

Social Isolation & Engagement

Volunteer Role Description

The role of a social isolation and engagement volunteer is to help improve the lives of those who are socially isolated. This is a fantastic opportunity to make a significant difference to the life of someone who may have very limited contact with the rest of society.

Social isolation and loneliness are two words which are often used interchangeably, however although they are related concepts, they have different meanings.

Loneliness is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. Social isolation, however, is an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of relationships.

There is an extensive body of research work, that links good social relationships in later life with a range of positive quality of life measures and health outcomes. Conversely, loneliness and social isolation have serious negative consequences for physical and mental health in older people, and a lack of social ties may confer vulnerability.

What a volunteer does:

- Actively engages with people who are isolated and / or lonely
- Works with each person in a person-led and strength-based way, focusing on the persons' strengths and personal assets
- Supports individuals to build confidence and resilience
- Encourages each person to maintain their independence
- Help promote the benefits of social engagement
- Facilitates access to appropriate creative, recreational and social activities that promote positive mental and physical wellbeing
- Brings people together to reduce the gaps across social, generational, digital, cultural and attitudinal divides
- Removes emotional and physical barriers that prevent people from engaging in social activities

Examples of what the role might involve include:

- Working with a person one to one to build up their confidence to engage in the best way for them as individuals
- Supporting a person to get out of the house more to pursue their interests and perhaps link with others, engage more in the community or attend a group
- Accompanying people to social events or activities in the community
- Supporting individuals to be more technologically savvy for enhancing their communication and engagement e.g. phone calls/ using Skype

Personal qualities most suited to this role:

- Strong and positive interpersonal and communication skills
- Friendly and approachable
- Reliable and honest
- Positive, supportive and encouraging
- Sensitive and able to respect confidentiality
- Ability to support client to deal with phone calls etc.
- Supportive of the value of older people in the community

In addition:

- Ability to support people with basic IT skills for communication and engagement e.g. Emails, Skype, Facetime, would be useful but not essential.

You will also gain from the role:

- A chance to meet new people and make connections in your community
- A greater awareness of services, events and activities in your local area
- Opportunity to make a significant difference to the life of someone else
- Training opportunities to develop your existing skill set

Time Involved:

In order to build a positive, meaningful relationship with individuals, it is asked that volunteers are able to commit at least one hour per week, reasonably regularly. This is to allow clients continuity and support in order to become less socially isolated.

Role Specific Training:

As this service involves home visiting, volunteers will be required to be engaged with specific training and procedures around personal safety and safe home visiting when lone working. As some recording is required, there will also be training around recording and confidentiality and boundaries.

You will be supported by the Social Isolation and Engagement lead who will ensure that your training and development needs are met, and provide ongoing support as needed.

Limitations and Boundaries

This service works primarily through contacts with vulnerable people and sometimes in their own homes. Volunteers must be aware that visits refer only to those that are scheduled with the agreement and awareness of the service lead and any visits not scheduled in this way are outside the project for support or insurance.

Volunteers must also be aware that before the use of their cars with clients, procedures must be followed and agreement of the service lead obtained.

Responsible to:

The Social Isolation and Engagement project lead

This Task Sheet must be read in conjunction with the Step Out Stockport & Age UK Stockport **General Guidance Sheet for Volunteers** which contains additional important information including about expenses, insurance, your privacy rights and other general matter.

Age UK Stockport is a local independent charity whose mission is working locally for your wellbeing. We are committed to the protection of Vulnerable Adults.

Age UK Stockport is a registered charity 1139547 and company limited by guarantee. Registered No: 7413632. Registered Office Commonweal, 56 Wellington Street, Stockport, SK1 3AQ