

A S U M E

Volunteering in Dementia



Services

For volunteers, it was not just about settings themselves but the services they provided between and outwith housing settings. In the organisational survey, the 'other' category (e.g. areas of volunteering activity we did not place in the initial categories) was filled with office based work e.g. office based, head office. Indeed, 25% of respondents noted volunteers working in an office based capacity but still supporting those with dementia and their carers.

Furthermore, key volunteering activities included driving, escorting and moving those living with dementia from one place to another. Befriending for example was not situated in one setting but with the expectations of movement with examples of walking, going to the hairdressers, going to cafes and the park. In this case, volunteers were therefore not only conduits between places but key in the manoeuvring between environments – they were also a facilitator between people with dementia and services. The findings show how important this was to volunteers but also how it is a challenge. For example, finding somewhere to park their car is an issue for volunteers and carers when attempting to attend events. The blue badge system allows people with disabilities to park in certain parking bays but these badges are not issued to volunteers (unless they are accompanying a person with a disability who has one). Many carers also do not realise that they could apply for these badges.

Initially I would say this is a local difficulty but I don't think it is, the biggest problem that I think volunteers have is parking. (Cumbria)

The distance from home to the venue of volunteering is important and could impact on people's decision to volunteer.

Well I suppose it's because I didn't want to be travelling necessarily to [place]. Once a week probably. I think if there'd only been [place], I would have thought about that. But I liked that it was local. Didn't involve a lot of travelling and using the car a lot. That made a difference. (CVF04, Cumbria.)

I'm only over the road. I haven't to travel so that makes it easier... You're not waiting about for buses and things like that. (CVF06, Cumbria)

I would go on walks, you know, join a walking club but it's getting to the pick-up points or the meeting points because we've no car and they don't meet anywhere in town. You've got to get on two buses {CDFO1}.
I: it sounds like living where you do makes it difficult to access things where they run, the facilities that they run.
R1: That's right. (CDMO1, Cumbria)

Therefore there is an element of movement and negotiation for volunteering in certain places. Travelling is an ongoing motivation and an added time commitment for volunteers. It was also explicitly acknowledged that where you live and the access you have affects volunteering activities. This has implications for both attracting and sustaining volunteers.



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