

Stories of Active Volunteering

Community transport

Volunteers are a key resource for community transport services. Transport services can make an enormous difference to people who may feel isolated at home or unable to get out on their own by helping them connect to their community and be socially engaged.



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 and use walking aids. They may have limited vision or hearing or other conditions such as arthritis. After all – these are some of the reasons people use community transport.

However, it is important to remember there are many ways for volunteers to assist people accessing community transport to remain active and independent.

With community transport, some simple ideas include:

- > Allow people to access their seats and 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.
- > Have an understanding of what clients can and can't do for themselves. Ask them if they can do something themselves – such as swinging their legs in the vehicle. If they can do it, allow them time to do so. If not, ask how you can best assist them.

Why are these actions important?

In each case, if you have an understanding of each client's strengths and needs then these actions:

- > allow people to take more control for themselves – this helps self-confidence
- > allow people to stay involved and connected – mental 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 travel by car with family or friends.

Some questions for volunteers to ask

It is important to be clear about what support you can provide in relation to your role when working with the client. Ask your supervisor:

- > What can this person do?
- > What does this person need assistance to do?
- > What are their goals in their plan?

When you are working with the client, ask them:

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

What else can volunteers do?

Volunteers can provide people with fantastic support by allowing them time to complete the task themselves.

Volunteers can be great observers – is the person doing better than before? Let them know you noticed! Does the person seem to be struggling a bit today? Check with them and see if there is an explanation. Monitoring and regular feedback ensures that the client's plan is relevant to the clients changing circumstances. Let your supervisor know how the person is travelling.

For further discussion

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