



## **DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE PLAN FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

### **Consultation response from Helpforce Cymru**

1. Helpforce Cymru is working with Third Sector Support Wales, Welsh Government and others to develop the potential of volunteering in health and social care. It is hosted by Wales Council for Voluntary Action and funded by Welsh Government.
2. Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) is the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector in Wales. Our purpose is to enable voluntary organisations to make a bigger difference together.
3. Some comments are offered below, in relation to some of the themes of the consultation. Links to case studies are included, to illustrate the role of volunteering in relation to mental health services.

#### **Workforce supply and shape**

4. We welcome the recognition that volunteers have a vital role to play within mental health services and the need to better quantify and integrate this into long-term workforce planning - as expressed under Action 6:

*'Commission a programme of work to identify and define impactful volunteering roles which will help to inform workforce planning, education and training.'*

## **An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce**

5. Volunteers, (appropriately involved, resourced, trained and supported) can positively impact on the wellbeing of the mental health paid workforce.
6. Volunteers are not there to plug workforce gaps, but their involvement, for example in a mixed staff/volunteer team, can have significant impact on staff wellbeing and morale, including enabling system efficiencies. Volunteer services can reduce pressure on paid staff by addressing more preventative and low level mental health needs, such as for information, companionship or emotional support, allowing more staff to focus on areas where their professional skills are essential.

### **Case study: Restraint debrief service**

7. The Restraint Debrief service gives patients, who are experiencing severe mental ill health, a voice through a debriefing session with an independent volunteer, enabling the patient's voice to influence their care and possibly reduce future restraint.
8. [This service guide](#), based on evaluation of a Helpforce pilot study in Camden and Islington NHS Trust, aims to encourage the adoption of similar approaches elsewhere.

### **Case study: iCan Community Hubs**

9. Volunteers support a mental health service across 11 community hubs in North Wales. Some have lived experience of mental health problems and so are uniquely placed to offer support others with low level needs
10. Individuals can 'drop in' without need for an appointment or referral, to access support and advice on a range of issues including relationship breakdown, drug and alcohol problems, employment difficulties, bereavement, housing and loneliness.
11. Services in the different locations are provided by different voluntary sector organisations. Whilst the nature and range of services differs from one hub to another, they are commissioned by the health board, share a [common website](#) and all provide a friendly welcome, listening ear and practical support, easing the pressures on acute services.

## **Attraction and recruitment**

12. Volunteering gives people exposure to a distinct working environment and can give opportunities to explore personal interest and aptitudes which may influence career choices.
13. Whilst recognising that people volunteer for a range of motivations, more structured pathways can be developed which provide, alongside

volunteering activity, opportunities for conversation, reflection and information about career development.

14. This [Volunteer to Career](#) approach is being piloted with Health Boards/Trusts across England and Wales, with support from Helpforce.

### **Seamless workforce models**

15. Befriending, mentoring, advocacy, counselling and other forms of one to one support undertaken by volunteers in the community is part of a broad spectrum of intervention which promotes positive mental health. Clear connections and good working relationships between volunteer and professional services will enable volunteers to be effectively trained and supported and fosters more seamless services, through appropriate cross referrals.

### **Case study: Volunteers meeting culturally diverse needs**

16. Cardiff [Community Care and Wellbeing service](#) (CCAWS) provides flexible and bespoke support through its counselling, befriending and advocacy services, delivered by trained volunteers in a wide range of minority languages.

### **Case study: Keeping in touch with isolated older people**

17. Voluntary and community organisations are well placed to keep in touch with those who are lonely, isolated and at risk of anxiety and depression. [Reconnect 50+](#) takes referrals and supports vulnerable older people in Merthyr, through mentoring, telephone support and provision of social activities.

### **Excellent education and learning**

18. The draft plan states that there is a need to make education and training available to third sector partners and other agencies. This should be extended to include volunteers.
19. The All Wales Induction Framework has been successfully delivered in the [West Wales Health and Social Care Joint Induction Training Pilot](#) to a mixed cohort of learners – employed and not yet employed – including young carers.
20. There would be benefit to exploring how such a course could be extended more widely to volunteers, perhaps in a pared down or adapted version, in order to promote consistent care standards, integrated care and mutual trust between sectors and to enable career pathways.

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