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What difference do volunteers make anyway? 5th December 2023

### These are questions that were asked in the chat box on the day of the webinar that unfortunately we ran out of time to answer:

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| **Q: Is anyone else making a note to google "make a pompom with a fork" later??**  *NHS Tayside:* Instructions below: |
| **Q**: **Do volunteers get reimbursed for any / all costs?**  *Volunteer Edinburgh:* All out of pocket expenses are reimbursed by the engaging organisation. |
| **Q**: **We get asked for advice around inclusive recruitment and how best to reach a diverse background Do you have any examples were this has worked?**  *Volunteer Edinburgh:* Volunteers are drawn from the general public and range in age from teens to 80s from 20+ nationalities.  For information on Inclusive Volunteering, please see:  1 [Volunteering for your health and wellbeing - how we can help](https://www.volunteeredinburgh.org.uk/volunteer/health-and-wellbeing/)  2 [Equality and Diversity in Volunteering - VolunteerWiki](https://volunteerwiki.org.uk/wiki/Equality_and_Diversity_in_Volunteering)  Also, to our knowledge, the Royal Edinburgh Hospital is the only hospital in Scotland which engages volunteers who are current in-patients. Our cohort of in-patient volunteers are therefore all people with complex mental illnesses, brain injuries and other support needs. |
| **Q: I love the idea that the volunteers bring a different perspective and interaction with the patients with focus on the person not the symptoms – do you think this approach enhances patient care?**  *Volunteer Edinburgh:*It’s absolutely right. Especially in the ward like IPCU which is a closed ward and our patients have limited access with the outside ward. So having volunteers coming regularly to do the group sessions with our patients mean a lot to them. Volunteers bring human kindness into busy hospital life and they act more like friends to the patients. And patients are totally aware of it so they are always very grateful. |
| **Q: Do any of you have any examples of volunteer activities around food, fluid and nutrition (this could be assisting at mealtimes but also at other times of the day to offer opportunities for improving nutrient intakes)?**  *Volunteer Edinburgh:* Pre-lockdown volunteers delivered fresh fruit and vegetables to wards (for patients and staff) on behalf of a community food project.  An extension of the core volunteer service engages volunteers supporting soup making by former patients who are now in supported accommodation. |
| **Q: It must be hard for patients with language barriers - do you have active recruitment for ethnic minority volunteers?**  *Volunteer Edinburgh:* We have numerous positive experiences of volunteers from different ethnic backgrounds engaged in the Volunteer Hub and on wards. Many support patients to learn new languages or converse in their native language.  Lots of examples of recruiting volunteers with specific languages for matching with patients on wards who have no English (which exacerbates their loneliness and isolation). A recent example involved the recruitment of a Ukrainian volunteer to spend time with a lady with dementia who spoke no English. Her inability to communicate with ward staff was increasing her distress and confusion. Ward staff were in tears when they saw her face light up when she started to converse with a trained and compassionate volunteer who spoke her language.  Our recruitment of volunteers from specific nationalities benefits from VE’s strong relationships with a range of community ethnic minority organisations. |
| **Q: I'm curious whether such a comprehensive induction programme may discourage potential volunteers?**  *Volunteer Edinburgh:* It has never been our experience that our training programme discourages potential volunteers – in fact the opposite is the case. Volunteers report that they are attracted by the level and detail of training they receive for these roles. It certainly supports volunteers’ motivation and commitment. |
| **Q: How / who manages any issues you have with volunteers and how is feedback managed by staff?**  *Volunteer Edinburgh:* To be fair since I took a role as a recreational nurse I’ve never had any issues with volunteers. If there is an occasion of an inappropriate interaction between a patient and a volunteer, I manage to give feedback and support just after the session and give advice for the future. |
| **Q: Great to hear about the volunteer experiences report - can you provide a link to the published report when it is available as I would like to read it?**  *HIS Volunteering Team:* Report link below:  [Experiences of NHS Scotland Volunteers | HIS Engage](https://www.hisengage.scot/equipping-professionals/volunteering-in-nhs-scotland/evidence-of-impact/experiences-of-nhs-scotland-volunteers/) |