



A young Fife woman was chosen to be mentored by First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon earlier this year. Charlotte Liddell, from Buckhaven, was chosen ahead of hundreds of applicants to be the inaugural 'mentee'. Not long before, Charlotte had been named 'Young Volunteer of the Year' at our annual Awards Ceremony so it's been a year to remember for the mum of two.

Recently, our Head of Volunteering Development, Stephen Adamson caught up with Charlotte to hear her story (part two of the interview will follow next week):

**Q. Tell us how you first came into contact with Fife Gingerbread.**

My Family Nurse asked me to attend a teen parent group as I didn't socialise very much when I was pregnant. It was Fife Gingerbread that was running the group. It was mainly the teen parent project workers I dealt with to begin with.

**Q. Were you nervous when the Family Nurse recommended the group to you?**

I was quite nervous as a teen parent but when I found out there were other teen parents going to be present, I was happy to go along.

**Q. Were you aware that the organisation recruited volunteers and at the time?**

Near the beginning, I didn't know that they involved volunteers, but as you get towards the end of a programme, they include some information about volunteering as part of the exit process. They tell you about other options as well.

**Q. Did the idea of volunteering appeal to you at that point?**

I always wanted to give back to the people that helped me so much. I was a bit worried about childcare and how I would fit it in.

**Q. At what point did you realise 'yes I'm going to give this a try'?**

I don't think there was an actually moment where someone specifically asked me, but it's in my nature to just help out so I had been giving some extra help. I was informally volunteering for a while and not long after, Sandie (Sandie Kennedy, Volunteer Co-ordinator) approached me and asked if I wanted to go on the volunteering training programme.

**Q. Have you volunteered before?**

I had volunteered at galas and one-off things as my mum was quite heavily involved in the local gala, but nothing regular.

**Q. What were your first impressions of the organisation?**

I was impressed with how well they treat their volunteers, they're given the same opportunities as paid staff. You go to the same training and meetings that the staff do. I was impressed with just how many opportunities they were able to offer me as a volunteer.

**Q. What motivated you to volunteer with Fife Gingerbread?**

I wanted to give something back to the organisation that helped me so much.

**Q. What kind of things do you do as a volunteer?**

I help out with any groups that need extra help, I've done cooking classes, I've planned events, I've organised the Christmas family packs, I've done media stuff for the teen parents, I've literally just done whatever was required. I've also helped out in their office on occasion too. The organisation has offered proper flexibility. They offer roles based on what you can offer so it's great.

**Q. Are you still volunteering at the moment?**

Yes, I do a lot of buddying. I see a lone parent on a weekly basis. She has a young son so I understand her situation. I offer support to regularly, she was quite depressed and isolated, but I've been with her for a year and she now attends social groups, she's more confident and has even applied to be a volunteer herself. She says this is because she's seen what I've been doing.

**Q. That must be satisfying, seeing someone you're supporting progress?**

Yes it is, but I feel she helps me as much as I've helped her. We are both there for each other, to talk and listen. She's really interested in me as a person and that's a nice feeling.

**Q. What's changed for you as a result of volunteering?**

I believe in myself, I'm more confident, I'm a better public speaker as I now have to speak regularly at events and meetings with this new role. I feel I'm a better person now, I have perspective on life now. Some people maybe don't view lone parents very positively, but having been there myself and volunteered with them, I know that there's always more to it. I don't judge people.

**Q. Have you met new people?**

Absolutely, I've met loads of people – families, staff and other volunteers. I've made a lot of friends.



Charlotte Liddell

Make sure you come back to read part two next week, where Charlotte will recall winning an FVA Award and then the moment she found out about being selected for the First Minister's Mentoring Scheme.