**27th September 2023 Volunteer Co-ordinators’ Forum**

**Volunteering past, present and future notes by Cllr Marian James**

Session began with a name game - objective to get to know each other and the importance of our name and our identity.

Marian outlined her experience in Social Care within Local Authorities and then having completed her counselling qualification went to ChildLine - her first experience of the charitable sector and of managing volunteers.

At that time, ChildLine volunteers were expected to attend an information evening and if after  listening they still felt they wanted to volunteer they were invited to complete an application and then attend interview. If application accepted and interview was successful, they swerve then invited on to a 6 week training course. At the end of the course, volunteers where then advised if they had successfully completed the course.

They could be rejected at all these stages. If accepted, they then had to commit to a 4 hour shift per week for at least a year. There was no shortage of people wishing to volunteer and people came from all walks of life. At the end of each counselling session, volunteers were offered a debrief to offload any difficulties they had encountered and to ensure they left feelings and emotions behind.

After a couple of years, Marian was asked to set up ChildLine Northwest in Manchester from scratch. It was fairly daunting as setting up a new branch entailed many elements, including recruitment of volunteers. Over 72 volunteers were interviewed over a 2 week period and the majority of them stayed for 3 years plus. Now ChildLine volunteers are expected to undertake an 11 week course!

In 1994 Marian came to Sutton and set up Sutton Carers Centre. At that time, she was a sole worker and turned to the Volunteer Bureau (as it was then known) to provide her with some volunteers. She started with an admin volunteer who had sight learning disabilities - she remained a volunteer for 15 years until sadly her early death. As time went on more volunteers were recruited in a variety of role and lots of procedures put in place to support volunteers. It was very different from ChildLine, as ChildLine was a large organisation supporting you, but now at Carers Centre up to me to put all the policies and procedures in place. Thankfully, the bureau was a fountain of knowledge.

After nearly 15 years, Marian went North to care for her father and to also manage another Carers Centre and young carers service. The concept of volunteering was quite alien to existing staff within the organisation and much work had to be done to change the culture.

Marian also talked about her own experiences of volunteering - supporting a young adult with Learning disabilities, trustee of organisations and a telephone befriender.

Amongst success, there was also failure. She tried to recruit volunteers from the Local Authority, but sadly the cheese and wine evening saw no-one turn up! However, today, there are many officers from the Council participating in volunteering opportunities.

Volunteering has changed - we have many older people and there is a need to reach out to younger people. The pandemic saw many people offering services that they had not thought about previously, new cohorts of people coming into borough who need support and friendship.

We had to evacuate the building due to fire alarm and therefore discussion on changing face of volunteering and questions was abandoned.