# **Volunteer Befriender – OPAL**

**Location**: Opportunities are available across West Lothian.

**Time:** A couple of hours every week or twice a month. Minimum 6 months.

We are flexible on which day(s) you can volunteer. Just let us know your availability and preferences. We welcome a visit to our hub, if you would like to see and get a feel for our place and people first. Just get in touch with us to arrange this.

**Hub location**: OPAL Cyrenians, 27 George St, Bathgate, EH48 1PG. [**See map here**](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Cyrenians+OPAL+(Older+People,+Active+Lives)/@55.9015602,-3.6415063,20z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x4888761f26fb7e7f:0xbc96c0f0c88d7c97!8m2!3d55.9015587!4d-3.6414902!16s%2Fg%2F1tkjkssk?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDQyMy4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D).

**What is OPAL – Opportunities for Active Lives?**

At OPAL, we want to maintain or increase the independence and well-being of older people across the West Lothian area. We support anyone of over 60+ years, who is looking to re-connect socially either on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting. People can either self-refer or be referred by a health professional

Our team provide these services with support from volunteers, who offer encouragement, companionship and support to engage in social, leisure and community activities. This help people to:

* remain active and independent
* be socially connected and engaged
* reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation
* increase self-confidence and self-worth
* create links with their local community.

Our service is funded through a collaboration with West Lothian Council, West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership, and NHS Lothian.

**What will you do as a volunteer?**

You will be carefully matched with someone in West Lothian, who you will support directly. You will encourage and support the person to get out and about, and identify activities which they would like to do.

Your tasks will therefore be varied and can include:

* Taking up a new hobby or interest
* Joining a local club or group e.g. activity groups, local walking group, dementia cafe
* Visiting a library, church, local gallery or exhibition
* Attending an event e.g. gala, open day, taster session, tea dance
* Going for short local walks.

We will provide support and continued training needed for you to engage with the tasks and people in a safe manner.

**What can you gain from this volunteering opportunity?**

* Meet new people and be part of a supportive team
* Develop your skills in working together with people of all backgrounds and with different support needs.
* Gain understanding of social isolation and impact of community work.
* Further develop your listening skills
* A chance to spend time with people, create connections and have a positive effect on people’s quality of life, health and wellbeing.
* Ongoing learning opportunities on different health topics.

**Does this sound like you?**

Everyone is welcome to join and get actively involved with supporting people as a volunteer.

If you…

* are 18+ years old
* work well as part of a team and on your own
* are friendly, easy to approach and reliable
* enjoy engaging with and listening to people
* are happy to engage with people, who may have different support needs
* do not judge and respect confidentiality
* understand personal boundaries and know how to set your own
* will not mind keeping simple visit records and provide feedback to our team
* are patient and respectful of everyone.

Then let us know your interest and get in touch by filling in the online form. We can then arrange a chat to get to know each other better, and we can offer more information about the place and volunteering opportunity.

## **Your accessibility**

Please let us know in the online form, if you need any support or adjustments to make our first chat together and volunteering a positive experience for you.

If you for any reason cannot fill in our online form, not to worry. Please reach out to us on 01506 815815. Ask for Sandra or Gary.

You are also welcome to submit a short video (MP4 format) via our online submission tool instead. Please include the information that we ask for in our ‘interest form’.

Any expenses for helping with these activities, which have been agreed, will be paid back to you. We cover local travel costs at public transport rate, or mileage if you drive here. We provide a meal for all volunteers joining for over 4 hours at one time.

Our hub is based in the centre of Bathgate, where busses stop nearby. It is wheelchair accessible and with accessible toilet facilities.

We will ask you for the contact details of a person, who you have known for more than 6 months (1 reference). If you need support identifying a reference, please let us know.

## **Keeping everyone safe**

You will engage with people, who are either young people under 18 years old and / or considered particularly vulnerable in our society. It is therefore required that you are a member of the [**PVG scheme in Scotland**](https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme).

If you are not already a member, then we will process your application with you. There are no costs to you in becoming a PVG scheme member for volunteering.

You can read [**our safeguarding policy here**](https://cyrenians.scot/assets/000/001/672/Safeguarding_Policy_original.pdf?1729240047) that details our commitment to keeping everyone safe. It is expected of everyone to adhere to these commitments. We expect all volunteers to do relevant training, so you can help keep yourself and others safe from harm.