

Helpforce Cymru



WINTER UPDATE 2021

This is a brief update to let you know what's been going on in recent months.

VOLUNTEERING TO SUPPORT THE VACCINATION PROGRAMME

Helpforce Cymru has been supporting the coordination of volunteering to assist the Covid-19 vaccination programme, providing liaison and information sharing between Health Boards, national government and NHS agencies, national voluntary organisations and CVCs.

Health Boards are co-ordinating local arrangements – defining volunteer roles and onboarding processes and working with local partners including CVCs to recruit volunteers as and where needed. The magnificent volunteer response to Covid last March means that in many areas there are plenty of existing volunteers available to help. It is recommended that you contact your local Health Board for local information.

Enquiries from volunteers who may be qualified to administer vaccinations can be directed to St John Ambulance Cymru, who will signpost people appropriately. Contact details can be found in this blog ['Volunteers supporting vaccination'](#).

SENEDD ENQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Helpforce Cymru was invited to give evidence to the Equality, Local Government and Communities committee at the start of its enquiry, in November. Focus groups were also held with volunteers and volunteer centre staff in order to give a fuller volunteering perspective.

The evidence [session is available on Senedd TV](#) and a report on the enquiry is expected to be available in February.

VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTING HEALTH AND CARE

A third video produced in conjunction with Welsh Government highlights, in infographic form, how volunteers are contributing to [A Healthier Wales](#). This is available on the [Helpforce Cymru web page](#), along with the two earlier videos featuring specific volunteering projects.

Early conversations initiated by [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) have paved the way for developing the role of volunteers to support care homes. The most urgent identified need is to enable family visiting (subject to current guidelines for safe practice during the pandemic) and to support families connecting with their loved ones using digital technologies. Helpforce Cymru will be supporting this agenda in the coming months.

VOLUNTEERING AND END OF LIFE CARE

Seven projects across the UK have all faced challenges and delays due to Covid 19; some have changed course and established virtual models of volunteer service, or shifted focus from end of life to bereavement support.

All three pilot projects in Wales (Powys THB, Hywel Dda UHB and Aneurin Bevan UHB) have 'gone live' on a small scale. Two offer a virtual volunteer companion service and one is ward based. We are finalising impact and evaluation plans for each, aligning to common measures where possible but tailoring to the local context as appropriate. A theory of change is being drawn up to describe the activities, expected outcomes and intermediate outcomes for each project. Monthly project data will be collected until July, with data analysis, reports and dissemination of learning to follow.

EVIDENCE FOR IMPACTFUL VOLUNTEERING ROLES IN HOSPITALS

Over the past 18 months Helpforce and NHS trusts in England have been developing and evaluating volunteer roles including [mealtime support](#), [companionship of older and vulnerable patients](#), [active response volunteer](#), [activity and mobility volunteers](#), [discharge support](#), [end of life care](#). A service

guide has been produced for each of these, drawing on the experience and learning from the pilot projects.

Key findings from the evaluation are:

- **Volunteers improve patient experience and help patients feel more supported at a difficult time**
For example: by helping patients to keep fit and well during their hospital stay and after returning home - eating and drinking well and maintaining mobility
- **Volunteers help the wellbeing of NHS staff and create more time for care**
For example: by helping to free up staff time, enabling them to focus more on clinical care related activities
- **Volunteers contribute to the efficiency of a hospital**
For example: by being on hand to help collect 'To Take Out' medicines (TTO) and so speeding up patient discharge and helping patient flow
- **Volunteers may pursue a career in the NHS as a result of their volunteering**
For example: volunteers consistently showed interest in pursuing a career within the NHS
- **Volunteering contributes to volunteer wellbeing**

The [full report](#) rates the findings using a traffic light system, identifying whether evidence is compelling, promising or limited. There was limited evidence, for example, that volunteer discharge support has longer term impact on readmissions. A [summary report](#) is also available.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING TO SUPPORT HEALTH AND CARE

Building on the findings of our web event last September: '[Volunteering to Support the NHS – looking forward in the light of Covid 19](#)' we are delighted to have the opportunity to develop the work through a two month funded project which will:

- Map the scope of current culture and practice for volunteering in health and care, exploring reasons for regional variations, changes due to Covid and fears or ambitions for the future
- Identify the '[prudent value](#)' of volunteering and enablers of a positive volunteering culture
- Identify opportunities for significant development and impact
- Develop a framework to enable sustainable integration of volunteering in planning and delivery of health and care services

The project team comprises Helpforce Cymru/WCVA, Bevan Commission, Social Care Wales and Richard Newton Consulting and the work will be supported by a wider reference group of stakeholders.

The project is grant funded by the Welsh Government Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering 2020/21. This fund is supporting a number of projects related to the development of sustainable volunteering. We look forward to linking up with a number of them in the course of our work and exploring common agendas. To find out more or to tell us about innovation, research or exemplary practice that you are involved with, contact Fiona fliddell@wcva.cymru.

RECENT BLOGS

We were pleased to write a guest blog for NHS Confederation Wales website '[Hidden Treasure: volunteering time and talent](#)' and to write a blog jointly with Wales Centre for Public Policy '[Building on strong foundations: the volunteer response to the pandemic in Wales](#)' which was publicised on WCVA and WCPP websites and on that of the [Institute of Volunteering Research](#), University of East Anglia.

A further blog: '[How do we maximise the impact of volunteering post-pandemic?](#)' draws on the evidence of case studies, videos and published tools to maintain momentum in rethinking the potential of volunteering.

Helpforce is working with Third Sector Support Wales (WCVA and 19 CVCs), Welsh Government and other partners to develop the potential of volunteering to support health and social care services in Wales.

Visit the [Helpforce Cymru web page](#)

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