

ACTIVITY SUPPORT STARTER PACK

What is an Activity Support Volunteer?

The aim of the Activity Support Volunteer is to create or extend someone's own personal social network of support. The scheme works on the principle that all of us need people in our lives that we feel are special to us. This may include family, friends, colleagues and neighbours or anyone else we can think of that's important to our own individual support and social network. Unfortunately sometimes this network may become limited or in some cases lost completely. It can be that the nature and length of a person's mental ill health has gradually confined them to their own home with the result that they start to lose that important contact with the outside world. That person may also feel themselves becoming increasingly withdrawn and isolated with almost no social network, hobbies or interests.

The service exists to support adults aged from 17 to 65 years living within the Colchester and Tendring districts who are experiencing or have experienced mental health problems. It may be that someone has a long standing involvement with the community mental health teams or as is sometimes the case, under their own GP experiencing a period of mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety.

The role of an activity support volunteer is broad. Every person has individual needs so an introduction to a volunteer must and does reflect this. Activities are negotiated between the individual and the activity support volunteer.

Typical activities include:

- Meeting for a coffee.
- Going for walks.
- Going to the cinema.
- Fishing.
- Visiting for a chat for example at their local shops, café or park etc.
- Going to a sports facility.

Mid and North Essex Mind can only fund the volunteer's travel expenses. Any other costs involved must be paid for by yourself and/or the volunteer. A discussion about this will take place during the first meeting, once you are matched with an activity support volunteer.



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How long can you have an Activity Support Volunteer for?

This will depend on both the individual and the volunteer, we have three monthly reviews to see how things are progressing.

Activity support is:

- Spending time together.
- Giving individual attention and support.
- Helping people to help themselves.
- Encouraging choice.
- Being a good listener.
- Helping to reduce social isolation.
- Having fun.

Activity support is not:

- Trying to solve all problems.
- Making judgements about lifestyle and behaviour.
- Counselling or therapy.
- Being a babysitter, home help or a driver.
- Giving advice that is not asked for.
- Creating a dependency.

Activity support helps as:

- Self-confidence is raised.
- Trust is built.
- Isolation is reduced.
- Independence is increased.
- Involvement in new activities within their own communities.
- Decision making is promoted.
- Relationships with family/carers/professionals can improve.

For more information on activity support or to become an activity support volunteer please contact us by email at enquiries@mnessexmind.org or by phone, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, on 01206 754500.

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