

Alison's Story

NODA



Alison Stephen

A personal experience was the inspiration which led Alison Stephen to dedicate her time to Highland Hospice's No One Dies Alone (NODA) service, an initiative which ensures that people are not alone during their final moments.

Before becoming a volunteer, Alison was a nurse at Highland Hospice. But it was during her time volunteering with the Hospice's befriending service that she encountered a man whose story would motivate her to become involved with NODA.

She recalls visiting *"quite an isolated gentleman [who] lived on his own [and was] very intellectual"*. Although they struggled to find common ground, Alison's visits were welcomed, particularly after the death of his mother and the admission of his father to a care home.

On a future visit Alison hoped to take him to see his father, however, before this could happen, he himself was admitted to Raigmore Hospital, where Alison continued to visit him - until one day when she arrived at Raigmore to discover that the man had died, alone in a busy hospital ward.

"The ward was very, very busy, and I just felt vexed that I hadn't been able to do a bit more," she remembers.

That feeling of regret inspired Alison to become a NODA volunteer after the service was launched as it gave her a chance to make a difference in a way that resonated with her experience.

"Something about that stuck with me," Alison said. *"When NODA came along, it reminded me of that time."*

Since becoming a volunteer, Alison has been with several clients during their final days. These individuals are often isolated, either due to distance from their families or the absence of family altogether. For Alison, being present during these difficult times has been both rewarding and fulfilling.

"I just feel privileged to be the person that is there at that time," she said. *"Whether their family is on the other side of the world or they have no family at all."*

Volunteering with NODA, Alison finds, is about far more than just being present in a difficult moment - it's about offering dignity and comfort when people need it most.

*'being present during these difficult times
has been both rewarding and fulfilling.'*