

ASUME

Volunteering in Dementia



attract

Overwhelmingly, Activity Friend participants reported positive experiences in their role of Activity Friend. This was interesting in that the pathway to becoming an Activity Friend seems a natural progression from previous volunteer roles or experience with dementia, something that each participant in the Norway study had in common.

In regards to attracting people into volunteering, there were numerous routes that were taken. However, personal experience of dementia was a key connection. Volunteers were asked what attracted them to becoming an Activity Friend. Of the 6 potential options given, the most common attraction was previous personal experience of dementia (48.7%). Another relatively common attraction was having volunteered before in another context (35.9%). The survey feedback indicated for the importance of word of mouth from staff, family and other volunteers and just one person mentioned social media as a route into volunteering.

it is a pleasure to be an Activity Friend (smiles) (AF3)

Reasons volunteers were attracted to being an activity friend. N = 39.

	Yes	No
Previous personal experience of dementia	19 (48.7%)	20 (51.3%)
Career-related reasons	12 (30.8%)	27 (69.2%)
Attached to job	1 (2.6%)	38 (97.4%)
The organisation was attractive	9 (23.1%)	30 (76.9%)
Other volunteering experience	14 (35.9%)	25 (64.1%)
Skill development	7 (18%)	32 (82%)

This was further highlighted in the qualitative data that indicated experiences with family members living with dementia was a common route into volunteering in dementia care.

I started when I lost my wife. It started at random. I was visiting my wife at the nursing home, and then... yes that's how I started... They asked me, and as I was used to being with people with dementia... my wife had Alzheimer and lived at home for 10 years. The last two months she stayed in the nursing home. (AF4)

Therefore reasons that people were attracted to volunteer in the field of dementia were related both to professional and personal experience, and overlapping. The ASUME UK study noted that personal relationships and professional backgrounds are clear pathways into dementia care, and this is a similar finding for those volunteering in Norway.

Söderhamn et al (2012) directly studies volunteering and dementia in Norway, aiming to outline the lived experiences of volunteers in an activity center aimed at those with early stage dementia. Qualitative interviews in the activity center indicated positive experiences. Similarly to the UK ASUME study, volunteers were often linked with a professional background in health and social care. The Norwegian context highlighted the importance of people with 'caring behaviour' and the importance of social interaction and social setting. Söderhamn et al (2012) conclude that trust and freedom are importance aspects that should be encouraged for volunteering in dementia care in the Norwegian context.

I think this is a splendid offer and more people should participate. I see many at the "Helsetunet" who need someone at least talking with them. I participated in an Activity Friend course but have not had much contact with "the group" since. It was, however, very useful and I learned a lot that since helped me in various settings (Volunteer comment, survey)



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