

# charity FOCUS

with Joy Burgess



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## THIS WEEK: SPECIAL FOCUS ON BEFRIENDING

### 1: FFRINDIA' PROJECT

THIS picture of Rita Cooper and her befriender Bet Roberts, who volunteers with Mantell Gwynedd-backed Ffrindia' Project, illustrates exactly what befriending projects are all about.

Rita and Bet met by chance at a bus stop. When the bus didn't turn up they started chatting; Bet mentioned she was a volunteer on a befriending scheme for the elderly.

Rita is over 90 years of age and even though she is mobile she felt she would benefit from company and having someone to talk with.

She was given the number for the befriending project in her area and the rest as they say is history.

These projects have dedicated volunteers and lonely or isolated individuals.

Every week Bet visits Rita and they have developed a good relationship with similar interests. Rita has now started to get out of the house more, walking or visiting interesting places. They enjoy each other's company and both have benefited from the experiences.

Rita says the bus not turning up was the best thing that happened for a long time. She not only got a befriender but also the support from a befriending project. They both feel their meeting on that day was meant to be and that's how their befriending began.

■ Ffrindia' is funded by the Big Lottery Fund, and is a partnership project between Mantell Gwynedd, Age Cymru and the Carers Outreach Service.



For more details on volunteering, go to [mantellgwynedd.com](http://mantellgwynedd.com) or call 01286 672626

■ Rita Cooper and her befriender Bet Roberts are supported through the Ffrindia' Project

### 2: TALES FROM VOLUNTEERS

ACROSS North Wales there are a number of befriending projects either funded through The Big Lottery AdvantAGE Programme or Trust Funds who offer volunteering opportunities

To get a better perspective of what volunteering as a befriender can offer, below are real life experiences by the volunteers themselves.

Sioned who volunteers with the Gofal Project managed by The British Red Cross said: "Volunteering gets me out and about, meeting people. I worked as a nurse for people with learning disability and the elderly until I had to give up due to health problems. Although I cannot sustain a paid job I felt I still had a lot to offer people, and volunteering gives me the flexibility to work when I feel well enough".

Sioned goes on to say "Befriending gives me a chance



■ Pictured from Cynllun Ffrindia: above, Maureen Parry and Amanda Cope; right, Pete, Don & Scruff

# 'I'd always get home happy and fulfilled'

to build a rapport with the service users which I find interesting and rewarding. If you have a bit of time to spare, give it a try!"

The volunteers who befriend through the Cadwyn Môn Project are also enthusiastic

about their befriending.

"I couldn't have wished for a better start to my role of volunteering, as the individual I was matched with and I had a lot in common and we learned from each other's life experiences. I would always arrive home feeling happy and fulfilled knowing I had given some of my time to make someone else smile. My life has changed for the better because of volunteering."

If you are not

keen on volunteering on a one to one basis Action on Hearing Loss have a project called 'Hear to Meet' where the befriending is based around meeting as a group who befriend individuals who are hard of hearing.

Here is the story of one volunteer: "Having recently retired, I found myself with time on my hands and there is only so many games of golf I can play in a week, and so I decided to volunteer.

"I love to socialise and I can see the individuals in the group really enjoy our meetings and activities. We all enjoy having a good chat and have made great

friends."

The Royal Voluntary Service offer opportunities through their Good Neighbour Project. They offer various opportunities and below is a comment from one of their befriending volunteers:

"Mrs B. is wonderful, and looks forward to going there every week, and spending time with her. She would like to attend the lip reading course with Mrs B. as she also suffers from some hearing loss.

The volunteer said that Mrs B. has taught her a lot about life, and that she appreciates the little things so much more now than she used to.

### Befrienders' Noticeboard

#### » Hear to Meet

HEAR to Meet is an Action on Hearing Loss project for the over 50's with hearing loss, to meet new people, share experiences and have a chat. Volunteers are needed to help run the Hear to Meet sessions. Training, support and expenses will be paid. It's a great opportunity to learn new skills and make new friends. For more details contact Sabina on 01248614437/ [sabina.dunkling@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:sabina.dunkling@hearingloss.org.uk)

#### » Cadwyn Môn

CADWYN Môn is an Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn befriending project funded by the Big Lottery Fund to provide a service to people over the age of 50 living on Anglesey. Volunteers help people to gain the confidence to be more active and make new friends. For more information contact 01248724970 or email [cadwynmon@acgm.co.uk](mailto:cadwynmon@acgm.co.uk)

#### » Red Cross

IF family members might live too far away to visit regularly; the Royal Voluntary Service Good Neighbours provides valuable company, friendship and makes sure the older person is safe and well. This can include going shopping, collecting prescriptions, or just having a chat. Please call 01248 661915 for more information.

#### » Gofal

GOFAL is a befriending and enabling service that is provided to people over the age of fifty in North Wales. Volunteers visit service users once a week for a twelve week period. The aim of the service is to alleviate isolation and loneliness. Contact 01745 828360 or [GofalNorthWales@redcross.org.uk](mailto:GofalNorthWales@redcross.org.uk)

#### » Ffrindia'

FFRINDIA' is a befriending service for lonely or isolated people over 50 years of age. Could you do with a companion or can you make a difference to someone's life by volunteering for an hour or two a week? For more information please contact the Ffrindia' Project on either 01286 672626 or 01341 422575.