



I was made redundant from Remploy Barking 2012 after the government withdrew funding from the firm.

A year earlier I started performing voluntarily on the keyboard at residential homes including Hanbury Court in Dagenham and Colin Pond Court in Chadwell Heath (the latter with which I was joined by my friend Aarron Fitzsimmonds who sang).

Myself and Aarron also performed on the keyboard at the Volunteer Bureau in Barking at Christmas time and after my job folded, we began to perform there more often.

However, being out of work has meant I've gotten lonely at times. I've undertaken courses including a course in I.T but many have been part time and when they have ended, I have sometimes been left with virtually nothing.

So this year I started looking for some new voluntary work and having heard from a student on the I.T course last year, about volunteering opportunities at Chadwell Heath Community Centre I decided to make inquiries and soon landed myself a weekly position at Robert Jeyes Library in Chadwell Heath.

Each week I help sort out books and deal with customer queries. It's really good for me because it gives me the opportunity to challenge my difficulties with concentration and short term memory and also gives me something to put on my CV. The social aspect is really good too. Instead of being stuck indoors watching telly, I am out meeting people.

I've since taken on a second voluntary position, at the Sue Ryder charity shop at Dagenham Heathway.

There, I sort out clothes and other stock and label them, ready for selling. This has been another good opportunity to get out the house and meet people as well as of course, once again putting something worthwhile on my CV.

These two voluntary placements over all have helped me to regain some of the confidence I lost after Remploy closed and also help me to feel I have a position in life again, whilst I continue to look for paid work.

But perhaps best of all, it gets me out meeting people rather than me being stuck at home, feeling isolated and depressed. Volunteering has certainly helped turn my life around.

I believe volunteering can be of great benefit for organisations but perhaps most importantly of all, for the volunteer themselves