

# ASUME

## Volunteering in Dementia



### understand

The activities themselves between volunteers and those living with dementia focused a lot on walking (movement), talking, singing, shopping, eating and games (such as bingo, Ludo etc.).

*We do the shopping; make sandwiches, coffee, and stuff. Then when the others arrive with the tenants from their walk, we eat and talk. We play games and bingo, we sing and I read poems, not my own (laughs). This happens every second Wednesday. (AF2).*

*I guess it was because I was interested in helping others. Like when we started Helselaget [the local sub-group of Nasjonalforeningen]. We noted that some people were unable to get out and join in activities. We had meetings where they participated once a week, and we arranged Christmas parties. The need for Activity Friends just grew. We had entertainment, singing, food and Bingo, and things like that. (AF3)*

Activity Friends tend to be older, with the survey indicating more women than men taking part in supporting those with dementia. Activities themselves are more commonly one-to-one (51%) but also in groups (24%). Activities were typically focused around events or key dates, and the qualitative data shows that these are focused on quite active activities such as walking, dancing, and singing.

### Impact on volunteers

Related activities in volunteering with people with dementia were seen as a positive experience for volunteers themselves, who felt they benefited from this interaction. The interaction from volunteers was also not exclusively with those with dementia but also the wider organisational support, as volunteers reported positive outcomes from interacting with other volunteers and gaining support from the organisation in terms of training. This was shown to overcome barriers and make volunteers more comfortable with their roles:

*In the beginning, it was a bit scary but everything worked out well. It is all positive experiences to me. I meet many people in different stages... and no, I just like it, I take people for walks, I drive them to activities and home again. We have a nice time during the drive. We also have a lot of support from the organisation. They explained everything during the course and prepared us for our tasks. (AF1)*

## Perspectives of those with dementia

Independence was a key element of what those with dementia were sharing. Really interestingly, each person with dementia interviewed emphasised their independence, that they have no need for help (while also often acknowledging they do get help):

*"I do not need any help. Think it is difficult to talk to some of the others. There is no help at home. Manage domestic activities myself. [Whispers] My daughters checks up whether it is dirty (laughs) (PD3).*

This shows that the role of 'friend' works well for those with dementia and volunteers. What all the volunteers had in common was the positive feelings generated from being needed, similar to the ASUME UK study. Volunteering was clearly not a one-way process with only those with dementia gaining, but a two-way give and take where volunteers saw perceived benefits.

*Well, I took care of my wife for 10 years. She had Alzheimers and would rather jump off a cliff then be tended to by health care professionals. I think she would have managed too (laughs) (AF4)*



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