

"I was pretty nervous when I knocked for the first time on the door of the lady I was due to visit. I have a lot of experience in business: I run a private equity firm, investing in and helping to run growing companies, but being a volunteer visitor for Independent Age was well outside my comfort zone.

I had long talked about a desire to get involved in charity work. Then I saw a feature in the Sunday Times that listed various charities, and the paragraph about Independent Age stood out to me. I knew that isolation among older people is a big problem but I had always seen it as something a community can help address.

In my experience of being a volunteer visitor, you each get something from the arrangement. Clearly the visit can be welcome company for the older person, and for the volunteer you have a real sense of making a difference to someone else. As such I see it as a two way street; an exchange where everyone benefits and it's fun. Older and younger people have different perspectives on issues which it's great to share.

I feel in today's society there's not enough respect for older people. I admire the stoicism of the generation. They have been through tough times and they are strong and principled because of it. They didn't have it easy but wouldn't make a fuss about it. Maybe generations since then have lost some of that strength.

That generation is hugely courteous, and humble about any help they receive. I know that it's easy to become isolated and somewhat lost and if you can't use technology this can increase your isolation.

Because I feel this so strongly I was delighted to be approached to be a trustee for Independent Age, some months ago. In fact the person who approached me didn't know I was a volunteer. I thought, 'This is a charity that does a lot of good and maybe I can help them make a huge difference to even more people using my experience of helping organisations to grow.' I think because I have worked as a volunteer I can benefit the organisation further: I can support the management team on strategy and the big decisions, but I also know how things work in the real world for the volunteer and can give that perspective

Even though I'm a trustee I want to carry on volunteering at Independent Age. Having a frontline role has really stretched me. I definitely want to do more and I'd recommend this role to anyone."