

Jane recommends becoming a Swim Buddy

Former podiatrist and librarian, retiree Jane Dey moved to Edinburgh from Tunbridge Wells in Kent in 2020, with her partner, looking for a new adventure.

She's embracing all that Edinburgh has to offer saying "it's like being let loose in a sweetie shop. It has all the advantages of a city, without the drawbacks of a larger city like London."



Jane Dey

Jane had always been active and as soon as Edinburgh Leisure venues opened after the pandemic, she joined Leith Victoria Swim Centre. As a newcomer in a big city, she had some trepidation, but her fears were soon allayed when she walked through the doors of one of Edinburgh Leisure's Victorian pools and was greeted by a helpful, friendly, and smiling member of staff, who made her feel welcome from day one.

Throwing herself into her new life, Jane had always wanted to learn to ride a bike and she found out about the Ageing Well Cycle Skills Course. Run by Edinburgh Leisure in partnership with NHS Lothian, Ageing Well delivers a range of city-wide activities which support people to become, and remain, active

in later life. The emphasis is on meeting new people and making physical activity accessible and enjoyable.

Jane had three attempts at Level 1 Cycle Skills and was fine in the enclosed safety of Saughton Park but being thrown into big open spaces and having to contend with other vehicles, was another matter.

Jane was just about to graduate to Cycle Skills level 2 but unfortunately fell off her bike and was out of commission for six weeks. While she didn't break anything, she did tear her calf muscles and her confidence was badly shaken. She realised that the other activities that she enjoyed such as yoga, swimming and walking were much more important to her than the need to learn to ride a bike.

Swimming

Despite this minor setback, she was determined to remain involved to Edinburgh Leisure and their Active Communities programmes. One of the volunteers she had met at the Cycle Skills course also volunteered as a Buddy Swimmer and encouraged Jane to get involved as she had such a love of the water.

Jane now volunteers once a week, every Tuesday, supporting less confident swimmers in the water at the Royal Commonwealth Pool. As Jane says: "I love it when someone makes a breakthrough and discovers they can put their face under water, or coordinate arms and legs in the breaststroke. All of us volunteers are hugely rewarded when frowns and fear are replaced by smiles on the faces of participants.

"It's so lovely to be able to give the confidence to someone new – and when new people arrive with some nervousness, I think back to that first time I went to Leith Victoria and that member of staff who smiled at me. It's all about making people feel confident and welcoming them."

Edinburgh Leisure's Active Communities programme supports around 10,000 people a year to get active and improve their health and wellbeing. Edinburgh Leisure's volunteers are the backbone of their [Active Communities](#) programme, and make an enormous difference to people's lives. Quite simply, many of Edinburgh Leisure's projects could not exist without them.

Whichever role someone volunteers for, full training and support is provided.



Swimming at Maidencombe Beach