

What is a Carer?

A Carer is someone of any age who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help. Carers often experience stress, loneliness and isolation, they can find it difficult to go out because they cannot leave the person they look after on their own.

What we do

We support unpaid Carers in East Sussex to continue in their caring role by providing free, high quality, volunteer-led services that encourage independence and reduce isolation.

Our services include

Regular Respite Breaks: Giving Carers the opportunity to have some time to them self, building a long-term befriending relationship with the cared for person.

Respite for Healthcare: Enabling Carers to attend their own healthcare appointments by sitting with the cared for person while they go.

Carer's Companion: Providing companionship for both the carer and/or the person they look after within the carer's home.

Telephone Support: Providing Carers with a listening ear and the opportunity to discuss their caring role in confidence.

Computer Help at Home: Teaching Carers to use their computer in ways that will help them to have more time to themselves and reduce their isolation.

Young Carers Befriending: Giving Young Carers the opportunity to take a break from their caring role.

What does a Carer's Companion Volunteer do?

A Carer's Companion Volunteer help reduce isolation and loneliness by spending time with both the carer and/or the person they look after. We try to match each volunteer with a family that they share similar interests with, giving the relationship the best opportunity to be beneficial and long lasting.

Scenario One:

Sometimes it is difficult for the carer to go out and leave the person they look after, because they have personal care needs, for example, needing assistance to go to the toilet.

The volunteer spends time with the cared for person while the carer has a lie down, spends time in the garden or enjoys any other activity that can take place in the home environment. This means that if the person they look after needs support with their personal care needs, the volunteer can easily let the carer know.

Scenario Two:

The person that is being looked after refuses our respite and befriending service, this can be because they do not like the idea of having someone coming to 'look after them'.

The volunteer will have a cup of tea and chat with the carer and initially not have much interaction with the person they look after. However, over time it is hoped that the cared for person will begin to accept the volunteer, enabling the carer to have a rest, or go out in the garden. If the volunteer is able to develop a positive relationship with the cared for person, it is hoped that the carer will start to be able to leave house, building up gradually to a three-hour break.

Scenario Three:

Sometimes the carer would really like to be able to go out with the person they look after, but are unable to do this without support.

The volunteer will be able to take the carer and the person they look after out. This might be to a garden centre, the cinema, theatre or for a meal. This could be during the day, in the evening or at the weekend.

Skills/Qualifications needed

The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for our volunteer's wellbeing. Our volunteers need to be:

- Patient and understanding
- Good at communicating and listening
- Able to treat people with respect
- Confident in a crisis
- Understanding of what it means to look after someone
- Able to attend induction and training sessions

Where does the volunteering role usually take place?

Volunteers usually spend time at the Carer's home on the same day and at the same time each week. Sometimes the role may involve going out with the carer and the person they look after to take part in an activity.

What is the induction process for volunteers?

We ask our volunteers to complete an application form, provide two references and meet us for an informal chat. We also carry out a DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) check as our volunteers work with people who are considered vulnerable. Following this, volunteers attend a one day induction, which helps them to:

- Understand more about the Association and the support it provides to Carers
- Understand what it means to be a Carer and the impact caring has on people's lives
- Feel confident in a variety of situations
- Gain an awareness of health and safety
- Learn how to be safe when lone working

What training are volunteers provided with?

We ask all our volunteers to attend Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and First Aid training. In addition to this they can also attend other relevant training throughout the year, for example;

- Dementia/Stroke and Parkinson's Awareness
- Basic listening and counselling and bereavement skills

What support do we offer our volunteers?

- We encourage our volunteers to call us or pop in to one of our offices if they need a chat, advice, or have any concerns
- We accompany new volunteers the first time they go to visit the cared for person
- If volunteers are unable to drive we find them a volunteer driver or arrange a taxi
- We reimburse expenses incurred while volunteering, for example, travel