



Tales from the TSI Network

Supporting Volunteering For All

All across Scotland

volunteering with additional support needs - Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise



Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise (SVE) provides the highly regarded Supported Volunteering Service for people from 12 years and older with additional support needs. Rebecca was referred to the service from Forth Valley College. This very friendly, confident 21-year-old who has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user, had expressed a wish to become a receptionist.

Finding an appropriate volunteer placement can be a challenge for those with supported needs. Everything must be meticulously planned and, with Rebecca, that would mean ensuring the environment was right for her – space to move around safely, a lift, suitable toilet and enough breaks to allow her to remain mentally alert. Therefore it is crucial that support was provided for the organisation providing the placement.

How Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise helped Rebecca

Following a meeting with Rebecca and her carer (who would also be there to support her throughout her volunteering journey) training through the Supported Volunteering Service was first up. Run over four weeks, this covers an introduction to volunteering, assertiveness, working with others and goal planning, before any individual appointment can be made.

Despite the hundreds of placement opportunities that SVE has built up through its network of organisations in Stirlingshire, there were no wheelchair accessible opportunities for receptionists at the time. SVE Development and Engagement Coordinator Joanne Rae worked quickly to source a placement for her by approaching local charities. Three charities came forward. Unfortunately the first one only needed a volunteer for two afternoons a month. Rebecca wished to volunteer more frequently to help her gain more experience for securing paid employment in the future.



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Although the second charity was well known to her, Joanne had never placed volunteers with it before. Therefore this meant the initial level of support for it was more comprehensive - including agreeing support in relation to Rebecca's needs. SVE supported the charities receptionists and their line manager to work through the processes involved.

Initially the Rebecas's placement was for four weeks, to see if it was right for her, as well as for the charity. Joanne needed to ensure that staff were never taken away from their own work excessively to support any volunteer, who, after all, is there to help. So she spent a lot of time personally supporting Rebecca during those first few weeks and was on hand if there were any issues.

Joanne then turned to another charity, a wellbeing arts project in Alloa. Rebecca's new volunteer role there will encompass both reception and administration activities. The placement will give her the chance to not only get more experience, and, as she is very artistic, she will be volunteering with like minded individuals.

The choice of career as a receptionist is just perfect for Rebecca – she is particularly great at meeting and greeting people.

Rebecca volunteered with the second charity for six months and gained a lot of valuable reception experience. The charity has also benefitted from positive feedback and by being recognised as a volunteer-friendly place for people with disabilities.

Due to complete honesty throughout the process and by ensuring robust procedures are in place, Joanne made sure the process was easy for all. Rebecca feels she will be doing something valuable with Resonate Together and Joanne believes she'll remain part of the team there for some time.

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