Reduction of Barriers to Volunteering

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Background

A report in 2012 recommended Hospices explore new approaches to volunteering to develop skills and widen deployment of volunteers enabling hospices to extend their reach. We recognised the need to broaden the age range of our volunteers, with only 11% of our volunteers being under 35. Similarly the vast majority of our volunteers are not involved in patient facing roles and following on from our successful ward support programme we wanted to develop and expand these roles. We recognised that there were a number of barriers, both internally and externally for developing our volunteer programme in these areas.

Methods

Survey sent to 950 existing volunteers; staff consultation and informal feedback from people applying to be volunteers. We identified four key barriers and solutions to volunteering and developed new volunteer roles that would be able to overcome these barriers and attract a broader range of people into volunteering.

Work Experience Programme

Barriers one and two

By developing a work experience programme in day hospice we can increase the number of young volunteers.

‘I got into university to study medicine and the experience at the hospice was a large part of my application process’

Work experience volunteer

Compassionate Neighbours

Barriers one and three

To develop the compassionate neighbour role we needed to be flexible to attract those with other commitments so training was at weekends. We also partnered with a Children’s Centre who provided child care for volunteers with children.

Morning Ward Support Volunteers

Barriers two and four

Volunteers got a great opportunity to develop skills in hands-on care and were mentored by IPU staff.

“Being here has given me great insight into how a good nursing team works and I will carry this through into my nursing studies - I have loved every minute.”

Morning Ward Support Volunteer

Conclusion

We have enhanced the level of support offered to patients through more hands-on volunteer roles and recognised the need for volunteers to use and develop their skills as well as the need for more flexible opportunities. The ability to provide childcare during volunteer training has enabled people who would traditionally not be available become volunteers.

We introduced 5 new volunteer roles which directly addressed these barriers and we now have 8% more people volunteering in direct patient support and the average age of volunteers has reduced by 3 years since introducing a more varied volunteer programme.