



Essex
Wellbeing Service

Your One Stop Shop for Wellbeing Support in Essex



Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome and a big thank you for your kindness

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with the Essex Wellbeing Service.

Volunteering remains central to the culture of the organisation and by selflessly donating your time you are helping to improve the life of so many people throughout Essex.

Your involvement as a volunteer, as an Essex Wellbeing Service representative in the local community, also provides the opportunity for you to let people know we are here and highlight the services on offer.

We aim to make volunteers feel valued, useful and proud to be part of the service. This handbook is designed to provide a basic overview of the roles on offer along with guidance related to volunteering. Please read and keep it somewhere safe to refer to if needed.

If you have any questions about the information in the handbook or during your time volunteering with us, please contact the volunteer facilitator who will be more than happy to help you.

Thank you once again for deciding to make a difference.



Volunteer Roles

Volunteer roles have been devised to assist with the most frequently requested services throughout Essex. Please note this is not a definitive list and the option to remove or add volunteer roles is constantly reviewed by existing volunteers alongside the wellbeing team at EWS.

The notes below have been drafted to give an overview of some of the most common roles undertaken by volunteers. They outline both what is expected of the role and also what should not be asked of you as a volunteer.

To provide the best support for service users, we would ask that volunteers:

- ❖ understand the need for client confidentiality
- ❖ are comfortable working on their own
- ❖ are confident relying on their own initiative/common sense but also know when to seek help
- ❖ are reliable and punctual
- ❖ are non-judgmental
- ❖ are able to communicate well with others and be a good listener
- ❖ have a capacity for empathy and be able to manage their own wellbeing

Please note that it is extremely important that you do not give a client your personal contact details. If calling a client is either part of the role (phone buddy) or your preferred method of contact for arrangement purposes, please remember to withhold your number before making the call. If you choose to communicate in writing, please use the mail facility within the Priority Me system – you can not withhold a number when texting from your mobile phone.



Volunteer Roles

Phone Buddy

One-to-one, non-judgmental conversation with someone who is lonely and/or socially isolated. Volunteers phone their client to talk about interests and things that are going on in the community and/or their lives. Frequency and length of the conversation is organised to fit in with the volunteer's availability however once a week for up to an hour is the most common arrangement. This role is for those able to commit to a slightly longer term arrangement thereby providing the client with a sense of stability and allowing time for trust to build.

What the role should not involve

It is hugely important that clear boundaries are set in the initial talks between a client and their volunteer. A phone buddy is not expected to commit to anything other than a telephone call at the agreed time so the client should not request your involvement in any other area of their life. A phone buddy is on hand to listen and offer a supportive relationship which aims to encourage independence, confidence and self-esteem. A phone buddy is not someone for the service user to become dependent on or place in a predicament with regards to emotional behaviour. Should you notice any breach of these boundaries or calls become uncomfortable for you, please let Essex Wellbeing Service know straight away.

Garden Guest/ Doorstep Buddy

As per the telephone befriender role above however volunteers meet their client face-to-face in the client's garden. This role can only be carried out if the location permits social-distancing guidelines to be observed.

Shopping Buddy

Shopping with someone who may be nervous about going out alone. A volunteer in this role provides support with the long term aim of the clients regaining their independence and confidence. The frequency and length of the shopping trip is organised to fit in with the volunteer's availability.

What the role should not involve

Accompanying a client to the shops should not be considered a long term arrangement; ideally a timeframe (perhaps 2-4 weeks) should be agreed so that client expectations are managed. The purpose of a shopping trip, for this role, is to allow the purchase of essential items or to conduct important errands which may include visiting a bank, post office etc. Clients should not expect volunteers to have an unlimited amount of time available to conduct shopping of a 'browsing' nature.

Gardening and outside maintenance

Support with light garden maintenance for someone who needs simple jobs carried out such as grass cutting, hedge pruning and weeding. Jobs should relate to volunteers maintaining an already manageable garden. It is for the client and volunteer to agree who will supply tools and what tasks will be undertaken. A volunteer is always able to decline assistance upon seeing the garden and/or tools. The frequency and length of support is organised to fit in with the volunteer's availability.

What the role should not involve

The purpose of this role, is to allow the client continued and safe enjoyment of their outside space. Clients should not expect volunteers to completely overhaul, transform or landscape an area. If a client arrives and is faced with a task that could fall into any of these categories, please inform Essex Wellbeing Service.

Volunteer Roles

Walking Buddy

Walking with someone who may be nervous about going out alone or requires additional motivation with regards to their health. A volunteer in this role provides support and aids confidence. The location, frequency and length of the walk is organised to fit in with the volunteer's availability however it is strongly advised that walks should take place in an area local to the client.

What the role should not involve

Clients that request a walking buddy should be able to walk unaided by another person. The purpose of going for a walk, in this role, is to provide support so the client can access fresh air and maintain fitness. Clients should not expect volunteers to have an unlimited amount of time available to walk without a planned route or timescale.

Dog Walking

Walking a dog for someone who is temporarily unable to do so themselves. A volunteer in this role needs to be advised on the dog's temperament before arrangements are made. Upon arrival at the client's home, an additional assessment of the dog is to be carried out by the volunteer and only when they are 100% comfortable, would the walk begin. The location, frequency and length of the walk is organised to fit in with the volunteer's availability.

What the role should not involve

The purpose of dog walking, in this role, is to provide support so a client is able to keep their canine companion fit and healthy whilst they are physically unable to do so. This should not be considered a long-term option, it is to assist clients through periods of ill-health or recovery. Volunteers who identify a long term expectation should notify the Essex Wellbeing Service.



Volunteer Roles

Tech Buddy (including assistance with online food shopping)

Remote assistance from volunteer to enable use of a device such as a smartphone or laptop. Requests for tuition should be based upon facilitating primary uses such as being able to make calls, send texts and e-mails and use online shopping services. As a result of increased technological knowledge, clients should want to build their own independence. Tuition is structured in line with the volunteer's experience and will progress in line with the client's pace of learning. The frequency and length of support is organised to fit in with the volunteer's availability.

What the role should not involve

Clients that request tech assistance must already have access to a device that is fit for purpose. Client's should not be asking for assistance outside of the agreed tuition time.

Food Shopping

Completing a food shop for someone who is unable to visit a shop for themselves. A shop is expected to be for essential items, of no more than £30 in total spend and of a weekly frequency (or less). A shop will be organised to fit in with the volunteer's availability and often the client is called beforehand to confirm items and agree procedure with regards to no stock or substitute situations. Client can pay volunteer with cash but if reimbursement/payment involves the use of a debit card/online banking, then a community agent will be involved to support.

What the role should not involve

Client's should not be requesting a shop that is unmanageable for a volunteer in terms of size/weight of items. If a volunteer identifies that a client is able to shop for themselves it should be highlighted to the Essex Wellbeing Service as an alternative role such as shopping buddy may be more suited to the situation.

Volunteer FAQs

How much of my time will I be expected to offer?

This is a personal decision driven by what you are comfortable with. There are volunteering opportunities that take one hour per month, some an hour a week and others a few times per week. We want to enable a flexible approach however certain roles like befriending require building up trust with someone so by nature, require a longer term commitment. We only ask that you carefully consider the amount of time you are able to give before choosing your role.

Can I stop volunteering if I don't enjoy it?

Yes, of course. You are under no obligation to continue as a volunteer if you find it's not a good fit however it is always worth talking to somebody before stepping away. You could discuss the situation with the volunteer facilitator, explaining why you feel unhappy and highlighting what you feel would improve your time as a volunteer. Speaking with fellow volunteers can also be helpful and sharing experiences, especially if you are new to volunteering, can be a great source of support.

Do you pay expenses?

If you undertake a shopping role and agree to pay upfront for your client's items, you will be linked to a community agent who will guide you through the reimbursement process. Aside from this, there are no other roles where payment or reimbursement is made. The Priority Me platform supports personal preferences and there is an option to set your travel distance. We do not want volunteers to incur excessive travel costs so urge that you set your radius in line with what is comfortable for you.

Can I volunteer from home?

The role of Phone Buddy or Facebook Friend can be conducted from home without issue.



Volunteer FAQs

Do I need any qualifications?

There are no core volunteer roles within EWS that require a qualification. It is more important that volunteers possess a wide range of social skills rather than academic ability. Good communication, patience, reliability and empathy are some of the key skills preferred however people often find that they strengthen these qualities throughout their volunteer experience.

How are people assessed for the service?

A team of care navigators at the Essex Wellbeing Service ask potential service users a number of questions to ascertain whether they require the help of EWS or would be more suited to an alternative service. Questions asked are dependent on the type of support they have requested but may include whether people have any support available from family, friends and/or neighbours, if they are able to go out unaided and if they can they use the internet. It is important to remember that care navigators make decisions based upon the response they receive from the client and this may not always reflect the situation when the volunteer begins to support. It is therefore imperative that volunteers notify EWS should they identify a job whereby their support may not be required as suggested. The integrity of the service depends heavily on client interaction and highlighting these cases allows volunteer resource to be allocated to those most vulnerable.

I have a question that hasn't been covered, how do I find the answer?

If you have a question that relates to a specific case involving a client, you must call the Essex Wellbeing Service on 0300 303 9988. If your question is more general with regards to a role or hypothetical situation, you can contact the volunteer facilitator or access the official EWS volunteer group which is active on Facebook.

Some Do's and Don'ts for Volunteers

- ✓ **Do** keep any personal information secure; treat other people's information in the same way you would want yours to be treated.
- ✓ **Do** keep to any arrangements you have made. If you cannot make an appointment, let the person you are assisting know in plenty of time.
- ✓ **Do** try and take note of someone's general wellbeing. As a volunteer, communicating with someone directly can give an insight into how they are on a much wider level. **If you notice any concerning change, please let EWS know as soon as is reasonably possible.**
- ✓ **Do** respect everyone you communicate with.
- ✓ **Do** enjoy your time volunteering with us and tell us how to make it even better.
- ✓ **Don't** share your personal contact details with anyone you are supporting, always withhold your phone number.
- ✓ **Don't** discuss personal details of any sort outside your volunteering role; confidentiality is very important.
- × **Don't** over commit yourself, you must keep yourself emotionally healthy.
- × **Don't** accept gifts from people you support.
- × **Don't** be afraid to raise concerns. It is better to raise a concern and for it to be nothing, than not raise the concern at all.



Covid 19 Guidance

Due to the nature of COVID-19 we are only asking people who are physically well and able to safely carry out tasks to volunteer. As much as you may wish to help, please do not under any circumstances volunteer if you should be self-isolating. This means if you or some one you live with has or develops any symptoms including a temperature, persistent cough or other flu like symptoms, or you are in one of the high risk categories.

Further details can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

For those who are fit and well and able to volunteer you must always follow social distancing requirements and take all the precautions you can to reduce social interaction between you and other people including:

- Avoid contact with anyone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Always stay at least 2 metres away from other people when out
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
- Avoid any large or small gatherings of more than 2 people
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP, 111 or other essential services

For more information see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Covid 19 Guidance

The latest information and guidance relating to COVID 19 can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Please remember, no matter what role you volunteer for you must:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before volunteering
- Take sanitiser gel with you and use as and when appropriate when you don't have access to soap and water and washing facilities
- Always wash your hands when you get home from volunteering
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the nearest bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

When helping individuals please only offer to help for the tasks you feel comfortable doing and are able to do safely. When helping local people you need to make sure that if you become unwell you must not continue to volunteer; you need to protect yourself and not put others at risk.



Health & Safety

General Guidance

The Essex Wellbeing Service has a duty of care for the health and safety of people who volunteer. The service, as far as reasonably possible, will assess the hazards and risks faced by volunteers whilst carrying out a task and act to control those risks to an acceptable level. It is, however, everyone's responsibility to be alert to any potential hazard around the people they are involved with or the buildings they visit. We would ask that volunteers take reasonable care for themselves and for others who might be affected by their activities. All accidents, incidents, injuries and near misses must be reported to EWS. If a volunteer considers any element of their task a risk to health and safety, it is very important that they inform the service.

Lone Working

Lone working refers to volunteering without close or direct supervision. When accepting a task where you will be at a location never visited before:

- Ensure that your acceptance of a job is visible within the Priority Me system
- Ensure that your phone is charged and within easy reach
- Wherever possible, inform someone that you are carrying out a voluntary role for EWS and give them an expected timeframe for completion of your job
- When arriving to complete a task, if you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not hesitate to leave and notify EWS

A copy of our full health and safety policy can be requested at any time.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding vulnerable adults is an essential part of our work. As an EWS volunteer it is very likely that you will be supporting older or vulnerable people and it is our duty to keep you and the people you are supporting as safe as possible.

Safeguarding is taking a common sense approach to keeping vulnerable people safe from harm however volunteers should never investigate safeguarding issues themselves.

When to raise a concern

If you feel that someone is being treated unfairly, you suspect someone is being hurt or threatened or if someone discloses that they have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed, you have a legal obligation to tell the Essex Wellbeing Service.

If someone discloses information to you remember:

- Do not promise to keep the information to yourself
- Re-assure them that telling someone was the right thing but let them know that you have to pass the information on for their own safety
- You may also need to write down, as accurately as possible, what they told you

Never be afraid to raise concerns. It is better to raise a concern and for it to be nothing, than not raise the concern at all.

A copy of our full safeguarding policy can be requested at any time.



Data Protection & Confidentiality

Access to Personal Information

British data protection law sets out some very clear rules about how people's information should be handled. These rules are part of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and The General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR). The GDPR sets out the standards expected of anyone who has access to records of personal or sensitive information. People trust EWS to store and use their information with the appropriate consideration and all our staff and volunteers are expected to treat such data with confidentiality. A copy of our full GDPR policy can be requested at any time.

Social Media

We use social media throughout the organisation. For the Essex Wellbeing Service, it's a great way of contacting lots of people when we're recruiting, when we support volunteers and to raise awareness ensuring that as many people as possible know all about our work. A lot of our volunteers, supporters and staff are on social media too, sharing information about EWS as well as their personal lives. Whilst we recognise that the internet provides a range of fantastic opportunities to participate in discussions and share information, we ask that everyone be mindful of the following:

- Whatever you write online can be made public regardless of your privacy settings
- Never disclose confidential information about EWS, its staff, volunteers and most importantly, its service users
- Be courteous and respectful of other people and their views even if different to your own

More about the Essex Wellbeing Service

Essex Wellbeing Service supports all Essex residents over the age of 18 with easy access and referral to all the wellbeing services they need. The service is commissioned by Essex County Council and delivered by Provide CIC in partnership with a range of local organisations - a truly local service for local residents.

Who do we support?

- ❖ Parents and families with practical, emotional and social care support
- ❖ Anyone to help to quit smoking, reduce alcohol consumption or lose weight
- ❖ Essex residents needing support with everyday tasks
- ❖ Small, medium and large businesses across Essex with health promotion advice

The specialist support currently offered includes:

- Feelings of loneliness or isolation
- Debt, housing or employment questions
- Parenting and family matters
- Caring responsibilities
- Mental wellbeing
- Learning disability/autism
- Dementia care
- Sensory impairment
- Quitting smoking
- Keeping physically active



Useful Contacts

Essex Wellbeing Service

For referrals and case specific enquiries or information:

0300 303 9988

provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net

Monday – Friday	8am – 7pm
Saturday	10am – 2pm

For general volunteer queries or guidance, e-mail the volunteer facilitator as below:

nadine.allwood@cessex.org.uk

Community Agents Essex

Supporting older people and informal carers to find and develop independent living solutions from within their local community.

0800 977 5858 or 01376 574341

enquiries@caessex.org.uk

A heartfelt thank you once again for all you do and for enhancing the lives of vulnerable people throughout Essex, without volunteers it just wouldn't be possible.

