

ASUME

Volunteering in Dementia



Development

Participants were encouraged to reflect on what development opportunities their volunteering had presented. Although learning was often cited as the motivation for volunteering activities, development opportunities for volunteers were not commonly reported by the participants. There was a lack of formal ongoing opportunities to develop.

They did some in Stirling as well, and I looked into doing that, and I did a few home visits to elderly people, but then it was a bit poorly organised and I didn't manage to do much there. But I would have liked to do more with that, but it didn't really happen. (CVF09, Cumbria)

Therefore, although there were often instances of willingness, often opportunities were simply not available. Volunteers did however identify a need for ongoing training and development. Much of the volunteers' skills and knowledge were obtained through learning on the job and from observing and talking to others including paid staff and other volunteers. Volunteers describe increasing confidence over time as they learn.

So I watch the carers and how they deal with them, and that's really clever how they do it, to maybe calm a situation. And watching their eyes and their body language changes, and I think that's just kind of the experience, yeah. (CVF08, Cumbria)

And I think you just have to...you just...I learned...at first I was very...not very nervous, but a little, because I hadn't a clue what I was doing. Not a clue. I just went. You just show up and you just have to go along with the flow. And that's what it is. And as I got more confident, I'd...felt I was able to do more and engage more with the people who had dementia and...so...I think it's just experience like anything. You experience something and you learn. You learn what the role's about and then the role can change. (CVF01, Cumbria)

Some volunteers talked about receiving an appraisal and feedback but this was not commonly reported. The below quote demonstrates that although volunteers are aware that volunteer coordinators can struggle for time, when they are able to engage with volunteers it is all the more appreciated.

I'm quite lucky with S because she's done a mini appraisal for me which was really good, and I know she doesn't get much time but she has shown me a lot and explained many things. But I think, yeah, I definitely need a couple of study days to get it in the head and do some writing I suspect. (CVF08, Cumbria)

And both the ladies that run the sessions are lovely, but S's the one initially I have a great relationship - I'm friends with her anyway, I get on really well with her, so that helps in terms of support. But they're very supportive. Like I said, they keep in touch with emails and texts all the time. They ask you at the end of the session how was it, do you think it was okay, and like that time where I did have a bit of a problem with the lady that didn't want to be there, afterwards they were saying well done, you did well there, and they provide feedback on what you've done, and they ask then if there was any moments that you had with someone, and they write them down. (CVF09, Cumbria)

One volunteer noted that there was little interest in what else volunteers might be able to offer, and very little information was collected about them by organisations. This meant that their potential to contribute was not fully realised.

It's looking at the fact that we are all different and there are perhaps things that we could do in addition to our role that maybe people don't look at. That's just seeing what you've got, looking at your... We fill in our DVS forms, we fill in our names and date of birth but other than that they want to know nothing about us. Well, we're all very different individuals and we all have very different things that they could maybe tap into. (CVF03, Cumbria)

Development of volunteers did not appear to be a high priority for organisations in this study. There were just a few examples of formal appraisal or feedback for volunteers and, as seen in this and the training section, few ongoing development activities. Good development opportunities seemed contingent on individual volunteer coordinators, who were central to supporting and sustaining volunteers.



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