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WEST
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VOLUNTEERING
SUPPORT

Volunteering in Care Homes

A good practice guide



A shared resource for
developing knowledge





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Please contact your local County Voluntary Council (CVC) about involving volunteers. Specialist staff are on hand to help ensure you are taking the right steps.



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Introduction

This guide provides an overview of how volunteers, and the third sector, can add value in a care home. It provides information about key considerations when thinking of involving volunteers and options for your next steps.

Care homes are part of the health and social care system, providing a home and essential care at a key stage of life. Volunteers can add value by complementing the role of paid staff, providing a positive impact to the wellbeing of residents.

During the pandemic, extensive research took place along with pilot projects to help address the pressures that care homes were facing. Using the expertise from two local County Voluntary Councils, careful consideration was given to how care homes could involve volunteers and how third sector organisations may become better connected.

The development of this guide has been funded by Welsh Government through the Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering (West Glamorgan Volunteering Support). The content is based on real experiences of involving volunteers and third sector organisations in care homes and has been written by those who have extensive, expert knowledge in volunteering good practice.

The guide is complemented by a number of information sheets, toolkits and volunteer induction training resources that have been developed as part of the **West Glamorgan Volunteer Support** project. 

The 'third sector' is a term used to describe the range of organisations that are independent organisations neither, public sector nor private sector. It includes community associations, self-help groups, voluntary organisations, charities, faith-based organisations, social enterprises, community businesses, housing associations, development trusts, co-operatives and mutual organisations.



Please watch this short documentary which will introduce you to some of the key considerations needed to involve volunteers in care homes.

Care Home Case Study – West Glamorgan Volunteering Support on Vimeo

Definition of Volunteering

The Welsh Government's Volunteering Policy: supporting communities, changing lives (2015) defines volunteering as activity which:

- is undertaken freely, by choice
- is undertaken to be of public/ community benefit
- is not undertaken for financial gain.



Strategic Context

The Welsh Government recognises the wide scope and diversity of voluntary activity across the whole spectrum of society and the contribution voluntary and community organisations and individual volunteers make to the economic, social, environmental, cultural and linguistic life of Wales.

The Government of Wales Act 2006

The Welsh Government's commitment to recognise the value of the third sector and its contribution to the wellbeing of Wales, its people and communities is set out in the **Third Sector Scheme**, under Section 74 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014

The Act provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support and for transforming social services in Wales. The Act strengthens the role of the voluntary sector and encourages partnership working to improve people's wellbeing and the quality of care and support provided.

A Healthier Wales

A Healthier Wales outlines the Welsh Government's vision of a 'whole system approach to health and social care' and acknowledges the vital role that volunteers play in supporting health and wellbeing.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act legislates for public bodies to work together and with people and communities to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Volunteering and the activities of the voluntary sector help contribute to the achievement of the seven wellbeing goals set out in the Act.

Framework for Volunteering in Health and Social Care

The Framework is a resource developed to support all organisations engaged with volunteering in health and social care. This Framework offers a series of common questions that should be considered by all organisations involved in volunteering.





Section One – Why Involve Volunteers?

Volunteers make a significant contribution to the economy of Wales. It is estimated that every year, volunteers contribute 221 million hours, which is worth £2.2 billion. Volunteering also has significant value, (less easily defined in monetary terms), within social cohesion, economic regeneration, and the development of social capital.

When thinking about involving volunteers, it's important that you understand the value of volunteering and the wide range of benefits volunteering brings to your care home, residents and their families, and to volunteers themselves.

Benefits of Involving Volunteers

For Volunteers

Volunteering can be a way of:

- Improving volunteer's health and well-being.
- Giving back to the community.
- Gaining new skills, knowledge and experience or using/developing existing skills.
- Improving employability.
- Enhancing a Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- Helping to find out whether a career in health and social care is the right pathway.

- Receiving training useful to health and social care setting.
- Improving health (physical and mental) and well-being, confidence or self-esteem.
- Sharing expertise or experience, or learning from the lived experience of others.
- Expanding social connections and being part of a team.
- Developing a sense of community.
- Gaining a sense of purpose and feeling valued.

For Care Homes

Involving volunteers can enhance the services provided by paid staff and provide an opportunity to link with the local community by:

- Engaging a more diverse range of people, skills, experience and knowledge.
- Reducing pressure on staff who may have limited time to interact with residents.
- Adding value through intergenerational understanding, helping to break down barriers and assumptions about age.
- Assisting staff to improve the social and emotional well-being of care home residents and providing additional reassurance to residents' family and friends.



- Helping the care home team to better meet the diverse needs of residents, including those with dementia and high-level needs.
- Workforce development: Care homes may consider inviting care home volunteers to apply for paid employment, recognising skills gained in volunteering could be further developed with additional training and support.
- Gaining an insight into the culture and community which surrounds the care home.

For Residents and their Families

Volunteers can enhance the resident's wellbeing. They can provide another welcoming face to visitors and they can offer reassurance to families that their loved ones have someone to talk to. Involving volunteers can help residents by:

- Providing opportunities for residents to interact with a range of people in their local community.
- Helping to reduce loneliness.
- Enhancing the daily lives of residents by offering a broad range of meaningful activities matching their needs.
- Aiding to reduce levels of inactivity.
- Improving the emotional wellbeing of residents through meaningful conversations with volunteers who are not constrained by work pressures.

A significant amount of research shows how harmful social isolation can be to mental and physical health. By increasing social interaction, some of these harmful impacts can be mitigated. Evidence also shows how valuable singing and playing music can be in helping individuals who suffer from dementia. There is considerable potential for the time and resource invested in volunteering to be repaid because of the positive impact the extra time on social and fun activities has on the wellbeing of residents.

Research has shown that communities with higher levels of volunteering have lower crime rates, improved educational performance, greater life satisfaction and better health. Volunteering helps build strong, connected and resilient communities where people can thrive.



Section Two – What Could Volunteers Do?

Volunteers should never be used in the same role as a paid member of staff, nor to save money. Tasks such as personal care, feeding and manual handling are not tasks for volunteers. Responsibility for these types of tasks should always lie with paid staff. Volunteers support the wellbeing of residents and can free up staff but, importantly, volunteers never replace staff.

Examples of appropriate roles for volunteers

Supporting Activity Coordinators

with the delivery of a range of planned activities, including chair-based exercises, music and singing sessions, arts and crafts or reminiscing activities. Volunteers can increase the range and type of activities offered by their involvement, skills and interests.

Increasing social contact and mental stimulation

including sitting one-to-one with a resident or supporting a small group to chat. Volunteers can help residents stay connected to the wider community, they can bring news and information about what is happening in the area. Volunteers can provide additional mental stimulation, particularly for residents with dementia. Volunteers are not involved in care tasks and so can instead focus on stimulating residents, including watching films, listening to music, reading, doing puzzles or playing games.

Keeping families informed – Volunteers can play a vital role in helping residents to settle into a care home, either permanently or as part of their recovery from hospital. Volunteers can keep families up-to-date with news of how their family member is settling in, possibly supporting residents to use technology to connect with their loved ones on a more regular basis.

Independent visiting – Specialist volunteers can be trained and supported (usually by a specialised project) to build a consistent, positive relationship with a resident. They can provide a listening ear, pass on concerns raised by residents, encourage choice and ensure the voice of the resident can be heard.

There are many ways to involve volunteers in your care home.



Volunteers are there to compliment paid staff, not replace them.



Section Three – Planning the Involvement of Volunteers

It will take several months to plan for the involvement of volunteers but getting it right is essential. Organisations have a duty of care to volunteers to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

You should carefully plan for volunteers before involving them in your care home. Think about why you want to involve volunteers, what this will add, the different roles volunteers could undertake, what resources you have in place and whether you have the staff with expertise to recruit, train and support the volunteers.

Recruiting and managing volunteers is different to managing paid staff. Volunteer management training and resources are useful, highlighting the distinct differences, including being mindful of not creating a contractual arrangement with a volunteer. Whilst some care homes recruit volunteers directly, many will use a third sector organisation to recruit and manage volunteers on their behalf – mainly because third sector organisations have the right expertise, policies and procedures in place to support volunteers safely and efficiently.

For organisations involving volunteers, there is a 'Code of Practice' plus a quality standard called 'Investing in Volunteers'. Before involving volunteers, you should check if you can meet or work towards these best practice standards. Volunteers will need to be included in your risk assessments, insurance and health and safety policies.

Involving volunteers costs money so it's important to identify a budget and decide if you have adequate resources to support volunteers. You will need to consider whether you have designated staff who are confident and competent to recruit, train and support your volunteers or whether you will need to recruit a Volunteer Coordinator.

There will be costs for time and money spent on advertising, recruiting, training, vetting, supporting and supervising staff. A budget is needed for costs such as volunteer expenses, training, staff time for supervision, admin and DBS (police) checks. You should decide what the capacity is within the care home in terms of budget and staff time and design a plan that is sustainable. Getting it wrong, is a breach of national minimum standards and statutory guidance set by Care Home regulatory body Care Inspectorate Wales. It is important to have the right policies and procedures in place for your volunteers and a good understanding from paid staff.



Whilst planning for volunteers, you should consider how you can recruit and support a diverse volunteer base. Offering different times of the day or week for volunteer involving activities at your care home attracts a wider variety of people. Volunteers reflect your local community so ensure volunteers of different backgrounds, languages spoken, religion, age groups and gender can be part of the team.

Making links with schools, colleges, and universities can be great for developing intergenerational opportunities which bring vitality and connection to the youngest members of our community. This can enable younger people to consider career paths in care, but some volunteering roles may be best reserved for those aged 16 or even 18+ years.

There are plenty of ways the third sector can support you such as providing training, resources, activities and digital support. Consider the ways the wider community can participate in your care home e.g. inviting choirs, schools or local groups in to perform or help. Involving people doesn't always have to be about creating formal, regular volunteering opportunities – you could look at creating one-off opportunities.

Getting everyone involved in planning

When planning for volunteers consider a wide involvement from the start. Involving stakeholders in the process helps consideration from different perspectives, collection of a range of ideas and supports 'buy in'. It helps to ensure that everyone understands why you are considering involving volunteers and the added value that they will bring to your care home.

Consider how you manage staff and volunteer relations. Some staff may be concerned that involving volunteers is a threat to their jobs, so it's important that staff understand that volunteers are there to complement their role, not replace them. Wales TUC Cymru and Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) have developed a great guide that can help to strengthen relationships:



Charter for volunteering and workplace relationships.



Working co-productively to develop volunteering opportunities with your residents, their families and your employees will help you to create meaningful roles that are supported and sustainable.

- Get everyone together in a group at the care home for a cuppa and a chat.
- Provide opportunities for individual chats – some people may feel more confident to speak one-to-one.
- Develop surveys or digital questionnaires.

You could try a range of engagement activities at various times and in various ways: considering accessibility will be important. What questions could you ask?

“What would improve day-to-day life in this care home?”

Can we develop volunteer roles to aid this?

“Are there particular times of the day residents want to get involved in activities with volunteers?”

“What do residents miss about not being at “home”?”

Could volunteers help with this?





Section Four – Volunteer Management and Support

Support from your local County Voluntary Council

In each area of Wales there is a County Voluntary Council (CVC) where staff have expertise in advising those who involve volunteers. Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) is a network consisting of all the CVCs and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). TSSW has a library of free resources that are used predominantly by charities who are managing their volunteers but can be useful to any sector considering how they can involve volunteers safely.

Your CVC should be your first stop! They will be able to guide you through the necessary preparatory steps when considering involving volunteers and can help you through initial stages. CVC's offer Volunteer Management training and facilitate forums for support and knowledge development around volunteering. They can also help you access the volunteer recruitment platform which advertises volunteering opportunities.



www.volunteering-wales.net

The role of Volunteer Coordinators

Volunteer Coordinators are responsible for volunteers and ensuring the organisation's volunteering objectives and goals are met.

They create the right culture for volunteering and provide a link to the staff team. Volunteer Coordinators will be responsible for recruiting, training and supervising volunteers and will create and review volunteer policies, role descriptions and risk assessments. They would be responsible for recording the recruitment and vetting details and arrange practicalities such as rotas and training attendance.

Volunteer Coordinators need to be confident in dealing with any challenging situations so it's important that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to follow. To do all of this, they require appropriate training and ongoing support themselves. This role is best kept as an entire role not as an add on to another role undertaken by a member of staff.



Training for volunteers

To ensure volunteers are ready for their roles, a comprehensive induction training needs to be designed and delivered to cover topics like confidentiality, boundaries, diversity, health and safety and safeguarding, making sure volunteers know what to do with safeguarding concerns. It should also cover topics specific to the care home setting such as 'infection control' to ensure volunteers remain safe in their roles.

Providing ongoing support and retaining your volunteers

Volunteer Coordinators need to provide ongoing support and supervision with volunteers to ensure everyone is safe and happy and that a high-quality service to residents is given. Supervision clarifies the volunteering role, provides opportunities for constructive feedback and identifies any additional support that may be needed.

A Volunteer Coordinator will link with other staff at the care home who may provide day-to-day support to the volunteer (e.g. the Activity Coordinator) and will ask for feedback. They need to be able to keep everyone updated and regularly say 'thanks' to volunteers, including marking Volunteers' Week June 1st – June 7th every year.

Volunteer Coordinators are aware not to rely too heavily on certain volunteers and try to ensure volunteers do not give too much time (3-4 hours per week is the average commitment for a volunteer) which can lead to burn out.

Saying goodbye to your volunteers

Volunteers will stay for various time periods. Regardless of whether they have been with you for a long time or not, you should find out the reasons why they are leaving. Find out what they liked about their experiences and where support could be improved. Sometimes volunteers may move on, gain employment or simply fancy trying something different. You can signpost them to your local CVC for advice on other suitable volunteer opportunities.





Working with a Third Sector Organisation to Manage Volunteers in your Care Home

Regardless of whether you decide to manage volunteers yourself or work with a third sector organisation to manage volunteers on your behalf, a new best practice volunteering initiative would take months to set up. Here are some considerations if you team up with a third sector organisation.

Step 1: Initial discussions between third sector organisation and care home

Initial discussions should take place to establish why the care home wants to involve volunteers and what their understanding of volunteering is. The third sector organisation can provide information about their experience in managing volunteers, including what policies and procedures they have in place. Discuss a mutual understanding of the role of the volunteers and what resources will be needed to support this initiative.

Step 2: Agreeing the volunteer project in detail

Confirm arrangements for health and safety e.g. insurance, risk assessments and whether the role will require a DBS check. Have a conversation about what topics will need to be covered in induction training and any additional training required for the role. Agree who will be responsible for what.

Step 3: Setting up a formal agreement

An agreement outlining mutual responsibilities should be signed to ensure clarity for both parties involved. It should include specifications of the volunteer service, details of funding, expectations and any monitoring requirements.

Step 4: Monitoring and Evaluation


It will be important to agree a programme of progress meetings to keep track on the development and implementation of the service. This will keep both parties on track with the plans, avoid delays, develop clear mutual expectations and to address any concerns that may have arisen.





Additional Reading

Here you will find a number of links which will take you to more information, advice and volunteering good practice resources.

[WCVA/TUC Charter for volunteering and workplace relationships: Clarifying and Strengthening relations between paid workers and volunteers](#) 

This charter will help stimulate discussion and good practice regarding effective, appropriate and mutually rewarding volunteer involvement.

[Code of Practice for Organisations Involving Volunteers](#) 

Follow the 20 key principles for ensuring best practice in recruiting and managing volunteers in Wales.

[Third Sector Support Wales' Knowledge Hub](#) 

Here you will find a range of documents that can help you to consider what needs to be in place to provide effective support to volunteers.

[Measuring the impact of activity & mobility support volunteers - Insight and Impact service case study](#) Tags: I&I 

This resource provides useful information to develop an impact measurement tool where volunteers have been providing activity support.

[Age Cymru's Care Home Volunteer Pilot Project Report](#) 

Age Cymru has developed a resource based on a pilot project they began during the Covid-19 pandemic where they managed volunteers in care homes.

[West Glamorgan Volunteering Support](#) 

You will find a range of information sheets, toolkits and links to volunteer induction training packs here.

[Investing in Volunteers](#) 

Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management.





Please see below some useful contact details of individuals/organisations that may be able to assist you.



Contact Details for Swansea Council for Voluntary Service



Swansea Council for Voluntary Service
7 Walter Road
Swansea
SA1 5NF

 01792 544000
 scvs@scvs.org.uk



Contact Details for Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service

Neath Port Talbot Council
for Voluntary Service
Ty Margaret Thorne
17-19 Alfred Street
Neath
SA11 1EF

 01639 631246
 info@nptcvs.org.uk

Contact Details for Third Sector Support Wales

If you're not a Care Home operating in Swansea or Neath Port Talbot area, then you can contact your local County Voluntary Council or Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

Please click on the following link for their contact details:



<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

West Glamorgan Volunteering Support is a multi-agency project creating shared resources to develop the knowledge, management and coordination of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations across the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas. It has been funded through the Welsh Government Volunteering Recovery Fund.

The project partners are:

Neath Port Talbot Council, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Swansea Council, Swansea Council for Voluntary Service and West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board.

**For more information visit:
www.westglamorgan.org.uk/wgvs**