

What qualities does a volunteer need?

- Good listening skills
- Someone who enjoys the company of others
- Someone with 1-2 hours a week to spare
- Someone who is prepared to make this a commitment
- Someone who speaks good English. If English is not your first language we may be able to match you with a client who speaks your native language, but you do also need to have a good understanding of English to participate in our training programme.

Is a volunteer trained?

Volunteers attend a comprehensive training course given by a speech language therapist and a co-ordinator.

Ongoing training is offered. These sessions are also an opportunity for problem solving and peer support.

Support is given by your co-ordinator throughout your involvement with the Scheme.

Clinical guidance is available from the speech language therapist responsible for your client.



LOST FOR WORDS: A volunteer can help build confidence with every day communication.

Are there any benefits for the volunteer?

Opportunities for the volunteer include:

- Personal growth—understanding others helps you to understand yourself
- Learning about the impact that stroke can have on people's lives
- Training in communication skills
- The satisfaction of seeing someone grow in confidence and independence with your help and support.

How do I find out more?

To find out more about this exciting opportunity please phone the Volunteer Stroke Scheme on: (09) 441 8959 ext. 3012 and ask to speak to one of our co-ordinators.

Volunteer Stroke Scheme

Street address:
Te Whare Karaka
9 Karaka Street
Takapuna

Postal address:
Private Bag 93 503
Takapuna
North Shore 0740

Phone: (09) 441 8959 ext 43012
www.waitematadhb.govt.nz



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Volunteer Stroke Scheme

For people whose communication is impaired by stroke

What you need to know

What is the Volunteer Stroke Scheme?

The Volunteer Stroke Scheme (VSS) is a unique and specialised service, helping people who have communication difficulties following a stroke.

Through the use of trained volunteers we give our clients the opportunity to experience effective communication and social interaction.

Trained communication partners function as a 'communication ramp' to enable clients to participate more easily in social and community life.

Clients referred to the Scheme may either receive one-to-one visits from a volunteer and/or attend a communication group.

Research has shown that using trained volunteers in this way can increase confidence in communication, reduce social isolation, improve self-esteem and encourage reintegration into other social activities.

The scheme has been running in Auckland since 1982. Similar schemes exist in the UK, Canada and Australia and we continue to foster close international links.

Waitemata District Health Board is contracted to run the VSS for the Auckland region from Wellsford to Port Waikato. The VSS is part of the Older Adults & Home Health section of Waitemata DHB.

The service is free.

To access the Scheme people must first be assessed and referred by a qualified speech language therapist. Co-ordinators then carefully match volunteers and the people who have had a stroke.

How is communication affected?

A stroke can affect communication in one or more of the following ways:

Dysarthria

Weakened muscles make speech sound slurred/ indistinct.

Aphasia

- Difficulty recalling words or knowing how to say them
- Using the wrong (or made up) words
- Misunderstanding the meaning of words – this may come across as difficulty hearing
- Spontaneously repeating the same words or phrases
- Difficulty reading; understanding words and/or reading words aloud
- Difficulty spelling words
- Difficulty understanding or saying numbers eg dates, time, money.

These communication difficulties can result in frustration, embarrassment and a sense of isolation.

Eventually this can lead to withdrawal from social interaction.

Volunteers are very valuable at this time, providing a supportive and positive environment for communication.

How can a volunteer help?

One-to-One matches

This involves volunteers visiting someone with communication difficulties once a week. Most matches are set up to enable practice of everyday communication skills, usually conversation. Occasionally volunteers may be asked to practice specific therapy tasks with clients.

Communication groups

Volunteers can also work as a communication group facilitator. Groups of six to eight clients meet for 1 ½ hours a week during school terms.

