

## Notes for Referrers

Welcome to Communicare in Southampton. We are a local charity which aims to match volunteers with people who need help in Southampton. Our 'Communiters' are kind-hearted local people who want to help reduce loneliness and isolation within our city. They are not trained support workers and so we have written these guidelines to help explain what help we may be able to give and what help we cannot give.

Please call our office on 023 8250 0050 if you would like to ask any questions or to discuss whether we are likely to be able to help.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Can you give me a start date for help?** Unfortunately we can't give a definite answer as to whether we will be able to find a volunteer or a start date for help because our Communiters are volunteers and sometimes no one is available. For on-going help we aim to match people who will enjoy each other's company rather than just working down a list. Unfortunately we do have a long waiting list at the moment especially for people who smoke.

**How much does it cost?** We do not charge but are grateful for donations from clients especially for transport, DIY and shopping. We expect clients to pay for any materials needed for DIY tasks and for parking charges and toll bridge fees when they are with a volunteer or if the volunteer is driving on their behalf.

**How does transport work?:** Communiters use their own vehicles and so can only take people who can get in and out of a car with minimal assistance. Some, but not all, drivers can take folding walkers and folding wheelchairs.

Our volunteer drivers tell us when they are available to be asked to help, they don't sign up for shifts. Therefore we can't say whether or not we can help when transport is requested. We will look for a driver and then contact the service user to say whether or not we can help. We can't always find a volunteer who is able to help.

### **What help can't Communicare Give?**

**Communiters are not trained councillors or support workers** and cannot help people with severe mental health issues (unless they have been stable for some time and are expected to remain so) or challenging behaviour who really need trained support workers. *We have a duty of care to protect our volunteers from emotional as well as physical harm.*

**Communiters cannot help with personal care** such as washing, toileting or dressing or administering medication nor can they usually take responsibility for people who cannot be safely left alone (for example someone with advanced dementia).

**Communiters cannot give legal advice or advice on filling in benefit forms.**

**Communiters cannot be responsible for passing medical or personal information** between medics and family or carers.

**Communiters cannot offer routine / regular cleaning.** We may be able to provide short term help in specific circumstances.

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**Communitesters cannot help clear homes for people with hoarding disorders** as this requires specialist training.

**DIY/Gardening:** Communitesters cannot do any DIY which needs a qualification such as electrical or plumbing work. They cannot work on roofs, guttering or paint outside above the ground floor level. We do not own vans and so we can't take large or heavy items to the tip.

### **What help can you give?**

This is an outline of the types of help we regularly give. We may be able to help with other things too – give us a call and ask.

**Face to Face Befriending:** We will aim to match people who are lonely or isolated and cannot go out alone with a volunteer who will visit them at home regularly for a chat or perhaps take them out for coffee or another activity. Our befrienders usually visit once a week or once a fortnight. We can sometimes help isolated young families with twins or several children under 5 by matching them with a volunteer who will help them get out to groups or the park and provide a listening ear for overstretched parents.

**Telephone Befriending:** We will match people with a volunteer who will phone them for a friendly chat. Calls are usually weekly and generally last between 20 and 40 minutes. Volunteers use their own phones to call so service users phones must accept unknown numbers.

**Hello Southampton:** This is our telephone 'check in' service. People can have up to 5 calls a week during weekday mornings from our friendly team. We expect calls to last up to 10 minutes. These calls are usually for people who live alone or as a couple where both people need support. If the service user is able to provide us with an emergency contact we can let that person know if the call isn't answered.

**Shopping:** We can often help with one-off shopping such as shopping for someone who has recently come out of hospital. We have a waiting list for help with regular shopping, either shopping for someone or going with them. Because we are a volunteer service it is important people have a 'back up plan' for times when we can't help. Volunteers cannot take a chip and pin card so clients will need to have cash or a pre-paid card/vouchers.

**Transport:** We will look for a volunteer to help people get to social groups or medical appointments if they can't use public transport and don't qualify for hospital transport. We need to have at least 2 working days' notice for transport and will let people know whether or not we have been able to find a driver.

**Hospital Homecoming:** Our homecoming project provides short term help for people who have recently been discharged from hospital. We may be able to help with shopping, errands, light cleaning, simple meal prep or just have a chat.

**DIY/Gardening/Decorating:** Our volunteers can often help with small DIY tasks such as changing light bulbs, assembling flat pack furniture, fitting a grab rail, tidying a garden or decorating a room. We have a long waiting list for ongoing gardening help.

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**Other help:** We can often help with errands such as collecting a prescription and simple paperwork especially for people who have full mental capacity but struggle to read or fill in a form due to poor sight or shaky hands.