

Volunteering for your Surgery

By volunteering for your local Surgery you provide a valuable service to your community, utilise skills you already have and learn new ones. You meet new people, get together with other volunteers and are offered different training opportunities if you are interested.

Through your volunteering lonely and isolated **patients benefit** by:

- Getting to their Surgery / hospital appointments on time.
- Having someone to talk to and feeling supported and cared for.
- Having someone to help with minor practical tasks.
- Having someone to visit them during a hospital stay.
- Having someone to encourage them to meet new people and try new activities.
- Having someone to take them out for a cup of tea.
- Having someone who is interested to hear their life stories.
- Having someone who visits them because they want to and not because they get paid for it.
- Having a reason to get up, wash and get dressed for.

Loneliness and social isolation are harmful to our health: research shows that lacking social connections is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Social networks and friendships not only have an impact on reducing the risk of mortality or developing certain diseases, but they also help individuals to recover when they do fall ill.

Through your volunteering **your Surgery benefits** by:

- Reducing non-attendance for Surgery appointments – you are helping their patients to keep their appointments by getting them to the Surgery.
- Reducing GPs' and Nurses' home visits as you can bring their patients to them.
- Reducing patients' social visits to the Surgery by offering lonely and isolated patients another sympathetic, listening ear.
- Possibly helping to cut down on prescriptions for depression and anxiety.
- Helping to keep lonely and isolated older people physically active and mentally engaged and thereby prolonging their physical independence and emotional good health.

Through volunteering (for your Surgery) **you benefit** by:

- Having the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped someone who has become lonely and isolated to again be part of society.
- Being a valued team member of your Surgery.
- Being part of new social networks
- Meeting a diverse range of people.
- Having the chance to 'give something back' to your Surgery and to your Community.
- Having a sense of motivation, purpose and achievement
- Using your own life experience by extending practical and emotional support to those facing challenges with which you might be familiar.
- Learning new skills and gaining new experiences.
- Gaining new interests and hobbies.
- Increasing your self-confidence.
- Having a very good reason to keep going (bereavement, unemployment, redundancy, retirement...)
- Better health in later years, greater levels of well being, lower rates of depression and increased strength and energy.
- Being seen as a valued partner and given professional development opportunities.

Research shows that staying active and volunteering has positive physical and mental health benefits and that volunteers live longer!!

Volunteers experience increased brain activity (measured by MRI) and the preservation of cognitive function.

Volunteering should be fun and bring you fulfilment!

Helping others kindles happiness!

Volunteering can help solve community problems, but simultaneously enhances the health of the growing number of older adults!