

Stories of Active Volunteering

Community transport

Volunteers are a key resource for community transport services. Transport services can make an enormous difference to many older people or people with disabilities who may be isolated at home.

How can volunteers assist community transport clients to stay active and independent?

This might sound like a strange question. Often, people using community transport have mobility restrictions – they may use a walker or walking stick. They may have limited vision or hearing. After all – that’s why some people use community transport services.

However – it is important to remember there are many ways to help people remain active and independent.



In transport, some simple ideas include:

- Allow people to do up their own seat belts rather than doing it for them.
- Facilitate interesting conversations with everyone on board as part of the trip.
- Have a quick quiz during the trip.
- Prompt people to observe their surroundings as they travel along.

- Rather than putting a client's legs in the vehicle if they are a bit slow, allow them time to swing their legs in if they are physically capable.

Why are these actions important?

In each case, these actions:

- Allow people to take more control for themselves – this helps self-confidence.
- Allow people to stay involved and connected – intellectual stimulation and social connections are both vital for good health.
- Allow people to keep active in looking after themselves. If people can maintain the ability to get themselves into a vehicle, it is likely to be easier for them to transported by car with family or friends.

Some questions for volunteers to ask

It is important to be clear about what is and is not safe for clients. This will be recorded in a client's care plan. Ask your supervisor:

- What can this person do?
- What does this person need assistance to do?
- In (the person's) care plan, what are their goals?

When you are working with the client, ask them:

- Can you do ...?
- How can I help you to do ... yourself?
- How would you like me to help you with...(this task or activity)?
- Are you comfortable doing this?

What else can volunteers do?

Allowing people time to complete the task can be a fantastic support that volunteers can provide.

Volunteers can be great observers – is the person doing better than previously? Let them know you noticed! Does the person seem to be struggling a bit today? Check with the person and see if there is an explanation. Let your supervisor know how the person is travelling.

For further discussion

- What are some other tasks that you can encourage transport clients to do for themselves?
- What are some good discussion starters for passengers on the bus?