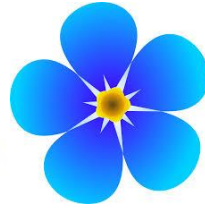




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Mental Health Volunteers

Case Studies

Case Study 1

1. What initially attracted you to the lived experience volunteer role?

I suffer with mental health issues myself, and after completing an online course for OCD, and having 12 one to one sessions with a psychologist, we felt I could use my experience and things I learnt to help others like myself.

2. Could you describe what it is like to volunteer as someone with lived experience of mental health challenges? You might want to reflect on any benefits or challenges you have experienced.

It is amazing to be able to help others hope, and support. It is also benefitting and helping me.

3. What do you enjoy most about supporting patients on the ward?

"I LOVE making them smile, and reminiscing with them, which they love. They never want me to leave? and will always start chatting about something to keep me with them longer."

4. How has volunteering impacted your own wellbeing?

It is helping my confidence.

5. What skills or strengths have you developed through this volunteering role?

Lots of patience, and knowing the right words, and showing positivity around our conversations, and their concerns.

6. Has volunteering influenced your future plans or career aspirations?

I wish I had done this when I was younger.

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a lived experience volunteer?

I am thrilled I have the opportunity to make a difference to people.

8. Would you recommend this volunteering role to others with lived experience?

Yes.

Case Study 2

1. What initially attracted you to the lived experience volunteer role?

Because I've lived through mental health issues myself I wanted to help others and give something back to the service

2. Could you describe what it is like to volunteer as someone with lived experience of mental health challenges? You might want to reflect on any benefits or challenges you have experienced.

For a long time I've suffered with mental health issues and have done courses to help my wellbeing and anxiety and feel I can help others in these areas

3. What do you enjoy most about supporting patients on the ward?

Seeing the joy on their faces when they have completed a craft task and that is a challenge for some

4. How has volunteering impacted your own wellbeing?

It has given me confidence and strength and interaction with the patients and a sense of purpose

5. What skills or strengths have you developed through this volunteering role?

I've done some training and have gained strength while conversing with the patients and I feel that some of the patients have gained trust in me

6. Has volunteering influenced your future plans or career aspirations?

I have no thoughts of going in to full time employment but would love to continue volunteering on the ward

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a lived experience volunteer?

I just like to thank you for the opportunity to be able to volunteer on this ward

8. Would you recommend this volunteering role to others with lived experience?

Yes definitely

Case Study 3

1. What initially attracted you to the lived experience volunteer role?

I was primarily drawn to this role by a deep desire to transform my personal challenges into a positive contribution for others. Having navigated my own significant experiences with injury/ accidents, I recognized the unique insight and empathy I could offer. I believe that sharing my journey and understanding with others going through similar situations can provide a profound sense of hope and connection that clinical care alone might not always achieve.

2. Could you describe what it is like to volunteer as someone with lived experience of mental health challenges? You might want to reflect on any benefits or challenges you have experienced.

Volunteering with lived experience of mental health challenges is a truly impactful and often humbling experience. The primary benefit lies in the ability to connect with patients on a deeply authentic level. My own journey allows me to offer not just theoretical understanding but genuine empathy and a unique perspective that can normalize their feelings. Patients often feel more comfortable opening up when they know someone has been there and this facilitates a more meaningful exchange.

3. What do you enjoy most about supporting patients on the ward?

What I enjoy most is witnessing moments of genuine connection and progress in patients. It's incredibly rewarding to see someone's initial apprehension or despair gradually shift towards engagement and a renewed sense of hope.

4. How has volunteering impacted your own wellbeing?

Volunteering has had a profoundly positive impact on my own wellbeing. It provides a strong sense of purpose and meaning. This regular engagement in a supportive, empathetic environment contributes significantly to my mental and emotional health, providing a fulfilling counterpoint to daily life.

5. What skills or strengths have you developed through this volunteering role?

This volunteering role has significantly honed several key skills and reinforced my existing strengths. Foremost, it has refined my active listening and

empathetic communication skills, allowing me to truly hear and understand individuals' experiences without judgement. I've also developed greater resilience and emotional intelligence, learning how to navigate sensitive conversations and support others while maintaining my own well-being. My ability to build rapport quickly and establish trust has also improved immensely.

6. Has volunteering influenced your future plans or career aspirations?

Absolutely. This volunteering experience has profoundly influenced my future plans and solidified my career aspirations. It has reinforced my passion for working in a supportive capacity within the health care or mental sector. I am now actively researching career paths, where I can further contribute to a more person-centered approach to care.

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a lived experience volunteer?

I believe that lived experience volunteers are an invaluable asset to any healthcare setting. Our unique position allows us to bridge a crucial gap between clinical expertise and the patient's personal journey, fostering an environment of greater understanding, trust, and shared humanity. My experience has reinforced my conviction that integrating lived experiences and voices at all levels, from direct patient support to policy development, is fundamental to creating truly holistic, compassionate, and effective healthcare systems. It's a role that benefits not only patients but a wider staff and profoundly volunteers themselves.

8. Would you recommend this volunteering role to others with lived experience?

Absolutely, without hesitation. I would highly recommend this volunteering role to anyone with lived experience. It's a chance to be a part of a compassionate community and to contribute to a more understanding and effective healthcare system, proving that lived experience is not just a personal story, but a valuable asset.

Case Study 4

1. What initially attracted you to the lived experience volunteer role?

Being able to volunteer with my dog.

2. Could you describe what it is like to volunteer as someone with lived experience of mental health challenges? You might want to reflect on any benefits or challenges you have experienced.

It's recognising people reacting differently to what we may perceive as normal and being able to adapt accordingly. My job is made significantly easier due to having a therapy dog that patients can not only interact with but ask questions about the dog. It's also being able to appreciate and empathise with how happy and joyous they feel during a therapy dog visit.

3. What do you enjoy most about supporting patients on the ward?

Interacting with the therapy dog watching how my dog can break down barriers between children/teenagers/adults with her simple woowoos (talking) or by them being able to hug such a large fluffy gentle dog with no fear of being attacked or judged.

4. How has volunteering impacted your own wellbeing?

It's given me more confidence, as I rely on my dogs to help me as assistance dogs and now it's helping me with being more social.

5. What skills or strengths have you developed through this volunteering role?

Confidence, communication, understanding as well as dog training for different environments, and behaviour.

6. Has volunteering influenced your future plans or career aspirations?

Yes, I've set up my own volunteer therapy dog not for profit organisation.

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a lived experience volunteer?

No

8. Would you recommend this volunteering role to others with lived experience?

Absolutely, especially if you're not able to work a regular job. Volunteering for whether it be a few minutes to a few hours each month makes a difference to one or more people, then it's truly worthwhile.

Case Study 5

1. What initially attracted you to the lived experience volunteer role?

My wife had dementia, and was very well looked after by the staff and I thought I could something back.

2. Could you describe what it is like to volunteer as someone with lived experience of mental health challenges? You might want to reflect on any benefits or challenges you have experienced.

As I nursed my wife for 4 years with Dementia. I felt I am able to understand both the patient and the families issues. Having been there I am able to offer support.

3. What do you enjoy most about supporting patients on the ward?

Sitting, talking and also involving them in projects, such as our garden project.

4. How has volunteering impacted your own wellbeing?

It has given me a purpose to get up and go out.

5. What skills or strengths have you developed through this volunteering role?

The ability to not just speak but be a good listener.

6. Has volunteering influenced your future plans or career aspirations?

If I had my time over, I would definitely be involved in some kind of mental health support.

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a lived experience volunteer?

I would recommend to anyone to become a volunteer.

8. Would you recommend this volunteering role to others with lived experience?

Yes

Case Study 6

1. What initially attracted you to the lived experience volunteer role?

It was always my intention to volunteer in a hospital setting and in the community.

2. Could you describe what it is like to volunteer as someone with lived experience of mental health challenges? You might want to reflect on any benefits or challenges you have experienced.

My experience in this.

3. What do you enjoy most about supporting patients on the ward?

I make a difference (I hope)!!

4. How has volunteering impacted your own wellbeing?

I feel better in myself.

5. What skills or strengths have you developed through this volunteering role?

Empathy and an ability to help and to reassure.

6. Has volunteering influenced your future plans or career aspirations?

No , I've always wanted to do what I am doing now .

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a lived experience volunteer?

Only that I could help in a better way.

8. Would you recommend this volunteering role to others with lived experience?

Yes I would most certainly.

Case Study 7

1. What initially attracted you to the lived experience volunteer role?

I started out as just a ward volunteer and was then asked to consider volunteering on mental health wards.

2. Could you describe what it is like to volunteer as someone with lived experience of mental health challenges? You might want to reflect on any benefits or challenges you have experienced.

I have had experience of dealing with and regularly visiting people with mental health issues in my role as a Christian Minister. Currently in addition to my NHS volunteering I have a relatives who have mental health issues which I have regular contact with.

3. What do you enjoy most about supporting patients on the ward?

It is the challenge of not knowing what to expect as each visit is different. Also seeing regular patients, relatives and staff I consider them as friends and try to consider them as such. I love to play games and any other activities with my friends and fully support the staff also.

4. How has volunteering impacted your own wellbeing?

It make me grateful for my health and when perhaps I find someone particularly difficult I try and focus on how would I react in that situation.

5. What skills or strengths have you developed through this volunteering role?

The most important skill for me is to 'Think on you feet' I can go with well thought out plans and find they do not work. As an example on one ward they have a weekly 'Music Therapist' which the patients love and I love supporting, although I am not musical. When this person does not turn up for whatever reason I think it is important not to just sit and chat but to motivate with colouring, jigsaws and use whatever is available.

6. Has volunteering influenced your future plans or career aspirations?

As I am retired NO

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a lived experience volunteer?

Just that I enjoy it and going on the wards and getting a friend to say nice to see you, and also staff and relatives is the greatest reward I love.

8. Would you recommend this volunteering role to others with lived experience?

This is difficult to answer as going on the wards with pre conceived ideas is no good in my opinion. You have to be friendly and accept if someone does not want to bother you then that is fine.. Alternatively if the staff say there is a new patient who is down they I feel it is my role to speak that patient and reassure them. For me it does help staff and relatives as I try to help as many as I can.