



VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Transport Buddy

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours

Reports to: Designated THFN coordinator

Time commitment: 1 – 2 trips per week, 1 – 3 hours per trip including the appointment itself

Minimum commitment: 6 months

Location: Across Tower Hamlets — meeting older neighbours at their home and accompanying them to appointments or events

Expenses: All travel and out-of-pocket expenses paid

Training: Full training and ongoing support provided

Check required: Enhanced DBS check (we organise and pay)

About us

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours (THFN) has been befriending older residents across the borough since 1947. We turn up — in person, on the phone, at appointments, on outings. For people who would otherwise spend the week without seeing anyone, we are sometimes the only knock on the door.

We do small things, week in and week out. A regular visit. A standing phone call. A trip to the GP that wouldn't happen alone. A monthly social where 25 to 40 older neighbours come together for tea, food and conversation.

We do what we say we will do. When we cannot help, we say so honestly rather than promise what we cannot deliver. We work alongside the people we visit, not on top of them.

We particularly need volunteers who speak Bengali, Sylheti, Somali or Cantonese. Older neighbours are waiting for a befriender in their first language.

About the role

Many of the older neighbours we visit are housebound — not because they cannot physically leave, but because leaving alone feels unsafe, overwhelming, or simply not worth the effort. A Transport Buddy is the difference between someone making it to a GP appointment, a hospital outpatient, our monthly Get-Together, or a local outing — and someone missing it entirely.

As a Transport Buddy, you accompany one or more older neighbours from their home to an appointment, event or social activity and back. Most trips are local to Tower Hamlets. We use a mix of buses, taxis (we cover the fare), and walking.

You do not need a car or driving licence. We match you with people whose route and schedule fit yours. Most journeys are 1 to 3 hours including travel time each way.

It is one of our most practically useful roles. People miss critical appointments because they cannot face them alone. You make those appointments happen.

What you'll do

- Meet your matched older neighbour at their home in time for the appointment or event
- Accompany them to the destination using whichever transport works best
- Wait with them or nearby during the appointment, as they prefer
- Accompany them home and make sure they're safely settled
- Log a short note after the trip — any concerns, anything we should know
- Some Saturday Get-Together transport is also needed (we will ask in advance)

What we ask of you

- Physical comfort walking at a slower pace and supporting someone who may be unsteady
- Patience with stops, rests, and conversations along the way
- Practical confidence on public transport and reading bus schedules
- Calm under pressure — most journeys are routine, but occasionally appointments overrun or transport is disrupted
- Discretion — medical conversations are confidential
- A 6-month minimum commitment

What you get from us

- Immediate, visible impact — your contribution makes specific appointments happen
- Free training in safeguarding, first aid awareness, dementia awareness
- All travel expenses paid (yours and the older neighbour's, including taxi fares where needed)
- Regular peer support
- A reference after six months
- Get to know Tower Hamlets in a way only a long walk with a long-term resident can show you

How to apply

Apply online at thfn.org.uk/volunteer-form. It takes about 10 minutes.

If you'd like to talk to someone first, or you'd rather apply by phone or email, contact us on 020 3007 9120 or admin@thfn.org.uk. We're happy to send the form by post or read it through with you over the phone.

After we receive your application we'll be in touch within a week to arrange an informal chat. From there it's a DBS check, a short training session, and a match with the older neighbour you'll be visiting or calling.