

Volunteers – part of the vision for health and care in Powys



Powys Teaching Health Board and Powys Social Services department have long recognised the difference that volunteers can make within health and social care. Working together and supported by PAVO (Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations), they have seen volunteering grow in scale and at significant pace in recent years.

Volunteers have always been active through the many local voluntary organisations in Powys. Some support the NHS through the League of Friends. Small numbers were involved directly within the Health Board, through its Red Kite volunteer scheme and a range of befriending roles in the community.

The Covid 19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for significant growth in volunteering. The sector could not tackle the pandemic on its own. So, working with the local county voluntary council (PAVO), Powys Teaching Health Board recruited more than 500 volunteers, at pace, to support the mass vaccination centres.

Since then, volunteers have been reintroduced into community hospital wards across the county and the role of volunteers in care homes across the county is being explored, too.

It is crucial to establish the distinct role of a volunteer and have a clear understanding of agreed boundaries between staff and volunteer roles. A lot of preparatory work is required to get necessary systems in place, including training and support for volunteers.

For volunteers, the opportunity to contribute within a service user environment can really enhance their experience. Volunteering can be a double success, therefore, with benefits to volunteers as well as to patients and service users.

All this work, and so much more, is part of the vision to create a School of Volunteers and Carers within the newly established [Powys Health and Care Academy](#). Set up by Powys Regional Partnership Board, which is made up of a range of public bodies and other representatives (including Powys County Council, Powys Teaching Health Board and PAVO), who are working together to improve the health and wellbeing of the county's residents.

Through the Academy, the region is working with [Neath Port Talbot College](#) to support health and care students to volunteer. Whilst volunteering, students can 'sign off' particular competencies within the care environment. There continues to be an

increasing range of opportunities to volunteer alongside professions and clinicians across the health and care services.

Work has been done (lead by [PAVO](#), with funding from a Volunteering Wales Strategic grant) to develop a skills matrix, which will help volunteers to navigate opportunities and will aid organisations to assess the availability of skills required needed for a voluntary role.

PAVO (Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations) is also leading on the Amser i Ni / Time for Us project, setting up [time banking](#) schemes across the county and evaluating how they can enhance citizenship and open more opportunities for people in communities to volunteer.

The '[Reaching Wider](#)' project is helping foster carers and care leavers to access Level 4 accreditation and this work will inform a county wide learning programme for foster carers and care leavers.

An large investment into carers has enabled the Academy to trial and test the specifically designed [Powys Balance programme](#). This programme enables volunteers and unpaid carers to 'balance their own care needs with the needs of others', through a range of initiatives including an eight week course in mindful based living; rest bite retreats and 1:1 life coaching, the programme has achieved positive results for those who have participated and it is the intention in provide further investment to continue this work.

Volunteers go on make a difference in Powys and the story is still unfolding.

Case study by Helpforce Cymru. 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, The [Helpforce page](#) on our website includes links to recent articles, blogs and case stories.