



# Volunteering with Onside Making better lives possible

## What do Onside do?

Onside Independent Advocacy was established in 1993. It is a registered charity managed by a Board of Trustees who delegate day-to-day management to the Chief Executive. The work of Onside stems from a belief that everyone has the right to be a valued human being and to be treated in a just and fair manner. The two main areas of work for the organisation are:

The provision of advocacy support to people within Worcestershire who are disadvantaged or vulnerable as a result of disability, ill health or old age.

LifeLinks - provides volunteer mentors to support people to become more involved in mainstream community activities.



## Who can be a volunteer?

Onside looks to recruit volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and who represent the diversity of life in Worcestershire. Some volunteers have worked within care services, but many have not and bring experience from all kinds of other work and family settings.

Volunteers do need to have some important qualities and characteristics.

They need to be:

- open and non-judgemental
- respectful towards others' views
- good listeners
- good communication skills
- calm and patient
- committed to rights and equality

## How can I become involved with Onside?

- There are a number of ways in which you can volunteer with Onside.
- Become a volunteer advocate
- Become a volunteer mentor or befriender
- Help with promotion and publicity
- Use your expertise on our Board of Trustees



## Volunteer Mentors

Empowering people and building stronger communities

### What do LifeLinks volunteers do?

Volunteer mentors and befrienders offer independent support to people over the age of 50 living throughout Worcestershire. Lifelinks volunteers also mentor people who have mild to moderate learning disabilities or mental health issues aged between 18 and 65 living in Worcestershire. These people may live independently in the community or with the support of family and/or carers. Many of them have limited contacts outside of their homes or day centres and can often feel socially isolated. Together with the support of their Lifelinks volunteer they can gather information about what mainstream leisure or social activities are available and choose what they would like to do. The mentors will also support project users in accessing activities whilst helping them to gain confidence and increase independence.

### Peer Support Group

LifeLinks also facilitates peer support groups. The purpose of the groups is to support people in developing and maintaining social contacts and friendships. By bringing like-minded people together, project users are able to offer one another support and share experiences. Volunteers work closely with project users to arrange get-togethers and to support them in making and sustaining friendship networks.

### Mentoring Support Case Studies

#### Andy

Andy had never used public transport & was keen to gain some independence rather than to rely on others. His reading skills were limited and he was not used to handling his money. The volunteer mentor met with Andy and they discussed how they might work together to find out which train/bus to catch, how much the journey would cost, how to read timetables and went on some journeys that Andy would regularly use. Eventually Andy was able to travel on his own.

#### Edward

Edward suffered from depression and because of a lack of confidence did not get out much. Edward had always wanted to learn more about computers. The mentor helped find him a nearby course and attended a few classes with him until he was settled and felt comfortable going along by himself.

I have very much enjoyed spending time with my partner - someone from a different background - she has a wealth of experience and knowledge and we have both learnt from each other.



## Volunteer Advocates

Helping individuals to be heard

### What do Onside advocates do?

Advocates offer independent support to people who are vulnerable as a result of disability, ill health, old age or who are carers. These people may not be able to get fair and equal treatment or access to services and facilities within their community. Advocates help people put forward their views and express their wishes and feelings. They assist them to obtain and understand the information and provide support to enable them to access services and professional help and advice. Advocates aim to ensure that the person they are supporting has their rights upheld and is treated fairly and respectfully in all aspects of their life.

### What makes advocates different to other people providing care or support?

Advocates are independent. This means they are able to focus solely on the views and perspective of that person. They are not constrained by a professional role or any other standpoint. The advocate is not there to provide services or to give advice. Volunteer advocates are also unpaid and this is very important to many people who receive support who value the fact that advocates are there because they choose to be and not because they are paid to be.

### Advocacy Support Case Studies

#### Molly

Molly was 18 years old and had just left full-time education. Her family had always managed her money for her. Molly wanted to have this responsibility for herself. Her family were concerned about this and were reluctant to relinquish their involvement. The advocate supported Molly to put her case to her family and to obtain appropriate legal advice as to her financial position.

#### Jack

Jack was a young man experiencing mental ill health whose wife wanted a divorce. Jack felt unable to cope with the paperwork involved and didn't fully understand his legal position. The advocate supported Jack to obtain the appropriate legal support and to break this down into understandable and manageable chunks

The power of Advocacy! Very interesting that people start to listen when an advocate is introduced. Good feeling when you get a positive result for an individual.



## Recruitment & Selection Process

There are 4 stages to our recruitment & selection process:

- Informal chat about volunteering with Onside
- Complete an application form, provide 2 referees and DBS application
- Attend free introductory training course
- Post training meeting to agree the kind of volunteering you would like to become involved with

## Volunteer Training

The training course is usually conducted in a small group setting and takes about 15 hours in total. It is structured to involve participants in discussion and activities rather than learning facts.

Topics covered include:

- The role of Advocates, Mentors & Befrienders
- Effective Communication
- Confidentiality & Boundaries

There is an option to gain 3 credits towards level 2 & 3 OCN.

## Support available to volunteers

- Ongoing support by the Volunteer Team
- Regular Partnership reviews
- Additional training opportunities
- Peer support meetings and social events
- Expenses paid

## Fundraising Events

To move forward as a local Charity, it is important we generate more support from local people, organisations and businesses.

As a volunteer you too can get involved. We have baked, painted, walked and dressed up to raise funds.



Grahame is a great ambassador for Onside and volunteering. He has been enjoying volunteering for over four years. After a major accident, leaving him unable to continue working, Grahame became cut off socially and lost confidence. He read about Onside and realised he could volunteer. "I like people and drinking tea – perfect!"

Volunteering has added purpose to Grahame's life and his experience enables him to show great empathy, support and care to the people he supports.

If you have further questions or are interested in volunteering with Onside, don't hesitate to contact the volunteer team on the number given below.

Onside



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