

Surplus to Requirement

Everybody needs a reason to get up but some can't work for pay
Still, we long for meaning and a purpose to our day
We may need extra input to contribute – time, support and care
But, regardless of constraint or disability, we're always there
volunteering all we have in service of a greater good
overcoming obstacles of health, low energy or mood

The benefit we bring to organisations that we help is clear to see
Though sometimes overlooked because it's fraught with effort and yet free
But be assured the cost to us is significant nonetheless
Considerably more than had we no impairment to attest
Empathy, experience and expert witness just a few
particular enhancements we can bring to work we do

But reward to us is reaped in feeling we belong
Where once considered weak, now capable and strong
Friendship and connection are a joy for all to feel
No less for us, though sometimes we can doubt it's real
Developing our talents, learning brand new skills
Opportunities to grow and feel fulfilled

Then Corona hit us like a brick
Killed off loved ones, quarantined the sick
And we, affected more than most, faced fear and isolation
Lost routine, place and feeling valued for our special contribution
Were relegated to the ranks of being a burden on the NHS
Felt worthless and unwanted, this I must confess

As others stepped up to the challenge of being needed -
Those now furloughed who were not impeded
by poor health or disability, though all the same downhearted,
looking for a cause to pick them up and get them started
Those we've come to call our heroes, national treasures
Doing all manner of good deed in no small measure

And yes, we ought to laud them and enable them to volunteer
But what about the likes of us, their unsung peers
Who once enjoyed the satisfaction of being part of something noble
Now hidden in the shadows, kicked by Covid underneath the table
We understand the need to isolate and social distance
That managers want people who can work without resistance

Where space is at a premium and time a tapering resource
They can't support us to be part of the workforce
The virus has changed everything, for none more so than us
Thrown the sick and vulnerable under the bus
We, the casualties who want to get back on
And will there be a place for us when Covid's gone?

Jo McFarlane, Volunteer