

ASUME



Volunteering in Dementia



sustain

Activity friends tended to see their roles as sustained over time, with many planning ongoing volunteering roles.

When asked to estimate this in years within the survey, 5 was the average response (below) showing that people viewed the role as long term. All participants in the interviews indicated expanding and evolving roles involving more people with dementia as they become more experienced. However, it is worth noting that many Activity Friends in the survey are older (38% are 70-79) and attracting younger people into being an Activity Friend would be a key way to build the sustainability of the programme.

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 had the Activity Friend training. But we just talk to the managers of the organisation when we think something needs to be changed, we talk to them and they change things. We handle things as they arise. I cannot think of anything that needs to be improved or changed. (AF1)

The interview participants indicated the importance of both peer and organisational support (via training, and Activity Friend co-ordinators). The survey indicated that group meetings are the most useful.

In regards to the specific skills needed for being an Activity Friend, flexibility and availability were seen as important skills. Although many people had experience of dementia as indicated above, this was not viewed as important compared to communication skills, availability and flexibility. Respondents accessed a range of forms of support, and asked how useful it was, if they received it.

Estimates time in years	Frequency(% of responses)
1	2 (14.3%)
1.5	1 (7.1%)
2	1 (7.1%)
3	1 (7.1%)
4	2 (14.3%)
5	4 (28.6%)
10	2 (14.3%)
15	1 (7.1%)

Length of time in years that activity friends plan to continue volunteering. N = 14. Mean = 5 years.

How useful volunteers found forms of support if received. For those that do not receive a given support form, availability not specified.

Support type	Very useful	It's ok	Not very useful	N=	Doesn't utilise/ unavailable
Training courses or workshops	10	16	1	27 (69.2%)	12 (30.8%)
Group meetings	10	12	1	23 (59%)	16 (41%)
One-to-one peer support (e.g. buddying)	6	6	2	14(35.9%)	25 (64.1%)
Group peer support	7	12	0	19 (48.7%)	20 (51.3%)
Online/virtual/ telephone peer support	4	5	2	11 (28.2%)	28 (71.8%)
Weekly supervision	1	5	3	9 (23.1%)	30 (76.9%)
Monthly supervision	1	5	2	8 (20.5%)	31 (79.5%)
Travel expenses	8	7	3	18 (46.2%)	21 (53.8%)

The most commonly received form of support (69.2%) was training courses or workshops, which volunteers generally found to be useful. With more respondents indicating that training was 'okay' than 'very useful', there may be scope for the usefulness of training to be improved. 59% also participated in group meetings, which were also broadly considered useful, although again there

I will continue being an Activity Friend as long as I am able to do it. (AF1)

may be potential to increase the utility of this source of support given the number of respondents who indicated that this was 'okay' rather than 'very useful'. Less than half of volunteers received weekly or monthly supervision. Of those who did, satisfaction levels were relatively low. A further

question related to support received asked whether the organisation that Activity Friends belonged to had a written volunteer management strategy. Of the 34 that provided a response, 44% said theirs did. The other 56% were unsure. No volunteers stated that their organisation did not have such a written strategy.

Training courses and workshops were also seen as useful, and the qualitative interviews indicated that the specific Activity Friends training worked well for them. There was an indication that volunteers expected to face challenges in this role, and most respondents indicated skills they had from previous experience as being useful for managing these challenges. One important challenge faced by the volunteers was feelings of bereavement (both with their own family and those people with dementia they were volunteering with), which is an unmet need that should be acknowledged/ supported.



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://twitter.com/vikki_mccall)