

Volunteers needed for Marie Curie Companion At Home service

The country's leading end of life charity, Marie Curie, is looking for volunteers in Edinburgh South to help with its Companion at Home Service.

All volunteers will be fully trained by Marie Curie and matched to someone locally who is living with a terminal illness. For up to three hours a week, the volunteer companion can provide valued emotional and practical support, such as having a chat together over a cup of tea, helping with small errands or providing a short break to carers.

Having a volunteer companion is vital for someone with a terminal illness. Sometimes, they might not have families or close friends living nearby, so this service can also help combat isolation and loneliness, as well as giving them the opportunity to remain socially active. In addition, the volunteer companion can also offer some respite to family members.

Jennifer Russell, has been a volunteer Companion for Marie Curie for a year.

She said: "I took early retirement in July 2019 following the death of my husband.

"Once life started to get back to normal after Covid I

realised that I had a lot of spare time on my hands and I decided to look for a way to put that time to good use.

“I looked online for organisations that were looking for volunteers and being a Marie Curie Companion fitted the bill for me. I like meeting people, I like to chat and my visits are made on a mutually agreed day and at a time that suits both of us. Also, where necessary we can be flexible to suit both me and my client if either of us has other appointments.

“I have two clients at the moment. Their needs are different but I think that the service is important to both of them.

“I visit one lovely lady who lives on her own. Her family are all around but they are working full time and she is alone during the day. My visit breaks up her day and gives her company at times when her family can't be around. We spend our time chatting about our families and putting the world to rights.

“My visits to this client are usually only about an hour but I know she enjoys the company and I was delighted when she introduced me to her grandson as her “friend”.

“My other client is a gentleman who is poorly and his wife doesn't like leaving him for too long. I visit them for two to three hours a week and sit with the gentleman to allow his wife to have time to do shopping or meet friends for lunch.

“Again, we spend time chatting and discussing current affairs or, if he's tired, we just watch tv or I read my kindle.

“I live on my own and whilst I'm providing companionship to my clients, they're also providing companionship to me. I really enjoy visiting every week and sharing our news and I think I can say that my clients are also my friends now.”

Jennifer has been supporting Margaret's husband, Tommy.

Margaret said: “When we were approached by Marie Curie to

provide someone to come and sit with my husband Tommy, who has terminal cancer, we were a bit unsure. But after a long chat we agreed to give it a go.

“They matched us with a lovely lady called Jennifer who is very chatty and friendly. She has been coming for a few months now and that means I can go out for a few hours and meet some friends. The most important thing is I can go out and relax knowing he is in good hands. It also gives Tommy someone new to chat to and Jennifer and Tommy get on so well together that I’m glad we decided to go for it.”

Sara Murray, Volunteer Coordinator, Marie Curie Scotland, said: “The Companion at Home service provides such wonderful support to people in the community at a time when they need it the most. We are delighted to be able to offer this service to people to help them to make the most of their time doing the things they enjoy the most.

“For anyone considering being a volunteer companion, this is a role that really makes a difference and is incredibly rewarding.”

Support can be provided 365 days of the year between 9am and 9pm.

To refer yourself or someone else, please email sara.murray@mariecurie.org.uk

