Patient Buddy Volunteer

Location: Midlothian Community Hospital Gardens, 70 Eskbank Rd, Bonnyrigg, EH22 3ND. **See on a map here.**

Time commitment: Approx 2 hours per week – either on a Tuesday 10 – 12 noon or Thursday 1.00 - 3pm.

What is the Midlothian Community Hospital Garden?

The aim of the community garden is to prevent homelessness by improving mental health and wellbeing, strengthening social connections, increasing skills and employability through structured, inclusive community gardening.

We do gardening using climate friendly techniques to grow local food and support wildlife, while building community and developing skills. We run practical sessions, workshops, events and shared meals to build skills in gardening, while encouraging healthy eating and promoting social inclusion.

What will you do as a volunteer?

Buddy volunteers support hospital patients by helping maintain a therapeutic garden space and encouraging participation in light gardening and nature-based craft activities.
Volunteers contribute to a welcoming and inclusive environment that promotes wellbeing and connection.

As a Patient Buddy volunteer in our community garden, you will be supporting a group of patients to come to the garden and do activities together. This might mean supporting them to:

- attend a gardening session
- meeting them in the garden for a walk and a chat
- encouraging them to do gardening and or craft activities with you

Your support and encouragement can help your buddy to:

- engage with gardening activities to benefit their physical and mental health
- relax and de-stress by spending some time in a green space
- reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation
- learn and share skills and knowledge
- increase self-confidence

What can you gain from this volunteering opportunity?

- Gain experience in therapeutic horticulture and community support
- Meet new people and contribute positively to patient wellbeing
- Develop gardening and interpersonal skills
- Be part of a supportive healthcare and community environment
- Gain understanding on issues and barriers for those affected by homelessness

Does this sound like you?

Everyone is welcome to join us in our community garden. We ask that you take part at least once a week for minimum of 3 months. This is due to the relationship that you are building with your buddy, which we want to be a consistent support. This role requires you to be over 18 years of age.

Skills and qualities:

- Friendly, patient, and compassionate approach
- Interest in gardening, wellbeing, or community engagement
- Good communication and listening skills
- Ability to work collaboratively with people of different ages and abilities
- Reliable and willing to follow health and safety guidance
- No formal gardening experience required; willing to undertake training provided

You may be supporting individuals who have varying support needs or have experience of mental ill health, disability, homelessness or social isolation as well as medical conditions such as dementia.

Let us know if you are interested 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 share 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 for any reason, you cannot fill in our online form, not to worry. Please reach out to Michala, our Garden Coordinator, on 07772 886 746.

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. Volunteers joining for over 4 hours at one time can claim expenses towards a meal.

We have free parking by the hospital, and buses stop nearby (5-10 min walking distance).

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

When volunteering, 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**.

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** 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.