



Helen's Story

My name is Helen and I have been a Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Volunteer at Glasgow Libraries for approximately two years.

For several years, I had worked in the NHS and was keen to try volunteering for a health-related charity. Moving from one caring organisation to another appealed, but I was also keen to have an opportunity to develop new skills. From my online searches, the role of Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Volunteer stood out. I was impressed by the professionalism of the staff team and also by the aim of the voluntary role - provision of support and information not only to the person with cancer, but also to their loved ones – throughout all stages of the journey.

After completing the Macmillan @ Glasgow Libraries core training, my volunteering journey began and I was introduced to an amazing group of volunteers who answered my many questions and proficiently demonstrated the listening skills and empathy required when interacting with people. Then several months later, after interview, I was delighted to become a Lead Volunteer for Macmillan @ Glasgow Libraries.

There are many different aspects of volunteering which I enjoy – communicating with and providing high-quality information to people, directing or referring them to local services, other charities or agencies or simply just chatting over a cup of tea. My fellow volunteers and I

work together to provide a welcoming and well organised environment for the drop-in and it's always wonderful when someone leaves their visit seeming more relaxed and reassured. It's probably such a big step for many people affected by cancer to actually approach the drop-in for information and support. Some say that once they get over that first hurdle, it's easier to talk to a stranger than to family and friends – and we feel proud to have been able to lighten their load a little. I am also a fan of the learning and development opportunities offered by Macmillan @ Glasgow Libraries. A variety of training courses, partnership forums and online resources are available to all volunteers to keep us informed.

It's always rewarding to be able to make a difference. I've found that over the last few months, several people have told us that they have finished their cancer therapy, but are now trying to come to terms with life after cancer – and in some cases – with their 'new' body. After the marvellous and supportive care of the NHS, many people then find themselves requiring different kinds of support and information. This is one of the many areas in which Macmillan @ Glasgow Libraries makes a significant difference. Several Macmillan booklets address these issues, and to improve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, a referral to complementary therapies and counselling - offered by our partner organisation Cancer Support Scotland is often beneficial.

I thoroughly recommend being a Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Lead Volunteer. My role includes provision of support to the other Macmillan volunteers in our library team and generally ensuring that their volunteering role is a positive experience. Liaison with the Macmillan staff team, the library staff and partnership organisations ensures that the service runs smoothly, remains up-to-date and can adapt readily to new challenges. My fellow volunteers are very dedicated and skilled. We learn from each other – and provide company for each other – for the happy times and also for the sad ones. Everyone who drops in for support is different and no two volunteering sessions are ever the same!