



Tales from the TSI Network

# Supporting Volunteering For All

All across Scotland

## supporting mental health recovery – Volunteer Edinburgh



**Nick Woodhead works with the Health and Wellbeing team at Volunteer Edinburgh, which concentrates on achieving the best possible experience for everyone.**

Matthew, a young man who faced many kinds of difficulties in his life, first approached them having found himself at a crossroads in life, suffering from anxiety following his graduation in 2014 and unsure of the direction he wanted to follow.

While some people are in a position to contact organisations directly themselves, others lack the confidence because of a wide variety of barriers - mental health issues, learning or physical disabilities, recovery from dependency or as past offenders struggling to get back into the world.

That is when the Health and Wellbeing team step in. They see first-hand how volunteering has an important part to play in recovery. Paramount is ensuring that the appropriate support is in place. It can be a gradual process, taking anywhere from one week to six months, or even longer when faced with greater complexities. Some arrive with their support worker, while others need more extensive input from Nick and the Health and Wellbeing team.

### How Volunteer Edinburgh helped Matthew

When Matthew arrived on his own at Volunteer Edinburgh, Nick was on hand to welcome him and make him feel comfortable. They began talking about what kind of volunteering he wanted to do and, having determined his skills and experience, along with any barriers he faced and how he felt able to contribute, Nick sounded out potential opportunities.



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With no experience of interviews and lacking in confidence, Nick took Matthew for an informal visit to Marie Curie, to have a look around and meet the people. Matthew was particularly attracted to the charity as he had experience of terminal illness in his family.

After discussing the visit with Nick, they settled on a financial administration position volunteering three days a week. This would make best use of his skills, as he would be dealing with incoming donations and mail enquiries as part of the Supporters' Relations Team. Crucially, Nick also knew that the charity would be supportive, empathetic and flexible to Matthew's needs.

Once Matthew started, Nick maintained contact predominantly by email to make sure everything was moving along well for him, gradually withdrawing as he settled in.

**As Matthew is delighted to point out himself, volunteering has made a huge impact on his life** and he really values the support he got from Nick. He benefited from great job satisfaction giving up his time in this way and being part of an organisation like Marie Curie, which he knows does amazing work to help people with terminal illnesses and their families through an extremely difficult time in their lives. It wasn't long after starting with the charity that his own medication was reduced.

With no distinction made between staff and volunteers, his Marie Curie colleagues were very friendly and he valued their companionship, as much as they valued his contribution. So much so, his manager offered him the chance to continue to volunteer with her when she took on a new position in Community Fundraising.

Not having heard from him in a while, Nick was delighted to receive an email from Matthew just a few weeks ago with great news. He now has a paid part time job in financial administration at Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity. Matthew is living life to the full.

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