

ASUME

Volunteering in Dementia



Impact on volunteer

There were many perceived impacts in regards to volunteers that centred on the benefits of social interaction and the fun that can be derived from this:

So that's all new for me, watching videos on YouTube and watching people in care homes with music and how that's helping them. So I feel like a brand new novice student, but I'm really enjoying it, really enjoying it. (CVF08, Cumbria)

I love it. Like the other day, after the one where we sort of focused our memory on the war and stuff, and I feel like now I know all of the people quite well, individually, and they are like my friends and I know what they like and don't like and that kind of thing. And I love talking to them. I think it's a real privilege to be able to speak to someone who's 96 and been in the first and second world war. (CVF09, Cumbria)

Whether they remember it or not, at that hour, they...they're having fun and I think...I love seeing people being happy. So I think that part I like, you know. It's a win/win really. There's no negatives really. It...you know, because it's all good that's happening. (CVF01, Cumbria)

This social interaction was enjoyable and also socially rewarding:

I think to be honest all of my time [volunteering] has felt very satisfying. (SVF03, Stirlingshire)

Yeah. It's...it just opens your mind to another area of life. And I've loved it. (SVF06, Stirlingshire)

I find it quite a privilege now to do what I do [befriending] because it is quite rewarding. (SVF07, Stirlingshire)

Although volunteers often discussed their own motivations as being selfless (see the next section on motivation) they were still articulate in regards to what they thought they received in return from their volunteering activities. The act of volunteering itself was empowering and the opportunities and confidence building that volunteering could generate often had positive mental health impacts on the volunteers. For example, this social interaction often enabled some volunteers to transcend some of their own issues and enhance their wellbeing:

I was quite depressed and I'd done social care at university and I'd worked with adults with a disability, so I just absolutely loved it. And I was looking for that kind of belief, that going out and just doing something for somebody else and really enjoying it, and not worrying about myself. (SVF03, Stirlingshire)

Oh, a sense of wellbeing. Most definitely. You come out of certain situations... And it's a challenge, and I like challenges. But it invigorates you. It really does, and it lifts you. And each time you come away you think I did that, type of thing, because each one is a different level. So it's that. You draw a tremendous amount out. (SVM01, Cumbria)

However, it was rarer for volunteers to talk about their own mental health or health benefits and they framed impact on themselves more in terms of enjoyability. For some their engagement has continued beyond the end of their official volunteering role:

So I befriended a couple and I still do that on a totally private, individual basis every now and then; take old so-and-so out for lunch, because I enjoy their company and it gives them another dimension as well. (CVF10, Cumbria)

Therefore, volunteers acknowledged a number of different types of impact on themselves and there was evidence of long-term impact as the relationships they had built continued over time. This links strongly with the perception that volunteers themselves are making an impact. The satisfaction and wellbeing as described above by volunteers derived from the feeling they themselves were making a positive impact on individuals. Volunteers valued the impact their volunteering effort had on the person with dementia.

Especially if somebody has quite bad dementia it's nice to see that there's a light goes on sometimes when something's registered, especially things like poetry and music which are repetitive things and people suddenly remember and they can latch on to, that's good. (CVF13, Cumbria)

You get a week when you feel you've made a connection with somebody who you felt was slipping away and they come back for a week and that's a lovely thing to see. So it's just the positivities of the interactions really which is very pleasant. (CVF03, Cumbria)

You can get somebody and it changes them. You see the change in them each week you come. Like if they're withdrawn, they don't like coming, eventually you begin to see them interact with others and that's part and parcel how you enjoy it. (CVF06, Cumbria)

See people developing...trusting you perhaps or...when you know that somebody is anticipating your visit with pleasure, or, when you drop them back home, [client] will say, ooh, thank you. That was a lovely day out, so that's...that in itself is rewarding. (SVF02, Stirlingshire)

Well, they are just so appreciative of what you do for them, which that's really what keeps me going, I suppose, because you see the difference it makes to them. So I think, well, if I was in this situation, I would like to be able to do, you know, be able to get out or be able to do things that are a wee bit different and it's just so rewarding and they are so appreciate. I think that's what, I don't know, it's nice to be able to feel you are making a difference to them, it's nice to be a part of. (SVF07, Stirlingshire)



Volunteer
Scotland



UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING



For more information
visit www.asume.co.uk or
contact Dr Vikki McCall,
Principal Investigator of the project
vikki.mccall@stir.ac.uk /
[@vikki_mccall](https://www.linkedin.com/in/vikki_mccall)