

## **Experience of a Childline Volunteer**

### **Patricia Breslin, Castlebar**

My name is Patricia Breslin. I am a retired teacher from the West of Ireland.

I always wanted to make a difference to the life of a child. As a retired person, I felt the need to give a sense of purpose to my new status. Childline was the very best choice for me as a volunteer.

I have been a volunteer with Childline for 18 months and find it a fulfilling experience. I saw an advertisement in the local paper about Childline's Volunteer Programme and attended the Open Evening in Castlebar.

I felt supported and encouraged on that evening and as I discovered it later, it was only an introduction to what was to come!

The training was of the highest standard – it's most comprehensive and equips volunteers with the requisite skills to deal with every situation. It is skills-based and participation is part of the learning. Training is regular, constant and updated accordingly.

The professionalism of the facilitators means that trainees feel equipped to manage every situation whether challenging or not. The tutors were and continue to be supportive – collaboration is at the heart of every situation.

Now that I have been volunteering for some time, I feel it is a wonderful privilege to listen to the young people who engage with the service on a daily basis. It has brought a sense of purpose to my life and is massively rewarding.

I feel that it is important that every child knows that there is always someone to talk to and that they will be listened to with empathy and understanding and will never be judged.

It surprises me that a great number of young people feel that they have no one trusted adult who they can share their thoughts and feelings with.

Volunteering in the Castlebar unit is a very special experience. Everyone is supportive and helpful. I have received constant encouragement and support from our Manager, Mary. She is always understanding and supportive and is a wonderful role model for all of the volunteers. She makes everyone feel comfortable and is warm and accepting.

Fellow volunteers are always ready to lend a hand. Everyone works together with a spirit of enthusiasm. In Castlebar, as I know is replicated in Childline units across the country, it is obvious that the welfare of the children and young people is foremost among the volunteers.

Anyone considering becoming a volunteer should check out the dates for the next Open Evening. I can assure you that you will receive a high standard of training and learn amazing skills which will make a significant difference to your life.

When you give to Childline, you will enhance your many wonderful gifts and talents. It is both fulfilling and challenging but most of all, a very worthwhile experience.