

TOGETHER WE CAN

A GUIDE TO FAMILY SUPPORT VOLUNTEERING

TOP TIPS FOR ENGAGING STAFF AND FAMILIES IN PLANNING YOUR FAMILY SUPPORT VOLUNTEERING SERVICE

Together We Can is a collection of resources for organisations developing a service where volunteers support families of a child with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition. The resources were developed and tested specifically for this purpose with volunteers working in the homes of a child with a life-limiting condition, but might be useful for any organisation developing volunteer services.

TOP TIPS FOR ENGAGING STAFF AND FAMILIES IN PLANNING YOUR FAMILY SUPPORT VOLUNTEERING SERVICE

Getting families or service users and staff teams involved in the development of your service can raise awareness, increase demand and reduce any misunderstandings. Helping families and staff feel that the service is 'owned' by them, may lead to a more worthwhile and sustainable service. This document contains some tips about how to engage families and staff in planning and development.

Engaging families

- Ask people helped by your organisation whether a Family Support Volunteering support service would be useful to them and what type of support they would like to see offered. This could be done at meetings (such as patient participation groups in statutory services); social gatherings; via email; with a simple survey online or placed at a reception desk.
- If your service will have a steering group, invite some families to be part of the group. Even if they can't attend regularly, it is a way to seek input and keep people informed.
- If you have a service user advisory group or regular get-togethers of families at your organisation, book regular slots to attend these meetings to report what is happening with the volunteering service. You could start when planning the service and provide regular updates.
- Listen to what people say and act on it. It may not be possible to accommodate all suggestions, but make sure people know they were heard, which components of their feedback have been taken on board and the reasons some suggestions might not be possible at the current time.
- Consider circulating an email newsletter or inserting stories in existing newsletters so families continue to hear about the service, right from the planning stages. Always include contact details so anyone interested can get in touch.

Engaging staff

- Recognise that staff teams are essential for the success of your service as they will refer families to you and recommend the service to families. If staff are not positive about the service, then it could be slow to grow.
- Understand that staff may worry that having a volunteer helping a family could duplicate what they are doing themselves or may even threaten their roles. Some people may worry that a volunteer might replace them or do tasks that they would like to do. Address this head on by saying what volunteers will and will not be doing, how they are designed to add to what the organisation does, not replace staff, and how they might free up staff time so staff can focus on what they like doing best. Focus on the potential positives for staff and the families they serve.
- Involving people from the start helps them feel ownership.
- Go to team meetings regularly to promote the service, even during the initial planning stages. Attending just one or two meetings is unlikely to be enough to help people understand what the service is and how it can benefit them and the people they serve.
- Consider whether some awareness raising sessions or training might be useful for staff.

EXAMPLE AWARENESS RAISING STRUCTURE

SESSION ONE

Volunteers and volunteering (Approximately 3 hours)

Understanding volunteers

- Why do we involve volunteers?
- What do volunteers bring?
- What is volunteering – informal and formal, regular, ad hoc
- The importance of understanding volunteer motivations

Getting to know the volunteer programme

Using scenarios to explore:

- The volunteer journey
- Different stages of volunteering
- Changing expectations and the changing face of volunteering

Supporting volunteers

- Support and supervision for volunteers within your team
- Supporting you in working with volunteers

SESSION TWO

Managing volunteers (Approximately 3 hours)

Managing Volunteers

- Using scenarios to explore different volunteering situations: Dealing with difficult situations:
 - Identified problems – what are the options?
 - Risks of not addressing difficult situations/behaviour
 - Where does the problem lie – volunteer or staff?
 - Potential solutions
- Using policies and procedures
- Support for staff who manage volunteers