



Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Involving volunteers

a guide for staff



Caring | Discovering | Growing | **Together**

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## Background

The Voluntary Services Department was established in 1989 and is responsible for promoting and managing voluntary activity across the Trust.

Volunteers are recruited from a diverse range of backgrounds and bring with them the skills, time, ingenuity and enthusiasm to enhance the experience of service users and their carers.

Volunteer contribution is complementary to the work of staff. **Volunteers must not undertake work which should be financed, used as job substitution or to combat staff shortages due to financial pressures.**

## The Voluntary Services team

The Voluntary Services Department is based at St. Nicholas Hospital and provides a Trust-wide service.

The department consists of three staff:

- Wendy M Spratt, Voluntary Services Manager
- Sarah Lovie, Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Joanne Hanlon, Administrator

The department is line managed by David Muir, Group Nurse Director - Central Care Group.

## Involving Volunteers - commonly asked questions

### “ How can volunteers benefit the service? ”

Volunteers bring a diverse range of talents, ingenuity and experience to provide valuable care and support by complementing the work of paid staff. Volunteers can help to personalise services, gather feedback, offer a fresh perspective, bring new ideas and skills, assist with research projects or simply spend time with a patient in a social activity without the competing demands of paid staff.

### “ What type of roles do volunteers undertake? ”

All roles at Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust are developed to meet the needs of service users. Examples include:

- **Social, therapeutic and peer support**  
On a ward or department, e.g. listening and chatting to service users, participating in board games, arts and crafts, quizzes etc. and in some cases offering peer support.
- **Providing a warm welcome**  
Greeting and involving new patients in therapeutic or involvement groups. Welcoming and supporting people attending chapel services or within libraries.
- **Providing practical assistance**  
Volunteers offer assistance in the St Nicholas Hospital shop, tuck shop at Ferndene and at Café Andrew.
- **Gardening**  
Volunteers assist and encourage user participation with gardening initiatives as part of the Vocational Rehabilitation Service at Hopewood Park and at Northgate Hospital.

### - **Service user involvement**

Gathering feedback and helping to shape and develop services through user involvement at Walkergate Park.

### - **Assisting with research**

Providing general assistance e.g. literature searches, data input etc. on a range of initiatives within psychological services.

## “ **Are there restrictions on what a volunteer can do?** ”

- Volunteers should not undertake the same work as paid staff and there needs to be a clear difference in their roles and responsibilities. Basically, volunteers should enhance rather than replace paid roles.
- Volunteers should not be used as job substitution or to combat staff shortages.
- Volunteers should not be asked to undertake additional roles during times of industrial action.
- Volunteers are not permitted to undertake clinical duties.

## “ **Who is responsible for the day to day management of volunteers?** ”

This will vary between departments but an individual within each department will be classed as a 'Project Lead' for the volunteer who has responsibility for day to day on the job management of the volunteer. The Project Lead may delegate to other staff when appropriate e.g. a Ward Manager may be the Project Lead but request the Activities Co-ordinator to offer day to day guidance to the volunteer. The Volunteer Co-ordinator will arrange periodical support group meetings with volunteers and appropriate staff to monitor progress.

## “ **Do volunteers have a Role Description?** ”

All volunteers are issued with a Role Description. The Role Description ensures there is a clear outline of accountability, expectations and required tasks. Volunteers should not undertake activities outside the boundaries of their role as this could impede patient care, pose risks and may not be covered by insurance.

Role Descriptions detail:

- Location of the voluntary role
- Accountability
- Time and duration
- Role and tasks of volunteer
- Skills, knowledge and experience required
- A commitment to adhere to Trust Values
- Key working relationships

## “ Is it safe to involve volunteers? ”

The following steps are undertaken to minimise the risks:

- Volunteer screening includes references and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. DBS checks are renewed every three years.
- Risks assessments are undertaken for volunteer roles.
- ID badges identify individuals as volunteers.
- Training sessions help to assess an individual's understanding and attitude to Trust Values.
- Volunteers sign a Code of Conduct.
- Volunteers may only participate in agreed roles at agreed times in agreed departments. They should not go to other wards and departments.
- Support and supervision monitors the volunteers' compliance to boundaries, can help to determine attitudes and values and offers the opportunity to share ideas, good practice, troubleshoot problems and offer thanks and appreciation.

## “ What is the cost of a volunteer? ”

While volunteers offer their time freely they are not a free resource. There are some costs to involving volunteers, including travel costs (predominantly paid centrally by the Voluntary Services Department). There may be costs for additional resources that may be required and additional time to supervise and support volunteers.

## “ Are volunteers reliable? ”

Most volunteers are very reliable if the role they are undertaking is purposeful and they are properly supported and appreciated. As with paid staff, domestic issues, holidays or study pressures can impact on availability or they may move on to paid employment.

There can be times when an individual's poor health or confidence impacts on their reliability and they should be supported through this in collaboration with the Voluntary Services staff.

## “ How do I manage a volunteer? ”

All volunteers are different and the amount of time that you will need to spend supporting someone will depend upon the role and capabilities of the volunteer. Initially you may need to invest time to induct, supervise and possibly debrief a volunteer, but as they become more confident and competent in their roles you should reap the benefits of their involvement and less management time may be required. Where possible some new volunteers may be buddied with experienced and competent volunteers who can offer guidance and ease some of the burden on management time.

## “ Are volunteers covered by employment law? ”

Volunteers are not 'employed' and have a non-contractual relationship with the Trust. Therefore volunteers are not covered by employment law. It is essential that terminology such as roles and tasks are used rather than 'job' or 'work' in documents to avoid terms that imply an employment relationship.

Volunteers are covered by Health and Safety legislation and the Data Protection Act. There are a range of legal implications around payment and treatment of volunteers and advice can be sought from the Voluntary Services Department if there is any uncertainty.

## “ What support can I expect from the Voluntary Services Department? ”

The Voluntary Services Department are responsible for the safe recruitment, training and placement of volunteers and organise reimbursement of travel expenses. They work in collaboration with the Project Lead to establish voluntary projects and achieve the successful integration and management of volunteers including support group sessions. Voluntary Services staff can offer advice, assistance or mediation should difficulties arise. Voluntary Services may also work with staff to establish mechanisms to evaluate the impact of volunteering with the client group.

### Volunteer recruitment and training

#### How are volunteers recruited?



Attend an interview with Volunteer Co-ordinator

Complete Registration Form

Two references sought

DBS clearance sought

Attend Volunteer Induction Training

Volunteer Handbook and Code of Conduct issued

Where appropriate, further project training or 'on the job' training is offered

Role Description issued

ID badge issued

Commence in project

## **Volunteer training**

All volunteers are required to attend Voluntary Service Induction Training prior to commencement. This includes:

- Welcome to volunteering
- Trust Values
- Maintaining boundaries
- Information governance
- Health and safety
- Moving and handling (not including patient handling)
- Equality and diversity
- Safeguarding adults
- Support and supervision

We understand that some volunteers may feel apprehensive or nervous about attending training and we aim to keep the sessions as relaxed and informal as possible.

A volunteer handbook is issued at the end of the training session containing relevant Trust information and good practice guidance.

A Code of Conduct is explained and issued at Induction Training. A signed copy of the Code of Conduct is held on the volunteer's individual file that is held securely in the Voluntary Services Department.

## **Additional training**

The Voluntary Services Department organises further training as follows:

- Fire safety and prevention
- Control of infection (where appropriate)
- Tailored project training is delivered where appropriate
- If volunteers have contact with minors they will complete safeguarding children training.
- Volunteers involved with food handling will be required to attend food hygiene training.
- Volunteers have the option to attend Dementia Friends Awareness sessions.
- Volunteers are not permitted to access all training and Project Leads should check with Voluntary Services should further training be considered.

Training updates in some statutory areas will be offered annually or every three years in line with Trust policy.

## **Support and recognition**

It is essential that all volunteers receive adequate support and supervision to enable them to undertake their role safely and effectively, to ensure they are meeting the needs of the service users and to receive recognition for their time, energy and commitment.

- Ongoing regular support is provided to all volunteers by the Volunteer Co-ordinator and Project Leads.

- Some volunteer projects operate peer support group meetings which enable volunteers to raise issues, troubleshoot difficulties and celebrate successes together in a constructive and relaxed atmosphere.
- The Voluntary Services Department operates an open door policy for all volunteers during daytime working hours Monday - Friday on the St Nicholas Hospital site.
- Volunteers receive a bi-annual newsletter to keep them up to date with Trust news.
- Recognition events are held periodically to celebrate the contribution of volunteers.
- The profile and recognition of volunteers is raised during Volunteers' Week which takes place in the first week of June each year.
- There is a Positive Impact/Volunteer category in the Staff Excellence Awards.

### **Volunteer expenses**

Volunteers are entitled to actual out of pocket expenses in line with the Volunteer Expense Policy. This is organised by the Voluntary Services Department.

### **I have identified a role for volunteers in my ward/department, what do I do?**

Contact the Voluntary Services Manager to discuss issues relating to the viability of the role, examine the availability of resources and identify training and support requirements and/or refer to the Volunteer Involvement Policy (NTW(0)10) on the NTW Trust website [www.ntw.nhs.uk](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk)

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