

Reducing Barriers to Volunteering



Vanessa Hill, Volunteering Lead, Princess Alice Hospice, Esher

Background

A report in 2012¹ 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.

Aim

To address barriers to volunteering; offer more flexible volunteer roles; review the areas where volunteers can provide additional support and widen participation.

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.



Compassionate Neighbours

"After having my little girl, I've been at home and feeling, like a lot of new mums, rather lonely... I signed up hoping to make new friends, get involved and do some good in the community."

Compassionate Neighbour

	BARRIER	SOLUTION
1.	Regular Weekly Commitment	Volunteer Roles with more flexibility and more short term commitment
2.	Unmet desire for patient facing volunteer roles	Broader range of patient facing roles
3.	Unable to attend training	Shorter training sessions, more training at the weekend, partnership with Children's Centre
4.	Staff Anxiety	Volunteer roles trialled, new support systems in place, staff involvement in recruitment and training

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

Discharge Buddies

Barriers one and two

Discharge buddies support patients and their families with moving from the hospice to home or a care home, providing support for 2 – 3 weeks. As an adhoc volunteer role it gives volunteers flexibility as well as making a positive difference.

"I have felt useful and valued and have thoroughly enjoyed being able to do what I can to help my person and the hospice."



Discharge Buddies

Discharge Buddy

Planning Ahead Volunteers

Barriers one and two

This role supports patients to carry out their end of life wishes and write an advance care plan. The volunteering is carried out in short blocks so enables volunteers to make a valuable contribution whilst still being able to take long breaks.

"these volunteers have been exceptionally driven and bring a wealth of experience to the role, from past GPs to ex-careers advisors. I think the appeal lies in the short-term, flexible time commitment combined with meaningful, tangible support given to patients."

Hospice Staff Member

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.

¹Hospice UK (2012). Volunteers: vital to the future of hospice care. a working paper of the commission into the future of hospice care. Hospice UK. London.