

Ideas for Volunteering Roles in Health and Social Care

Supporting older people through volunteering



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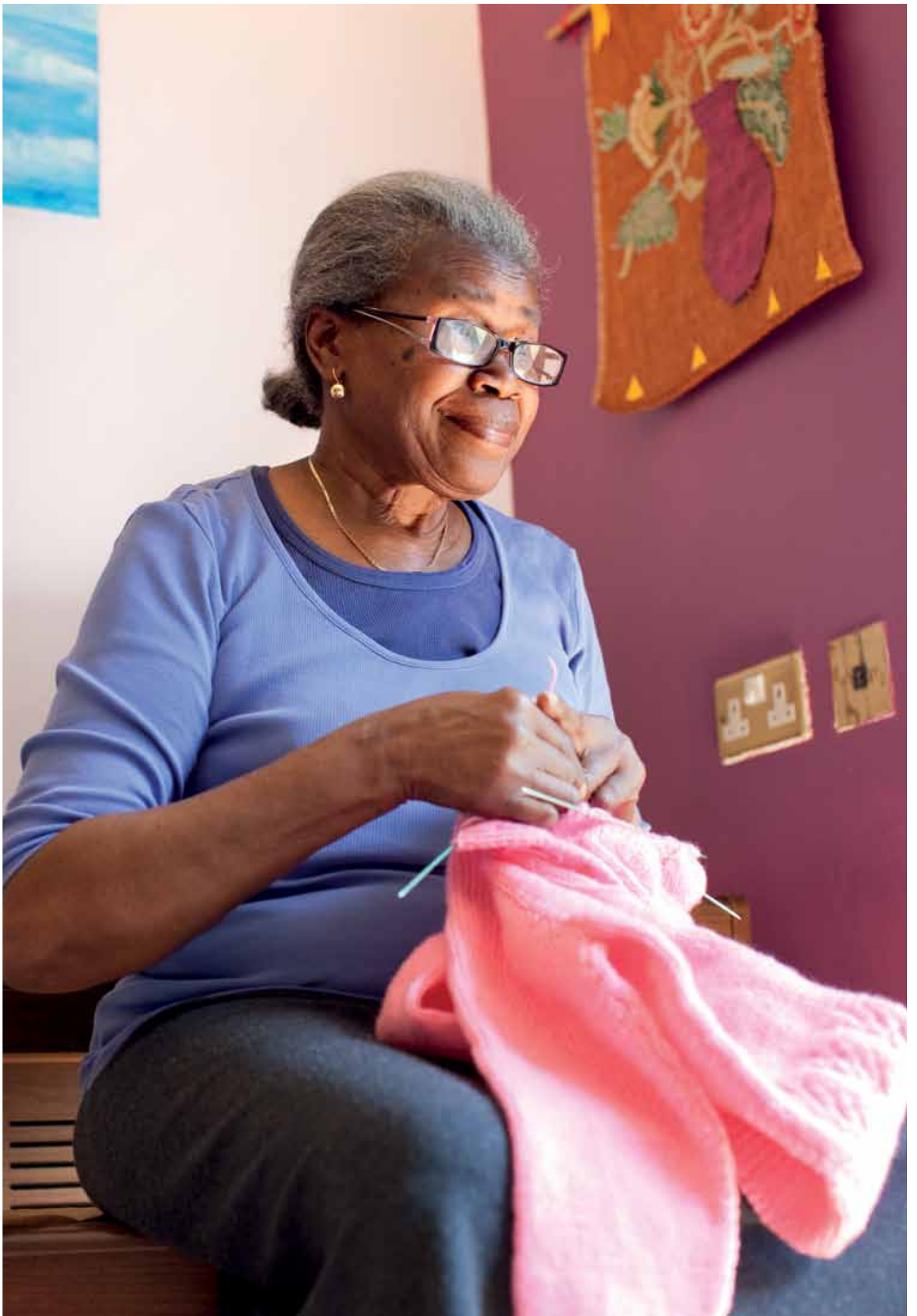
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1 Introduction

The European Year of Volunteering 2011

The European Year of Volunteering 2011 was established to recognise the contribution of voluntary activity in society and the value that volunteering inherently gives to causes and communities – locally, nationally, and internationally.

Age UK's role in the European Year of Volunteering 2011

As part of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, Age UK secured funding from the Cabinet Office to deliver activities around the theme of health and social care.

These activities covered the three themes of policy, practice and celebration.

- **Policy** – Identify the issues, and make recommendations, on how to better engage older volunteers; analyse the role of older volunteers in the co-design and delivery of services; and assess how volunteering can engage older people more effectively in the localism agenda.
- **Practice** – Publish a guide to volunteering roles that can support the health and social care needs of older people.
- **Celebration** – Organise a volunteering awards ceremony to celebrate the role that volunteers play in the health and social care support of older people

About this guide

This guide is the Practice element of our European Year of Volunteering work. It aims to look at the breadth of volunteering roles that support older people in health and social care, and to provide inspiration and advice to organisations and volunteering managers when thinking about what volunteers can do. It is not a comprehensive guide to volunteering good practice.

All the roles in this guide are based on real-life examples, but we know that there are many other roles that have not been included. If you have a volunteering role that supports older people in health and social care and that we could include in future editions of this guide, please email volunteering@ageuk.org.uk

2 Developing volunteer roles

The key to effective volunteer involvement is being flexible in how it is managed. Generally, the more complicated, skilled and time-intensive the role is, the smaller the potential volunteer pool will be – and consequently the harder it will be to recruit volunteers.

Therefore, when developing volunteering roles, ask yourself four questions.

- What activities and tasks need doing?
- Is there flexibility in how these tasks and activities are carried out (for example, can they be combined or separated)?
- What skills, knowledge and experience are needed?
- What training can be provided?

The skill in developing volunteer roles successfully is balancing the needs of:

- the service user – what needs doing?
- the organisation – how will it be done?
- the volunteer – who will do it?

Drawing up volunteer role descriptions

The purpose of developing role descriptions for volunteers is to ensure clarity for both the organisation and the volunteer, so that volunteers are recruited to suitable opportunities.

Role descriptions ensure that:

- organisations understand the role they are recruiting for and have planned appropriately
- volunteers have sufficient information to make an informed decision about the opportunity, and understand what is being asked of them
- employees have a good understanding of what the volunteers will do, the boundaries in which they are working and their contribution to the organisation.

There is no ‘accepted’ format for a role description, but you might wish to include:

- the role title
- a summary of the role and the activities involved
- how many hours a volunteer needs to give and when
- the location
- the personal qualities, skills and experience you require
- what training will be necessary and available
- who will supervise the volunteer
- what expenses are payable.

In practice, many organisations develop role descriptions that fit their business practice, mirroring the job descriptions they have for their employees. However, this can be a barrier for many volunteers, who see overly formal role descriptions as being excessively bureaucratic. Take your lead from what the volunteers want, while ensuring that this meets organisational needs.

Training

A key part of ensuring a positive volunteering experience is making sure that volunteers have all the tools they need in order to succeed. This includes being properly inducted into the organisation, and having the skills to perform the role, whether as a prerequisite or through the provision of training.

Providing a safe volunteering experience

Key to all volunteering placements is ensuring that the risks are managed appropriately, to provide a safe volunteering experience for the service user, the volunteer and others who are involved.

Many of the roles in this guide involve volunteering with vulnerable older people, so it is important that you have proper procedures in place (and that these are applied) to deal with:

- screening volunteers effectively
- carrying out Criminal Records Bureau checks, if necessary
- lone working
- data protection
- confidentiality
- maintaining boundaries between volunteers and service users
- reporting concerns
- whistle-blowing
- insurance.

Alongside that, volunteering is increasingly being delivered in more diverse areas, as part of commissioned services or within statutory settings. It is therefore important to understand whether there are any other additional statutory, legislative or contractual obligations to be aware of, and how these apply to your organisation, your volunteers and your volunteer-delivered service. For example, your volunteers might have to undergo specific training in safeguarding, health and safety or infection control, depending on the service.

Ensuring equality and diversity in volunteering

It is important to emphasise that all volunteers and potential volunteers should be treated fairly and given equal access to opportunities and resources, regardless of their age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. In the same way, it will be expected that volunteers will treat the people they work with equally, regardless of these factors. Volunteers are not covered by the Equality Act 2010, therefore each organisation has a moral duty to ensure that volunteers are not discriminated against.

Aside from the moral dimension, promoting equality and diversity has a very practical benefit – it not only widens the skills, knowledge and experience of the organisation, but also means that organisations will be able to increase their reach and provide more effective support to a wider section of their client group. In particular, many of the roles described in chapters 4–8 would benefit from being provided in languages other than English.

Providing management support for volunteers

If the volunteer is to be effective for the older person and the organisation, and the volunteer themselves is to have a positive experience, then proper consideration must be given to how the volunteer will be supported.

Regular support and supervision sessions are a crucial way of ensuring that:

- the volunteer is performing well
- the experience is a positive one for the volunteer
- any issues that have arisen are dealt with appropriately.

The manner of that support and supervision will depend very much on the nature of the volunteering and the overall service. In general terms, a person who volunteers three days per week will require more support and supervision than someone who volunteers one day per month.

As with all volunteering management issues, the fundamental objective is to recognise and balance the needs of the volunteer, the organisation and the service user.

Understanding the cost of volunteers

Although a volunteer's time is freely given, volunteering is not cost-free.

A number of costs can be associated with volunteering, such as out-of-pocket expenses, training, equipment and resources, recruitment and management support.

Before recruiting to the role, it is important to identify what costs are involved and how these will be accounted for.

Adding value by involving older volunteers

This guide is about providing support for older people through volunteering. A key way of achieving this is through involving older people as volunteers themselves, which provides benefits to both the older people supported and the older volunteers.

In 2011, Age UK produced a report entitled *Older People as Volunteers Evidence Review*, which highlights the value that involving older volunteers brings to organisations as well as the benefits of volunteering for older people themselves. The report is available at: www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/OlderPeopleAsVolunteers.pdf

Microvolunteering

Microvolunteering is a relatively new type of volunteering. It challenges many of the assumptions about 'traditional' volunteering and how it is managed.

Microvolunteering enables people to volunteer in bite-sized chunks of up to 30 minutes – even from their own armchair if they want to – for example, mentoring someone online. The opportunities are developed on the basis that many micro-actions taken together produce a significant output.

The main benefits of microvolunteering are that it:

- gives volunteers greater control over their volunteering, as it can be done at a time of their own choosing
- attracts a new range of volunteers, who may not be comfortable with more traditional types of volunteering
- is a relatively small commitment – the perception that all volunteering opportunities require a substantial commitment can be a barrier to many people.



However, the main drawbacks are that:

- there is less organisational control and interaction with the volunteer, so it may take more effort to convince, motivate and encourage people to help out
- the volunteer is divorced from seeing any direct results and has little direct contact with the recipient.

Therefore the organisation needs to consider how to ensure that both the volunteer and the recipient have a positive experience.

For more information about microvolunteering opportunities, contact Help from Home (www.helpfromhome.org), which has one of the largest directories of current microvolunteering opportunities.

Getting further information and support

This is not a comprehensive guide to volunteering good practice. However, there are numerous websites where you can access further support on volunteering.

- Association of Volunteer Managers – an independent body that aims to support, represent and champion people who manage volunteers: www.volunteermanagers.org.uk
- Local volunteer centres – these provide support and expertise to volunteer-involving organisations. To find your nearest centre, go to: www.volunteering.org.uk/iwanttovolunteer/where-do-i-start
- National Association of Voluntary Service Managers – works exclusively with volunteering managers in the NHS in England: www.navsm.org
- UKVPMs – a networking and communication resource for all volunteering programme managers working in the United Kingdom: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UKVPMs>
- Volunteering England – the national volunteering agency in England, providing support to volunteering managers and volunteer-involving organisations: www.volunteering.org.uk

Microvolunteering is a relatively new type of volunteering. It challenges many of the assumptions about ‘traditional’ volunteering and how it is managed.

3 How to use this guide

Each volunteer role is unique – it is dependent on the organisation, the service being delivered, the client and the volunteer themselves.

The roles included in this guide are suggestions as to what volunteers can do. They should be adapted and moulded to meet the needs of your clients, your volunteers and your organisation. They should not be considered as the prescriptive and definitive description of each role.

The roles have been divided into five broad categories of relevance.

- **Exercise and activity** – roles that provide exercise and other activities for older people
- **One-to-one** – roles that provide one-to-one support for an older person
- **Practical support** – roles that provide practical support for older people
- **Transport** – roles that involve transporting or supporting the transport of older people to a destination
- **Organisational support** – roles that support the running of the organisation

Under each category, the following volunteer roles are described.

Exercise and activity (see chapter 4)

- Activity Buddy
- Arts and Crafts Support
- Day Centre Helper
- Digital Champion
- Exercise Class Assistant
- IT Coach
- Nail-cutting Helper
- Outings Companion
- Singing and Music Leaders
- Swimming Monitor
- Talking Group Facilitator
- Walking Companion

One-to-one (see chapter 5)

- Bereavement and Loss Visitor
- Good Neighbour
- Home from Hospital Helper
- Home Reader
- Mealtime Helper
- Patient Befriender
- Personal Shopper
- Supporting Carers Helper

Practical support (see chapter 6)

- Gardener
- Handyperson
- Information and Advice Adviser

Transport (see chapter 7)

- Driver
- Minibus Driver
- Transport Escort

Organisational support (see chapter 8)

- Administration Assistant
- Campaigner
- IT Support Assistant
- Receptionist
- Trustee

Case studies (see chapter 9)

Chapter 9 provides five volunteer case studies for:

- a drop-in facilitator at a carers' centre
- a Local Involvement Network (LINK) volunteer
- a Marie Curie helper
- a Choosing Independence volunteer
- a self-management ambassador.

Each volunteer role is unique – it is dependent on the organisation, the service being delivered, the client and the volunteer themselves.

4 Exercise and activity volunteer roles

Activity Buddy

Role

To encourage an older person to become physically active.

This could include:

- introducing them to activities they might not have tried before, but would like to
- supporting them to overcome any barriers to becoming more physically active
- encouraging and motivating them to be more physically active.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Interest and involvement in physical activity
- Enthusiastic about the value of physical activity
- Encouraging and motivating
- Friendly and approachable

Any other information

In some cases, peer support is a key part of being a buddy, so volunteers who are a similar age may be the most effective recruits.

Arts and Crafts Support

Role

To support the running of arts and crafts activities.

This could include:

- welcoming people to the class
- assisting with the activities
- giving support
- making refreshments.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- An ability to keep records
- A sense of humour
- Reliability
- An interest and aptitude in arts and crafts

Day Centre Helper

Role

To help older people to maintain their dignity and independence, get out of the house, mix with older people and have fun, by assisting in a community-based day centre.

This could include:

- establishing, maintaining and developing relationships with users within the day centre
- assisting at mealtimes as necessary (e.g. cutting up food)
- providing assistance with domestic tasks, including serving meals and washing up
- working with individuals to maintain their levels of mobility and independence
- being involved with the planning and implementation of activities in the day centre.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Friendly, outgoing and approachable
- An ability to work as part of a team
- Reliability and trustworthiness

Any other information

Volunteers in day centres that cater for people with high dependency may need training in areas such as communication with people with dementia. This is not generally suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires developing relationships with users of the centre.

Where volunteers provide assistance with self-care tasks, this will need additional specific training.

Digital Champion

Role

To encourage and enable older people to become more engaged with digital technology and the internet.

This could include:

- signposting or arranging for an older person to take up an IT training opportunity
- taking someone to an event or training session
- providing one-off or occasional one-to-one support for a friend or neighbour
- providing ongoing one-to-one support.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Computer-literate
- Confident, enthusiastic and able to deal sympathetically, patiently and sensitively with all users
- Good communication skills

Exercise Class Assistant

Role

To assist and give support at exercise classes.

This could include:

- welcoming people to the exercise sessions
- making refreshments
- taking the register and collecting payment from each attendee
- submitting the completed register together with collected money.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- An ability to keep records and handle money
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality
- Reliability

IT Coach

Role

To provide one-to-one IT coaching to older people who are inexperienced with computers.

This could include:

- providing internet and email taster sessions
- assisting older people to learn the basics of computing
- identifying the older person's specific needs and assisting them, e.g. shopping online, emailing friends and family, or researching health topics
- raising awareness of the internet and technology, including safety and security issues.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Computer-literate
- Confident, enthusiastic and able to deal sympathetically, patiently and sensitively with all users
- Good communication and training skills
- Reliability
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Nail-cutting Helper

Role

To provide a nail-cutting service to older people.

This could include:

- preparing for clinics, by ensuring that enough supplies of items such as couch roll and protective gloves are available and that the venue is made suitable prior to a clinic
- preparing older people for treatment
- cutting and filing nails
- assisting with footcare advice
- clearing up after a clinic
- completing individual service user records following each treatment
- ensuring that those service users who may present with a problem are referred to the appropriate professional.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality
- Reliability

Any other information

Full training is needed on issues such as the safe and effective use of the necessary equipment, hygiene, the avoidance of cross-infection and identification of conditions requiring professional referral.

Outings Companion

Role

To accompany older people on days out.

This could include:

- ensuring the safety of the older people's belongings
- pushing wheelchairs
- reading small print.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Reliability
- Patience
- Being proactive
- Good communication skills

Singing and Music Leaders

Role

To provide entertainment to older people, encouraging them to move with the music and joining in through sing-along sessions.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An ability to play a musical instrument and/or read music (where appropriate)
- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Patience

Swimming Monitor

Role

To accompany older people on days out.

This could include:

- welcoming people to swimming classes
- organising transport and pick-up points for attendees
- taking a register and collecting payment from each attendee
- submitting the completed register together with collected money.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- An ability to arrange transport and pick-up points
- An ability to keep records and handle money
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality
- Reliability

Any other information

If the role supports the class itself, the volunteer may need to be trained in certain health and safety activities, such as life-saving.

Talking Group Facilitator

Role

To bring together groups of older people to talk on a variety of subjects or shared interests, such as books, theatre or music.

This could include:

- arranging meeting dates and meeting points
- facilitating discussions
- ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Reliability
- Patience
- Good listening skills
- An ability to encourage participation

Walking Companion

Role

To provide support and encouragement to older people who need to take regular exercise, particularly those who are recovering from knee or hip operations.

This could include:

- liaising with medical staff to understand a person's exercise needs
- encouraging and motivating them to be more physically active
- supporting them to overcome any barriers to becoming more physically active
- taking the older person out for a walk.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Being encouraging and motivating
- Being friendly and approachable
- Reliability
- An ability to deal with emergencies
- Patience
- A reasonable level of fitness



5 One-to-one volunteer roles

Bereavement and Loss Visitor

Role

To support an older person who is experiencing a loss or bereavement.

This could include:

- regularly visiting an older person in their own home and supporting them on a one-to-one basis
- being aware of any worries and concerns, and reporting them as appropriate.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- Patience and tact
- Reliability
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality
- An understanding of the needs and aspirations of older people who have been recently bereaved
- An understanding of the emotional impact and common responses to bereavement
- An ability to work with minimum supervision

Any other information

This is not suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires developing a relationship with the client and some significant training.

Good Neighbour

Role

To provide companionship for older people, to combat loneliness.

This could include:

- visiting an older person in their own home on a regular basis
- escorting someone into town to do shopping or other activities

- providing company to alleviate isolation
- providing information and referring to other services.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- Patience and sensitivity
- Reliability
- An ability to deal with emergencies
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Any other information

This is not suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires developing a relationship with the client.

Home from Hospital Helper

Role

To visit an older person in their own home on a regular basis, to provide practical help and emotional support to help them re-establish themselves at home after a hospital stay or when medical support ceases.

This could include:

- cleaning and preparing the house for the older person's return home
- ensuring that there is sufficient food and other supplies in the house
- ensuring that all utilities are working and that there are no outstanding bills
- transporting the person from hospital to home (if no ambulance is required)
- assessing safety and security in the home and referring on as necessary
- escorting someone to do shopping, or shopping for them
- help with paying bills and dealing with correspondence

- escorting to appointments
- supervising or making light meals and chatting over a cup of tea
- providing information and referring to other services
- providing companionship and reassurance
- identifying and helping to resolve practical problems.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good listening skills
- Thoroughness
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Any other information

This may not be suitable as a short-term opportunity where it requires developing a relationship with the client.

Home Reader

Role

To visit visually impaired older people who are living on their own or in a retirement home and reading to them.

This could include:

- books, magazines and newspapers
- their correspondence and other documents to them.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Patience
- Good listening skills
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Any other information

This is not suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires developing a relationship with the client.

Mealtime Helper

Role

To support older people in hospital who need assistance at mealtimes.

This could include:

- helping with menu selection
- helping with hand-washing
- encouraging patients to eat
- ensuring that patients can access their food
- cutting up a patient's food
- offering alternative choices, if a patient does not want to eat their meal
- feeding patients if necessary
- making drinks.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- Confidence
- A friendly and cheerful manner

Any other information

This role may require food hygiene training.

Mental Capacity Advocate

Role

To ensure that older people with mental capacity issues are heard and get the support they need.

This could include:

- understanding, responding to and representing older people's interests, e.g. securing their rights; accessing social care, housing and health services; and resolving their problems
- encouraging self-advocacy
- exploring the older person's issues
- identifying options
- listening supportively
- offering the opportunity to decide how any actions should be carried out.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Reliability
- An understanding that some people need more support than others
- An ability to organise and plan work
- An understanding of the role of an advocate
- An understanding of the impact of dementia and other mental health conditions
- An ability to listen to, and communicate effectively with, older people and service providers
- An ability to appreciate the significance of non-verbal communication
- An ability to represent someone else's point of view without judgement
- An ability to write clear and concise notes and letters, and to keep accurate records

- A commitment to user empowerment, by accepting the client's right to choose a course of action
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Any other information

This is not suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires developing a relationship with the client and substantial training.

There is an ongoing debate regarding what advocacy is, so it is important to be clear about what is expected of the role.

Patient Befriender

Role

To support older people in hospital who may not have any visitors, who are attending appointments alone, or who simply need someone friendly to talk to.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- Confident
- A friendly and cheerful manner
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Personal Shopper

Role

To support an older person in going shopping.

This could include:

- escorting older people to the shops
- assisting with money

- assisting with wheelchairs and mobility scooters
- helping older people to choose their items
- escorting older people back home.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- Confident
- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Reliability
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Support Planner

Role

To support older people who do not qualify for statutory support from social services but who need assistance in putting together a package of social care and support services and activities.

This could include:

- helping people to identify their support needs and outcomes
- working with the older person in discussing their needs with the local authority
- helping to design a support plan
- identifying any support to which they are entitled.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- An ability to understand information by listening and reading
- An ability to keep legible notes and records, write letters, fill in forms and carry out basic calculations
- An ability to avoid judgements and stereotypes
- Being a good listener
- An ability to explain things clearly without using jargon or being patronising

- An ability to identify problems and solutions in meeting the needs of older people
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Any other information

This is not suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires developing a relationship with the client. It also requires a detailed knowledge and understanding of the care and support options that are available locally.

Supporting Carers Helper

Role

To provide a carer with a sitting respite service, giving them an opportunity to have a break, knowing that the person they care for will be safe and comfortable in their absence.

This could include:

- providing companionship
- serving supplied refreshments as required
- responding to telephone calls or callers where appropriate.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- Confident
- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Reliability
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality

Any other information

Volunteers are not expected to be involved in any moving or handling, personal care, food preparation, housework or giving of medication. This is not suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires developing a relationship with the client and their carer.

6 Practical support volunteer roles

Gardener

Role

To provide practical gardening assistance and support to older householders, in order to help them maintain their independence and remain safe, secure, comfortable and happy in their own home.

This could include:

- agreeing what gardening tasks need to be carried out
- carrying out the task or referring it where appropriate
- improving garden security through trimming and planting
- clearing up following any gardening tasks
- ensuring that green waste collection has been arranged.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An interest in gardening or willingness to learn basic gardening skills
- A reasonable level of fitness
- An ability to assess the task and to complete it safely
- An understanding of health and safety issues
- Good communication skills
- Reliability

Handyperson

Role

To provide basic household maintenance for older people living in their own homes, to help them feel safe and maintain their independence.

This could include:

- assessing the task and completing it safely, or referring it on where appropriate
- carrying out basic maintenance tasks, such as replacing light bulbs, fitting door chains and security devices, putting up shelves and pictures, or moving pieces of heavy furniture
- cleaning up following any household tasks
- ensuring that any large waste collection has been arranged.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An interest – and reasonable level of skill – in household maintenance and DIY
- An understanding of health and safety issues
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality
- Reliability

Any other information

A handyperson does not tackle major works and does not replace the help of skilled tradespeople.

Information and Advice Adviser

Role

To provide information and advice to older people and their carers.

This could include:

- interviewing clients in person or by telephone
- exploring the nature of the problem and, where appropriate, the wider circumstances
- identifying and researching information relevant to the situation
- presenting and discussing information with the older person, enabling them to identify a suitable solution
- acting on their behalf, where appropriate, and representing their interests with third parties
- helping with writing letters and completing forms
- informing older people about services that may be available to them and how to access them
- where appropriate, referring people to other agencies and sources of help
- maintaining statistical and case records, using manual and electronic systems
- working with other relevant local agencies in developing an information and advice service
- keeping up to date with relevant laws, policies and procedures – locally and nationally.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An ability to understand written information and to explain things clearly, without using jargon or being patronising
- An ability to write clear notes and records, to write letters and fill in forms, and to carry out basic calculations
- An open-minded approach to individuals, avoiding judgement and stereotyping
- An ability to listen to others and to identify problems and solutions in order to meet the needs of older people
- Good communication skills and willingness to work face to face and on the telephone with clients
- An awareness of discriminatory practices and equal opportunity issues
- An ability to work as part of a team

Any other information

This is not normally suitable as a short-term opportunity, as it requires substantial training.



7 Transport volunteer roles

Driver

Role

To help older people to be independent, by providing transport.

This could include:

- taking clients to a variety of places, such as doctor's appointments, shopping and to social activities
- assisting passengers when entering and leaving the vehicle where necessary
- providing a safe, comfortable and reliable travelling experience to those who need it
- informing the organisation immediately of any changes to their own health or incidents that affect their driving licence or ability to drive
- notifying the organisation as soon as possible of any incidents or accidents affecting passenger safety while on duty.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Being a good, safe driver
- An ability to arrange transport and pick-up points
- An ability to assist people to get into and out of a car
- Reliability

Any other information

The volunteer needs to have a full driving licence and to provide their own car with the appropriate documentation (MOT, tax, insurance).

Most insurance providers will not charge additional premiums for volunteers who drive their own cars. However, it is important check beforehand whether or not this is the case. The Association of British Insurers publishes Volunteer Driving – The motor insurance commitment (www.abi.org.uk/information/consumers/general/volunteer_driving_.aspx), which lists what conditions, if any, insurers attach to volunteer drivers.

Minibus Driver

Role

To provide transport for older people.

This could include:

- assisting passengers when entering and leaving the vehicle, where necessary
- carrying out regular basic checks, such as monitoring the oil levels and tyre pressures
- reporting any vehicle defects and faults
- ensuring that the vehicle is in a clean condition before and after use
- ensuring the safety and comfort of passengers and being aware of relevant minibus legislation
- using the passenger lift/ramp in a safe and responsible manner
- informing the organisation immediately of any changes to their own health or incidents that affect their driving licence or ability to drive
- notifying the organisation as soon as possible of any incidents or accidents affecting passenger safety while on duty.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Being a good, safe driver
- An ability to arrange transport and pick-up points
- Reliability

Any other information

The licence requirements for drivers depend on when the driver passed their test, the size of the minibus and the reasons for using the minibus. For further information, visit: www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/WhatCanYouDriveAndYourObligations/DG_4022498

Transport Escort

Role

To supervise the safe transfer of older people in a minibus or coach.

This could include:

- supervising the safe transfer of older people from home to the vehicle, from the vehicle into the appropriate venue, from the venue back into the vehicle and from the vehicle into their home
- operating the vehicle tail lift – only after appropriate training and under the supervision of the driver

- offering assistance to the older person, to ensure that their home is safe and secure on leaving
- ensuring that the passengers are comfortably and securely fastened in their seats, that gangways are clear of obstructions and that the driver is not distracted during the journey
- maintaining the security of the vehicle and supervising the older people in the absence of the driver.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An ability to work as part of a team
- A reasonable level of fitness
- Good listening skills
- An understanding of safety issues
- Good timekeeping skills
- Reliability and trustworthiness

Any other information

Training in, for example, the securing of wheelchairs would be required.

8 Organisational support volunteer roles

The roles that volunteers can perform to support the organisation are only limited by what the organisation does or wants to do. Listed below are some of the more common examples.

Administration Assistant

Role

To help ensure the smooth running of the office.

This could include:

- supporting other staff with photocopying, mailings and other administrative tasks
- managing files
- responding to emails and queries.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good organisational skills
- Good communications skills
- Basic IT skills
- Good timekeeping skills

Campaigner

Role

To support local and national campaigns on older people's issues.

This could include:

- distributing campaigning material and encouraging people to take campaigning action
- communicating and engaging with external stakeholders, such as the general public, health professionals, MPs, councillors, partner organisations
- supporting the delivery of national campaigns at a local level

- carrying out a wide range of campaigning activities, such as writing letters and press releases, attending events, or arranging meetings to further local campaigning activity.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An interest in older people's issues
- Good communication skills
- A friendly and cheerful manner
- Good organisational skills

IT Support Assistant

Role

To support the IT systems within the organisation.

This could include:

- supporting staff and volunteers on IT issues
- troubleshooting problems
- designing and updating the website.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An ability to work as part of a team
- An ability to respond to different situations
- Friendly and approachable
- IT skills

Receptionist

Role

To provide a welcoming environment to all visitors.

This could include:

- greeting clients and other visitors
- referring visitors to the appropriate member of staff
- answering the phone
- explaining the services available
- maintaining the reception area.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- Good communication skills
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality
- An ability to respond to different situations
- Friendly and approachable

Trustee

Role

To have overall legal responsibility for the organisation, and to be responsible for the direction and performance of the organisation.

This could include:

- managing, planning and monitoring the organisation's strategic direction
- acting as employer for paid staff
- managing the organisation's finances
- ensuring that the organisation complies with the law
- being responsible for premises, insurance and equipment.

Personal qualities most suited to this role

- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- Good, independent judgement
- An ability to work effectively as a member of a team, while contributing an independent perspective
- Reliability and trustworthiness
- An understanding of the need for confidentiality
- An ability to give sufficient time to the role

Any other information

Trustee boards need a wide variety of skills and experience to function effectively, such as in finance, law, business management and people management. They also need people with knowledge about the specific issues relevant to the organisation.

Different types of trustee liability apply to different types of organisation. A potential trustee should be clearly informed about their particular liability.

There are certain restrictions on who can be a trustee, so each person should be checked for their eligibility. For example, they cannot have been previously disqualified as a trustee or company director, cannot be an undischarged bankrupt or cannot have certain unspent criminal convictions. For further information, visit: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc3.aspx

9 Volunteers in action: five case studies

Case study 1:

Drop-in Facilitator, The Princess Royal Trust Oldham Carers' Centre

What does the volunteer do?

The volunteer facilitates drop-in sessions at the carers' centre, providing support to carers. On average, there are 45 people per session.

What skills does the role require?

It needs good people skills, an ability to take leadership in the sessions and to be able to empower other people to take part in activities and influence service delivery. It is preferable that they have experience of being a carer.

What skills does the volunteer need to have before applying?

They need to have confidence to speak to people in a group setting.

What additional training do you provide?

We have a full induction process with ongoing personal development.

What management support do you provide?

We provide supervisions, team meetings and peer mentoring.

What lessons have you learnt on how this role has developed?

The positive impact of having facilitators who are, or were, carers is invaluable.

What are the key risks involved in the role?

It can be emotionally draining at times, due to the nature of caring situations.

Contact details

For more information, contact: Miranda De Blasio, The Princess Royal Trust Oldham Carers' Centre; email: miranda.deblasio@oldham.gov.uk

Case study 2:

West Sussex Local Involvement Network (LINK) volunteer

What does the volunteer do?

Roles vary according to the requirements of the project, but all of them aim to improve the delivery of health and social care services in the county.

For the LINK Advocacy project, volunteers were trained in interview techniques and then they interviewed local authority and West Sussex Primary Care Trust (PCT) commissioners on various aspects of advocacy service provision in the county.

The Enter & View project requires volunteers to be trained to enter premises where publicly funded care is provided and to report on the quality of service observed. This could be a hospital ward or a privately owned care home. All projects take place in the West Sussex area.

How many older people does LINK support?

LINK projects and activities directly and indirectly support hundreds – if not thousands – of older people, encompassing as they do health and social care issues in a county that has a disproportionately high population of older people.

Recent activities include:

- commissioning a DVD to raise awareness of stroke
- scrutinising the quality of care received in care homes and hospitals
- analysing and reporting on the impact of changing social care eligibility criteria.

What skills does the role require?

There is a wide variety of roles demanding different types of skills, including researching patient or service user views, visiting care settings and monitoring quality of care delivered, and speaking and presenting to groups.

What skills does the volunteer need to have before applying?

No specific skills are required prior to application – simply a desire to see an improvement in the quality of health and social care services in the county.

What additional training do you provide?

Project-specific training is given to LINK volunteers. For instance, service review volunteers are eligible for free West Sussex County Council training in ‘Safeguarding adults – basic awareness’. They have also received training in infection control procedures for a review of cleanliness of care homes in West Sussex. Other free training for LINK volunteers can be accessed from the NHS West Sussex PCT.

What management support do you provide?

LINK project leads are appointed to supervise progression of projects and to provide support to new volunteers. Comprehensive briefing and peer mentoring are available from existing volunteers and staff. Risk assessments are carried out for all areas of work of Help and Care (West Sussex LINK’s host), and are reviewed on an annual basis.

What lessons have you learnt on how this role has developed?

The variety of volunteer opportunities with LINK has expanded over time as new health and social care priorities come to the fore. This enables volunteers to have a wider choice of project in which to participate as well as greater choice about the method of participation – whether face to face or online. As volunteers become more experienced, they are able to have a greater influence, via LINK, in health and social care outcomes in the county.

What are the key risks involved in the role?

Risk assessments are carried out for all areas of Help and Care’s work, and are reviewed on an annual basis. Head office policy is adapted to the needs of the local West Sussex office.

Contact details

For more information, email: diane.ruban@helpandcare.org.uk or mark.habibi@helpandcare.org.uk; web: www.makesachange.org.uk

Case study 3:

Marie Curie Helper, Marie Curie Cancer Care

What does the volunteer do?

A Marie Curie Helper is a trained volunteer who can provide company and support to a person with a terminal illness, and their family and carer, to help them cope more effectively and with more confidence. The Marie Curie Helper service aims to improve people’s ability to stay in their own homes if they are terminally ill, and for their carers to continue with their caring role.

A Marie Curie Helper will visit a person in their home, or sometimes support them on the phone, offering a few hours of their time each week to provide a listening ear and an emotional support, a short break for families and carers from their caring role, and information about relevant local services.

The Marie Curie Helper service is available, free of charge, to all people with any terminal prognosis and for their families and carers after bereavement.

What does a Marie Curie Helper do?

When people with a terminal illness – or their families or carers – need someone to talk to, a Marie Curie Helper is able to spend time listening to them.

A Marie Curie Helper is not a healthcare professional and cannot provide any medical or nursing care or advice. But they can offer carers the chance to take a short break from their caring role. Carers can feel confident about leaving their loved ones with a volunteer they know and trust.

A Marie Curie Helper can provide information on local services that might benefit those living with a terminal illness, their families and carers.

A Marie Curie Helper tries to help with most requests. If they are unable to do so, they will try to find someone who can help.

What skills does the role require?

Essential requirements are:

- being friendly and sensitive – a good listener
- self-awareness and emotional stability
- a willingness to learn and operate within set role boundaries
- being a reliable team member, who can operate autonomously and keep commitments and appointments
- respect for individuals regardless of their race, gender, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation and marital status.

What skills does the volunteer need to have before applying?

Volunteers do not need any previous experience.

What additional training do you provide?

A rigorous training programme is provided to our volunteers, which covers:

- the role and its boundaries
- communication skills
- assertiveness
- client confidentiality
- record-keeping
- key worries at the end of life
- loss, grief and bereavement
- common end-of-life signs and symptoms
- looking after yourself as a volunteer
- personal safety
- moving and handling
- infection control
- managing risks.

Further training is provided on a regular basis to improve the volunteer's skills and knowledge.

What management support do you provide?

Each Marie Curie Helper is supported by the Marie Curie Helper Manager, who leads the service in the area where they volunteer.

Support includes:

- regular contact with the volunteer, either by phone or face to face, to ensure that the volunteer is appropriately informed, able to keep within their role boundary, and to address any additional support or training needs
- an annual formal performance review to help the volunteer maintain the professionalism of the service.

What lessons have you learnt on how this role has developed?

From conducting focus group sessions with our volunteers and encouraging feedback on the role, we have learnt that the Marie Curie Helper role is felt to be a privilege by our volunteers, as they are being involved in supporting terminally ill people and their families and carers.

We have also expanded the role for some of our volunteers who would like additional training to enable them to support carrying out the initial assessments of need for referrals to the Marie Curie Helper service.

What are the key risks involved in the role?

The key risks are:

- lone working
- ensuring that professional boundaries are established and maintained
- remaining alert for any emotional difficulties that a Marie Curie Helper may be experiencing in relation to their role.

Contact details

For more information, email helper@mariecurie.org.uk or see the website: www.mariecurie.org.uk

Case study 4:

Choosing Independence volunteer, South Yorkshire Centre for Inclusive Living

What does the volunteer do?

The volunteer provides peer mentoring for disabled people of all ages (including older people), to help them to be more independent and to have a voice.

The Choosing Independence project offers support for people obtaining a personal budget to meet their social care needs.

What skills does the role require?

Volunteers need empathy and listening skills.

What skills does the volunteer need to have before applying?

The volunteer needs experience of disability issues and to have good interpersonal skills.

What additional training do you provide?

We provide peer mentoring, disability equality training, safeguarding, confidence-building and deaf awareness.

What management support do you provide?

The volunteer co-ordinator provides supervision.

What are the key risks involved in the role?

We have to be very clear about what mentoring can – and cannot – provide. Some people are referred to the scheme who are looking for, or require, counselling or befriending.

Any other information that you feel would be useful to share?

Many of the volunteers have a personal budget themselves, so can share their personal experiences with people going through the process of obtaining one.

Many older people are still receiving traditional support services, but can be supported by the project and its volunteers to think of innovative ways to meet their social care needs.

Contact details

For more information, email Jane Kidd: jane.k@sycil.org

Case study 5:

Self-management Ambassador, the Expert Patients Programme Community Interest Company

What does the volunteer do?

The Self-management Ambassador promotes the importance of self-management to people living with long-term health conditions within the local community, through working with a group of up to 18 people.

What skills does the role require?

The volunteer needs to be an active self-manager, with good understanding of self-management techniques, and confident about talking in public.

What skills does the volunteer need to have before applying?

The volunteer should have either lived experience of self-managing a long-term health condition or experience of supporting others to self-manage a long-term health condition.

What additional training do you provide?

We provide:

- presentation skills training
- induction
- supervision
- skills development
- ongoing support.

What management support do you provide?

A named local manager supports induction, training and the provision of information and guidance materials. The manager is overseen by a National Volunteer Manager, who is responsible for developing, monitoring and reviewing structures, policies and procedures to support and recognise the central role that volunteers play in promoting self-management in local communities.

What lessons have you learnt on how this role has developed?

People living with long-term health conditions who actively and positively manage their condition on a daily basis – or who have experience of positively supporting others to self-manage a long-term condition – make the best advocates. They do this by raising awareness and recruiting people with long-term conditions to attend self-management programmes, so that they can gain the confidence, skills and techniques to improve their own health and wellbeing.

Any other information that you feel would be useful to share?

As part of local team delivery, Self-management Ambassadors are vital in supporting the awareness and promotion of programmes and services, to ensure that people living with health conditions have access to programmes in their local community.

Self-management Ambassadors should reflect the very communities they represent and should be able to provide the ‘voice of the patient’ in group presentations and talks to promote awareness of self-management programmes.

Contact details

For more information, email Lyn Wilson, National Volunteer Manager, Expert Patients Programme Community Interest Company on lyn.wilson@eppcic.co.uk, or see the website: www.expertpatients.co.uk

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