

**Preparation:** Apart from discussions with the co-ordinator, there will also be group sessions where you can meet other volunteers. You will also be given written information and if you would like more training, outside courses are available.

**Insurance:** If you use your car for your volunteering you should tell your insurer and can claim back any premium increase from the project. The project also has public liability insurance to cover you during your link.

**Berwickshire:** Judy Kay, Platform One, Station Road, Duns  
Berwickshire TD11 3HS Tel: 01361 883662/07776 221843  
lesleystephenson@interestlink.org.uk

**Buddies & Central Borders:** Stefanie Poletylo, Low Buckholmside, Galashiels TD1 1RT Tel: 01896 750020/07717 403529  
stefaniepoletylo@interestlink.org.uk

**Roxburgh:** Val Reilly, Katherine Elliot Centre, Howdenbank ,  
Hawick TD9 7JT Tel: 01450 377600/07738 567498  
valreilly@interestlink.org.uk

**Tweeddale:** Mary Mouat, Volunteer Resource Centre, School Brae, High Street, Peebles Tel: 01721 729348/0777 3303829  
marymouat@interestlink.org.uk

[www.interestlink.org.uk](http://www.interestlink.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. SC030132



**Volunteers and people with learning disabilities enjoying activities together.**

**Information for Volunteers**

# Interest Link Borders

## Information for Volunteers

### **What the service does and why:**

Like most of us, adults with learning disabilities often have things they would like to do independently of their family or professional carers.

This can be very difficult for them to organise because they have few opportunities to meet people to do things with.

To overcome this problem, Interest Link recruits volunteers and links them one-to-one with adults with learning disabilities so they can do activities both enjoy.

Interest Link is an independent Borders-based organisation operating through four branches (see below for addresses).

### **How the service works:**

Adults with learning disabilities who wish to use the service register with Interest Link. The co-ordinator visits them and their carer and discusses what they would like to do. This might be anything from attending an evening class, golf, bowling or swimming to shopping, crafts, music, going for a walk or drive or going to the cinema, a concert or the pub or just being visited at home.

Volunteers are recruited by word-of-mouth, through the Volunteer Bureau or by adverts in the local press. They fill in an application form and the branch co-ordinator interviews them, takes up references and carries out a police check. Volunteers are given the necessary preparation, and are then matched with a service user, taking into account such factors as age, interests and location so as to ensure a compatible and practical link.

Volunteers are introduced to the service user and their carer by the co-ordinator. Ideas for the link are discussed and plans made for the volunteer to take the service user out, or visit them, on a regular

basis (for example once a week or fortnight for 1-2 hours). The link operates on a trial basis for a month and is then confirmed if the service user and volunteer are happy with it. The link continues for as long as both wish.

### **Your role as a volunteer:**

As a volunteer your role in Interest Link could be demanding and require a good deal of patience and persistence. Communication with the service user may be difficult and it may take a while to establish a relationship. However:

You would be given as much preparation and support as you needed. The co-ordinator would always be available to give advice and you should not hesitate to phone her if you have a question or a problem. She would keep in touch, and send you a newsletter and a feedback form every four months to find out how things are going.

The satisfaction to be had from the role, and the difference it makes to a service user's life can be immense: By being linked with a volunteer, service users can do the things they want to and know that the person helping them is doing so because they want to, not because they are paid to or feel obliged to. As well as improving their quality of life (and giving respite to their carers), being linked to a volunteer can help them with their social skills and self-confidence and give them a sense of independence.

Being a volunteer also provides very good work experience and a source of references if you are thinking about applying for courses or paid jobs in Care.

**Confidentiality:** All personal information about service users must be kept confidential unless it is something that you feel their carer or somebody else should know for the good of the service user.

**Expenses:** Interest Link will pay all your expenses, including car costs at 30p per mile and activity costs such as cinema tickets and basic refreshments. Costs are claimed monthly and paid promptly. They will not affect Benefits.