

My volunteering journey – Sue Sambells

I didn't set out to volunteer to support my community. I had a job and family to bring up and was a parent helper at my son's primary school, but when our neighbourhood watch scheme was set up in 2004 and coordinators were needed to pass on messages to ten houses, I offered to help.

Over the years I became more involved. In 2011 I took over running our scheme, with the support of a neighbour, and contributed to community meetings with the police and council. We attended our first NottsWatch conference later that year and I was invited to become a [Multi Scheme Administrator](#) for South Broxtowe. I enthusiastically contacted all the schemes in my area, initially, then moving onto neighbouring areas. I enjoyed the feeling of purpose in my community.

Early in 2014 I was invited to join the board of NottsWatch to represent South Broxtowe. This was just ahead of the county and city charities amalgamating and receiving charitable status. Trustees were needed so I agreed to take on this role and, in addition, become the secretary. I was secretary to three Chairmen between 2014 - 2017. The latter Chairman asked me to also take on responsibility for publicity and communication. Each time I took on a new (additional) responsibility, I welcomed the challenge and invested my time and energies to do the job well.

So, what did I get out of giving huge chunks of my free time for no remuneration? Partly, a feeling of giving back to society but in the main, I enjoyed it. I developed new skills and gained confidence from my voluntary work in a way that I didn't in my paid work. I have always enjoyed variety and working proactively. In 2016, believing that I could take on a more challenging role in my paid employment, I successfully gained a promotion through quite a challenging process. I am not sure that I would have felt "worthy" if not for my voluntary work.

In the spring of 2017 our Chair announced that he would be resigning at our upcoming Annual General Meeting. My first thought was that our committee may well fold. Our numbers had diminished since I joined and there didn't seem to be a potential leader left amongst us. After some soul searching and encouragement from our Chair, I put myself forward to become our first female Chair. I was very apprehensive about the role. I didn't have any experience of managing a team. But two years on I can see that it was the right move for me and for NottsWatch. I have been fortunate to build a strong team with positive and ambitious people to support me and I continue to gain in skills and confidence.

If you are considering volunteering, think about what you can give and what you can gain and explore the possibilities. The application process for NottsWatch is very simple. We basically need enthusiasm and reliability. Our roles are clearly defined. It's important that you enjoy the role that you take on! See [our current opportunities](#).