



Maria Overton



I began volunteering with HCGA over 2 years ago. I joined as a volunteer on the Get out There! project which helped me to overcome agoraphobia and anxiety.

At that point in time I was unable to leave the house and was extremely anxious at the thought of being in social situations. I knew I had to do something to help overcome my fears and when I heard about the Get Out There! project I thought it sounded like a supportive environment and somewhere I would feel safe. I went along to the first session, which wasn't easy as I hadn't been further than my garden gate in a long time, however the group made me feel comfortable and I started to enjoy myself. Attending each week became easier and I gradually felt my anxiety begin to disappear. I really enjoyed being outdoors, part

of the local community, connecting with nature and learning rewarding new skills. I got a real sense of achievement which did wonders for my self-confidence.

The Get Out There! project has helped me to overcome a challenging time in my life. As a busy mum and grandmother I am grateful to be able to live my life again. I recently approached my psychiatrist with information about HCGA and explained how they had helped me. He is now referring other patients to their volunteering projects.

I am now an Ambassador for Hammersmith Community Garden's *Plant a Seed, Grow Well* project; supporting the project's Advisory Group with quarterly meetings and assisting with workshops and events. I also now work for a number of voluntary organisations across Hammersmith and Fulham and find myself to be extremely busy on a weekly basis!