

## Real-life story - Renault Noel

Renault worked as a carpenter and later as a caretaker until quite suddenly in his mid-fifties he fell ill and needed a triple heart by-pass operation. After this experience Renault discovered the world of volunteering as a health champion.?

Renault Noel Volunteer health champion

**Employer or university** Haringey council

**Salary range** Unknown

### How I got into the role

I met the senior health trainer from the Haringey Health Trainer Service at a local volunteer recruitment event and decided to find out more about the role. I went along to the office to meet the co-ordinator and those already volunteering. I found it so interesting to learn how to be able to encourage and help others to look after themselves better?something I hadn't had the chance to think about for myself until it was too late!

### What I do

I am a volunteer with the Haringey Council Health Champion Programme and have been doing this since recovering from my triple heart by-pass operation. I volunteer for two or three hours a week. Much of what I do supports the health trainers and health services, and includes promoting them at local events. I've taken part in promoting NHS Health Checks which involved having a stand in Morrisons, in Tesco, at social events in the community and at a GP surgery to talk to people about what Health Checks are and how to get one.

As an ordinary guy myself I'm very approachable and available to chat when it suits members of the public. It's great when I talk to someone and they say they appreciate the help I have given them ? if just one person finds my work helpful and goes to see their doctor then I'd be happy.

I have had several training courses to help me: the British Heart Foundation Workshop; Mental Health First Aid course; the RSPH Understanding Health Improvement training and qualification; the RSPH Understanding Behaviour Change Training and qualification; Smoking Awareness Level 1 training (I now want to go on to do Level 2) as well as the "Let's Talk Cancer" programme on how to raise awareness about cancer. They have also prepared me to help others when I chat with them, by signposting them to where they can get further help and advice.?

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## **The best bits and challenges**

The satisfaction you get from volunteering is wonderful; you get such a lot out of it, helping you learn by helping others at the same time. I now realise that I should have gone to my GP earlier but I didn't recognise my symptoms.

I'm so proud of the Haringey Health Champion scheme: everyone is doing such a wonderful job and wants to spread the word about what help and services there are ? everything from supporting people with their mental health to helping those who want to lose weight.

## **Career plans and top tips for others**

I have thought about going on to become a health trainer but at present my priority is for my own health.

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