

HOT TOPIC: A SNAPSHOT OF THE VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE ACROSS THE NORTH WEST

With a growing number of volunteers being used within NHS trusts to carry out a range of tasks (including some tasks within clinical areas) there is a need to understand what exactly volunteers do and the contribution they make to patient care and experience, as well as how they are managed to help deliver NHS services.

NHS Employers have developed a volunteering pack intended to help NHS trusts manage their volunteers more effectively, stating that “volunteers who are both well managed and supported are more likely to stay with an organisation, building their skills and knowledge and contributing to effective and value-for-money services. Good volunteer management also ensures that risk is managed effectively”. This pack provides employers with the practical information they need to help them respond to the Department of Health’s strategic vision for volunteering and provides advice on recruitment, training and induction, managing volunteers and problem solving.

Against the backdrop of such guidance this hot topic is intended as a snapshot of several North West trusts, as a means of gaining an insight into how, in practice, volunteers are trained, recruited, monitored and managed within individual organisations.

Volunteers

Volunteers come from all walks of life and play a very important role in the NHS. Working in a range of settings they provide a variety of services alongside paid staff, and are often a key part of patient services. There are already thousands of volunteers in the NHS, involved in services ranging from mentoring, befriending and peer support through to assisting with recycling, working in hospital radio or cafes and even fish tank maintenance. Volunteering can help people to gain new skills and experience and, for some, can provide a stepping stone to paid employment. Someone who is admitted to hospital for a routine appointment, for example, may meet many different volunteers who will not only greet them as they arrive in the clinic, but may also sell them a drink at the cafe, make sure they’re comfortable once in the clinic, or help feed them if they’re unable to do so themselves.(NHS Careers, n.d)

Participating Trusts

Several trusts have contributed to this report by submitting information on how their volunteer workforce is recruited, trained and governed. Primarily these included; Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust, Wirral Community NHS Trust and St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. Other organisations have also provided information around how volunteer numbers and activity are monitored, including; The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust and Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust.

Policies and Procedures

Whilst there does not appear to be a cohesive approach across the North West as to how volunteers are managed locally, of those Trusts sampled each has a set of policy documentation in place that helps govern their recruitment and management. For instance, Salford Royal has extensive



documentation including policies on how to manage volunteers, and protocols around volunteer registration and the payment of volunteers' expenses. Wirral community has also recently reviewed and approved the policy which it actively uses to manage volunteers, whilst St Helens and Knowsley is at the final stage of ratifying its volunteer policy which it has been using in draft format until now. This will soon go to the Trust's governance council, and once signed off a comprehensive volunteer handbook will also be circulated to underpin it

Volunteer Management

Each Trust has a volunteer manager/coordinator who is responsible for recruiting, managing and monitoring volunteers. The number of people they are responsible for varies, depending on the size of their Trust and its demand for volunteers. Of the Trusts sampled Wirral has 100 (with 20 more pending), Salford Royal 330 and St Helens and Knowsley around 700 at time of going to print. However the approach to managing volunteers appears broadly similar. Within Salford Royal the volunteer coordinator reports to the HR service manager and in turn to the deputy director of HR. Volunteering is reported on at executive-led assurance committees, and in the workplace volunteers are managed operationally by their assigned supervisors, who are staff from the department in which they are hosted. At Wirral Community the volunteer manager is supported by the membership and engagement manager, where volunteers are also managed on a daily basis by department/service managers.

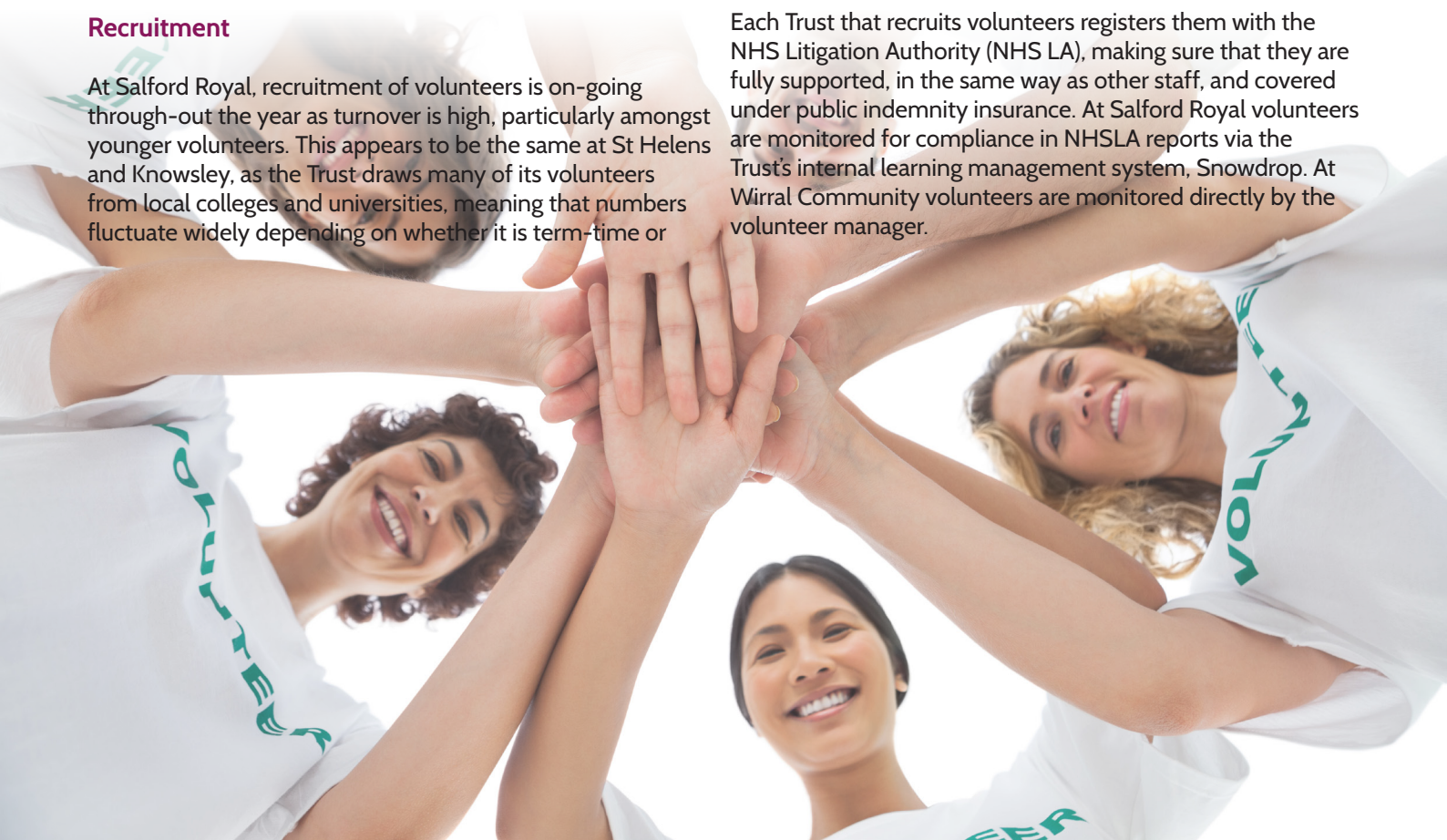
Recruitment

At Salford Royal, recruitment of volunteers is on-going through-out the year as turnover is high, particularly amongst younger volunteers. This appears to be the same at St Helens and Knowsley, as the Trust draws many of its volunteers from local colleges and universities, meaning that numbers fluctuate widely depending on whether it is term-time or

not. Many students undertake voluntary placements to illustrate their personal development or to gain vital work experience as a route into healthcare professions. This often leads to volunteers going on to do apprenticeships or to join NHS staff banks in clerical or healthcare assistant roles. At Wirral Community a new approach is being trialled, whereby volunteers are recruited via public membership and the Trust's website, rather than word of mouth. This is a complete change from the system that has used over the past ten years and may lead to a broader range of people being recruited.

Although Wirral Community is adopting a more electronic approach from 2014 onwards, it will still require applicants to complete a full recruitment and selection process, including; an application form, two references, an interview with the volunteer manager, and occupational health and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where appropriate. St Helens and Knowsley and Salford Royal also carry out a thorough recruitment process, which mirrors that of other paid staff. However Salford Royal has a slightly different approach in that rather than interviewing volunteers centrally, the volunteer management team hosts interview panels for specific departments that wish to host volunteers, including departmental staff to enable them to have a direct link with the volunteers they recruit from the offset. Meanwhile the team manage the process of registration internally, conducting all of the relevant checks and coordinating placements. St Helens and Knowsley's volunteer services on the other hand carry out the entire process centrally, before placing volunteers throughout the Trust according to their skills.

Each Trust that recruits volunteers registers them with the NHS Litigation Authority (NHS LA), making sure that they are fully supported, in the same way as other staff, and covered under public indemnity insurance. At Salford Royal volunteers are monitored for compliance in NHSLA reports via the Trust's internal learning management system, Snowdrop. At Wirral Community volunteers are monitored directly by the volunteer manager.



Induction and Training

At Salford Royal volunteers undertake the Trust's corporate induction in the same way as Trust staff, benefiting from a full introduction to its values and their role within the organisation. This is accompanied by extra sessions specific to volunteers in areas such as assisted feeding and dementia awareness. The Trust operates a policy of 100% compliance and volunteer's mandatory training is recorded on Snowdrop, which is the internal Learning Management Service, as well as the volunteer database. Training compliance is regularly monitored and staff from volunteer services are in regular contact with volunteers as they approach dates of renewal. Volunteers who are non-compliant and do not engage with training are suspended from duty.

Wirral Community's mandatory training for volunteers consists of corporate induction and non-person manual handling training. Volunteers attend the morning session of a corporate induction together with other staff, which consists of; welcome to the trust, working for the trust, infection control and fraud prevention. Paid staff then stay on for the afternoon session that covers payroll and other relevant staff information. Training for volunteers also includes; local induction, risk assessment, declaration of confidence, and information governance, which is currently delivered by the service manager. However the Trust is currently working on the development of a bespoke training package for volunteers.

Within St Helens & Knowsley, before a volunteer is even given an application form they take part in an initial induction, which takes place at the Trust every quarter. These events have been attended by up to 150 people at a time and cover issues such as safeguarding, infection control, equality and diversity, spiritual care, and falls management, so that potential recruits understand what would be expected of them. Before they can be placed volunteers must undergo mandatory training in the same way as other staff and undertake the same cycle of training every three years. On the day they start they are given a local induction pack with practical information on issues such as fire evacuation, trust dress code and incident reporting. Recently volunteers have also been given access to literacy and numeracy courses if they want to go on to do an apprenticeship. Some volunteers have also received specific training on assessing patients with delirium in order to prevent and reduce the condition and to monitor how quickly patients recover, as part of a wellbeing pilot at the Trust.

Monitoring

Anecdotal evidence had suggested that some trusts record volunteer information on ESR. However feedback from the trusts participating in this snapshot suggest that they tend to be recorded locally on internal databases.

- **Salford Royal** – the volunteer coordinator has set up an access database to record volunteer information on. This includes features such as training compliance

management, and automated postal, email and text communication, which supports the management of the recruitment process. It keeps a track of all communications between the department, the volunteer and other parties which prevents duplication of tasks for volunteer services. ESR would not support this bespoke functionality. Volunteers' mandatory training is recorded separately on the Trust's learning management system

- **Wirral Community** – information on volunteers, such as mandatory training, is held by the volunteer services manager (VSM) on a volunteer services database, which can only be accessed by the VSM, her line manager and an administrative support officer. "As NHS employers do not advocate volunteers being held on ESR and the management of volunteers sits outside of HR, a separate system is utilised including paper and electronic systems".
- **The Christie** – volunteers are managed through the volunteer management team and recorded on a local spread sheet and not on ESR
- **St Helens and Knowsley** – do not record volunteers on ESR. The volunteer manager holds a local database which includes CRB/DBC data, induction training and personal details. "There is no reason why we could not record them on ESR as honorary assignments, we have never seen this as a priority"
- **Lancashire Care** – doesn't capture information about volunteers on ESR, but has a separate system which its volunteering team uses to store all the volunteering figures. The workforce team requests information from that team as and when they need it for reporting purposes.
- **Liverpool Community** – volunteers are currently managed on a separate system. The likelihood is that they will go onto ESR when they increase in numbers; however the trust is mindful of the charge that will be incurred as a consequence.

References

- NHS Careers, n.d
www.nhs.uk/working-in-the-nhs/joining-the-nhs/volunteering-in-the-nhs

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