

# WHEELCHAIR ASSISTANT

## What Does Being a Wheelchair Assistant Involve?

Wheelchair pushing involves visiting an isolated, lonely or vulnerable person on a regular basis, usually in their own home and taking them out in their wheelchair, weather permitting.

## What Else Might Be Included?

In order to take a service user out on a regular basis, you will need to befriend them. Sometimes when the weather is bad you may need to spend the same length of time with them in their own home.

You will need to attend a wheelchair assistant training session with the VSL Organiser before you begin.

VSL support sessions for all volunteers (held 3-4 times each year) form an integral part of the volunteer role and you will be informed of these through our regular newsletters or by letter.

## Is There A Minimum Commitment?

For a befriending/wheelchair pushing relationship to develop and in the interests of protecting the service user, it is hoped that a volunteer could commit to at least 6 months. There is no maximum length and many volunteers will befriend a service user for many years.

## How Frequently Will I Take Someone Out?

The first visit should be approximately 1 hour. After the first visit, a 1 hour visit once a week is the recommended length and frequency. As the relationship develops, volunteers may wish to visit a service user less or more frequently or for longer than 1 hour. We ask the volunteer to inform the Organiser of any changes, which must be discussed and agreed with the Organiser and the service user.

## Who Will I Befriend/Take Out?

Service users are usually referred to us by Social Services or Health professionals. We also take referrals from friends, neighbours and sometimes the service users themselves. Service users whom we befriend come from all different walks of life and may face a wide range of issues. All of our service users live in the Forest Hill & Sydenham area.

## How Are We Introduced?

Organisers will arrange the first visit. Volunteers are issued with an id card or given a letter. You will be asked to take this with you on your first visit as proof of your identity. The Organiser will phone both the volunteer and the service user after the visit to see how this went.

The Organiser is here to support you in your voluntary

work and therefore welcomes feedback whether it is about any concerns you may have or just keeping up to date on your progress.

## Volunteer's Responsibilities

As a wheelchair pushing befriending volunteer for VSL you will be expected to;

- Agree to abide by the Equality and Diversity Policy of the VSL.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Be punctual: if you are unable to keep an appointment, you should inform the service user or VSL in good time (48 hours in advance when possible).
- Inform the organiser of any concerns that arise.
- Where possible, attend all relevant training and support sessions, including initial wheelchair pushing training.
- Allow the service user to talk whilst you 'listen actively'.
- Develop a trusting relationship to support and, where appropriate, enable the service user to pursue social activities and life skills.
- Engage in friendly conversation. It is important not to impose your opinions and beliefs on the service user.
- Respect others' views.
- Be able to communicate clearly and effectively.
- Inform the Organiser of any unattended appointments
- Inform the Organiser of any change to the length, frequency or nature of visits. (changes need to be agreed by VSL for monitoring and insurance purposes)
- Be sensitive to the needs of service users who are in wheelchairs and attend wheelchair pushing training offered by the VSL.
- Comply with relevant Health & Safety regulations.

Reviewed February 2013