

Volunteers' Week – one volunteer is helping VoiceAbility

A University of Edinburgh graduate has spoken during Volunteers' Week about why he decided to volunteer in the city for a voice and rights charity.

Barney Bussell – who lives in the Newington area – has been volunteering since April for VoiceAbility, which supports people to be heard in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing.

The 22-year-old found VoiceAbility – one of the UK's largest advocacy and involvement services providers – when searching on the internet for volunteering options in Edinburgh.

After registering his interest online, Barney has gone on to complete his training and take on the role of service team volunteer – working with disabled people who need support to access Social Security Scotland benefits.

VoiceAbility launched the free advocacy service – the first to stretch the length and breadth of Scotland – in January last year, with Barney one of the first volunteers to be involved.

So far Barney has visited Edinburgh residents in their own homes, as well as attending a focus group at the Salvation Army hub.

Speaking during Volunteers' Week, which runs until Wednesday 7

June, Barney has been reflecting on why he decided to volunteer and his experiences so far.

“I’m interested in potentially doing law, so this looked like the perfect blend of charity community work and getting some skills for future jobs,” said Barney.

“I’ve really enjoyed it, and I’m learning the job as I go. I’m not an expert on Social Security Scotland benefits, but I like helping.

“The home visits are out of your comfort zone, and not something I’ve done before. It’s not like academic work or professional work. It’s something more personal, so I’ve really enjoyed that.

“Often as a student it can feel a bit like living in a city rather than being a truly part of it. However, volunteering with VoiceAbility has allowed to feel more involved in the local community.

“If you’re thinking of volunteering, I’d definitely advise you to do it. Get involved, come on in!”

Karen Murphy, VoiceAbility’s volunteer co-ordinator for Scotland, added: “A huge thank you to Barney and all our other volunteers for the important part they play in ensuring people are heard when it matters most.

“If you’re thinking about volunteering then please visit our website to find out more, where there’s also a short form you can fill in to register your interest.”

For more information about volunteering for VoiceAbility, which includes opportunities across Scotland, visit voiceability.org/volunteer.

To find out more about the advocacy support VoiceAbility provides in Scotland visit voiceability.org/socialsecurityadvocacy.



Barney Bussell