The role of the hospice volunteer in community settings

Conference or Workshop Item

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The role of the hospice volunteer in community settings

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Seminar overview

• National, regional and strategic contexts
• Findings from a literature review –
  • Benefits to hospice
  • Benefits to service users and carers
  • Benefits to volunteers
• Conclusions and next steps
National context

Policy direction in five nations:

- Service user preference regarding location of end of life care provision
- 74% of people would prefer to die at home yet 54% die in hospital (NICE, 2011)
- Voluntary sector key in making aspirations a reality
Regional context

- **Living Matters, Dying Matters:**
  ‘families, carers and volunteers…the crucial cornerstone of this care’ (p.4)
  ‘enabling all organisations to work collaboratively to design, deliver and improve palliative and end of life care services’ (p.38)

- **Transforming Your Care:**
  ‘Services will regard home as the hub’ (p.7)
The contribution of volunteers

- Hospice enabled death needed in a range of settings
- Wide variety of hospice volunteer roles essential to effective service delivery
- Increased volunteer support = increased scope and size of provision
- Collaboration between hospice at home staff, volunteers and other community staff
‘New models of health’ emphasize community response reliant on volunteer involvement

Low numbers of volunteers providing direct care (NICE, 2011)

Need for strategic approach to volunteer development and deployment (HtH, 2012)
Commissioned literature review

- Ascertain nature of volunteer activities
- Define the scope of volunteer roles
- Identify process regarding selection, induction and training of volunteers
- Outline the benefits of volunteering to the hospice, services users and carers, and volunteers themselves
Benefits to hospice

- Range of volunteer activity
- Driven by desire to improve quality
- Add diversity to professional team
- Bridge between hospice and community
- Recruitment, selection, induction, education and ongoing support
- Volunteer Value
Benefits to service users/carers

• Support across illness trajectory
• Increased patient/carer satisfaction
• Complementary to professional care
• Different types of support
• Improve quality and access
Conclusion (1)

- Volunteering benefits care providers, service users, carers and volunteers themselves
- But evidence unevenly spread
- Volunteering needs development to support palliative and end of life care in the community
- There are some gaps in current research
Benefits to volunteers

- Health and social benefits
- Volunteer satisfaction
- Education and training
- Motivations for volunteering
- Enduring appeal
- Challenges of volunteering
Conclusion (2)

• Research questions:
  - What training and support is needed?
  - How to involve volunteers in patient care?
  - What exactly can volunteers do?
  - How to avoid tension with paid staff?
  - How to provide culturally sensitive care?
  - What is the impact of volunteering on volunteers?
  - What is the impact of bereavement on volunteering?
  - How to maximize benefits and minimize challenges?
Conclusion (3)

Volunteers occupy ‘boundary spaces’ and research is needed to better understand how these boundaries are navigated.
Conclusion (4)

• Wider role of All Ireland Institute for Hospice and Palliative Care to promote practice development and explore gaps in knowledge
• Future collaborative research between academia and palliative care providers
Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

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