

Qualities needed to be a volunteer

- Good listening skills.
- Enjoys the company of others.
- Has 1-2 hours a week to spare.
- Is prepared to make this a regular commitment.
- Is fluent in English. If English is not your first language we may be able to match you with a person who speaks your language. You do need to have a good understanding of English to participate in our training programme.

Volunteer training

- 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 and speech language therapist throughout your involvement with the Scheme.



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

The benefits of being a volunteer

Opportunities for the volunteer include:

- Learning about the impact that stroke can have on people's lives.
- Training in communication skills.
- Making new connections in the community.
- The satisfaction of seeing someone grow in confidence and independence with your help and support.

What conversation partners have to say

"I struggle to talk to people every day. She is someone I can talk to"

"She waits for me to get my story"

"It's a challenge but I like it, always interesting"

To find out more about this exciting opportunity please phone the Volunteer Stroke Scheme on: (09) 487-1513 and speak to the co-ordinator.

Volunteer Stroke Scheme

Street address: Te Whare Karaka

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Waitematā
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone

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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 specialized service helping people who have communication difficulties following a stroke to participate in conversation and social interaction.

To access the Scheme people are assessed by a community speech language therapist. Co-ordinators carefully match volunteers with people who have communication difficulties following a stroke.

People referred to the Scheme may either receive one-to-one visits from a volunteer and/or attend a communication group. This is a free service.

Research has shown that using trained volunteers to help people with communication difficulties following stroke can increase confidence in communication, reduce social isolation, improve self-esteem and encourage participation in other social activities.

The Scheme has been running in Auckland since 1982. Similar schemes exist in the UK, Canada and Australia.

Waitematā DHB is contracted to run the VSS for the Auckland region from Wellsford to Port Waikato. The VSS is part of the Allied Health Service of Waitematā DHB.

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 a made up) word
- Misunderstanding the meaning of words – this may come across as difficulty hearing
- Unintentionally repeating the same words or phrases
- Difficulty reading, understanding words and/or reading words aloud
- Difficulty spelling words
- Difficulty understanding or saying numbers e.g. dates, time, money.

These communication difficulties can result in frustration and embarrassment and make holding a conversation very challenging.

Eventually this can lead to social isolation as new and old friendships become difficult to maintain.

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 the person with communication difficulties once a week to support them to participate in social conversation.

Communication Groups

Volunteers can also work as a communication facilitator. Groups of 6 to 8 people with communication difficulties following stroke meet for 1 ½ hours a week during school terms.

