

ASUME

Volunteering in Dementia



attract

Experience

Each volunteer's background of work and personal experience influenced their roles as volunteers. Here the focus is on personal and professional experience and how that affects the motivation of volunteers and what people take on. Many volunteers in this project came from health and social work backgrounds and this attracted them to taking on volunteer roles in dementia care. However, other professions were represented, including fire officer, engineer, teacher, hotel housekeeper and others.

I was a youth and community worker in Leicester for...before I was a social worker. And even then you would always...I think if you're a community worker which I was, even as a social worker, you'll always go over and above. (CVF04, Cumbria)

I think it was just a natural progression of being in the environment and also because of my background as a nurse and perhaps as somebody who had been involved in catering and other things through my life I just sort of merged into becoming a volunteer. (CVF11, Cumbria)

Many of the volunteers had experience of other volunteering: 19 participants specifically talked about other volunteering roles. This was often about past volunteering but a large majority of them help multiple volunteering roles at once. Sometimes their role with people with dementia developed from other volunteering jobs and, for some, it was just one of a number of volunteering roles they were currently involved with. Often volunteering in dementia was a natural progression from previous volunteer or caring roles.

I've been doing various things at Tully House [museum] and I'm a guide at the Cathedral as well. (CVF13, Cumbria)

As I say, I do a lot at the Theatre Royal in Workington which is our local theatre there. And I also help out at our local hospital. I'm a meet and greeter. (CVF16, Cumbria)

I have been volunteering for forty years as a volunteer steward at folk festivals. (CVMD1, Cumbria)

Some had shared experiences with people with dementia that meant their connections were particularly powerful, as they could relate to each other on another level.

I mean I'm thinking of one man at the moment particularly whom I sit next to at the music. He was a musician and a classical musician at that, as I was, so we have the link there, and occasionally there's a wonderful spark where we can laugh together, he and I, about something that's more sophisticated than perhaps anybody else in the group or even the provider would understand because it's on a different level. (CVF10, Cumbria)

Some work experience gave individuals skills and knowledge that enhanced their ability to take on volunteering roles with people with dementia.

Overall the volunteers made strong links between their own professional and personal experience and their volunteering roles. However, in the wider stakeholder survey we found that organisations do not rate volunteers' past experiences very highly in terms of what they are looking for in volunteers. It seems this may be something that could be more carefully considered during recruitment processes.



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