**What is the Volunteer Support Project?**

Volunteering can have so many benefits for the individuals and we aim to make sure that anybody can access volunteering opportunities if they wish. The project supports people with mental health issues or mild and moderate learning difficulties to volunteer. We have a dedicated Support Worker who will help your client to find a suitable volunteer role in an organisation which will be able to support them and their needs. Our support worker can help with finding appropriate roles, helping supporting them during the settling in period and providing a contact point for ongoing support if difficulties should arise.

**What benefits could the project have for your client?**

Volunteering can have lots of benefits including;

* Building confidence and self esteem
* Being able to help in the community and make a difference
* Learning new skills
* Meeting new people and making new friends
* Improved mental and physical health
* Providing a sense of achievement

**What is Volunteering?**

Volunteering is an activity that is unpaid and freely entered into, carried out for the benefit of others. Voluntary and community organisations ask people to volunteer to help them carry out their activities. Volunteering is usually not the same as a work experience placement – it’s often ongoing, informal, and focused on helping out the organisation rather than being ‘like work’ or giving specific skills. We work with organisations that understand that although some people might need a little extra support they can still make a valuable contribution.

Volunteer roles can include:

* Supporting refreshments at coffee mornings
* Helping to clear river ways or plant trees
* Supporting children at activity clubs
* Working in a charity shop

**Is your client ready to volunteer?**

Volunteering may not be suitable for everybody. Here are some questions to ask yourself before making a referral;

* What do you want the client to achieve?
* Does the person want to volunteer?
* What do they want to do or what are they interested in?
* Do they have realistic expectations about volunteering?

Before referring a client to the project please make sure that you feel that they are ready to, and want to, volunteer. This can be difficult but there are a few indicators which may show that a person isn’t ready yet to volunteer, including;

* Mental health not being stable
* Lack of motivation
* Inability to attend appointments
* Poor health
* Struggles with social situations
* Feeling forced to participate
* Alcohol or substance misuse

If any of the above apply to your client then they may not be ready to volunteer, please contact us before making a referral to discuss their suitability.

**How to make a referral**

Please complete our referral form and email it to bexleyvc@bvsc.co.uk. We aim to respond to all referrals within one week.

Once we receive a referral we will arrange to meet with the client to discuss the referral, support workers are welcome to attend with the client if they wish.

**For more information**

If you have any queries please Sharon, Project Support Worker, on 01322 524 682 or vspworker@bvsc.co.uk