

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.
- We welcome volunteers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. Our training is delivered in English.

Volunteer training

- Volunteers attend a comprehensive introductory training course given by a speech language therapist and a volunteer 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.



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

9 Karaka Street, Takapuna

Private Bag 93503

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Te Whatu Ora

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Volunteer Stroke Scheme

For people whose
communication is affected 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, to participate in conversation and social interaction. This is a free service.

To access the Scheme people are assessed by a community speech language therapist. Co-ordinators then 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.

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 United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Waitematā is contracted to run the scheme for the Auckland region from Wellsford to Port Waikato. The VSS is part of the Allied Health service.

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 empowering environment for communication.

How can a volunteer help?

One-to-One Matches

A volunteer visits 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 group facilitator. Groups of 6 to 8 people with communication difficulties following stroke meet for 1½ hours a week during school terms.

