

Frequently asked questions about volunteering in Macmillan funded services

What types of work can volunteers do?

There are lots of ways that volunteers can support health and social care services funded by Macmillan, such as providing advice and information, meeting and greeting, complementary therapies, administration, arranging events, sitting with service users waiting for appointments, filling in forms, making phone calls, befriending... the list goes on and on. A list of volunteer roles in health and social care services is attached to the bottom of these questions. Talk to your colleagues and your organisation's volunteering lead for ideas for roles.

How much of my time will it take to manage volunteers?

All volunteers are different and the amount of time you will need to spend supporting someone will depend upon the role and each volunteer's capabilities. In the short term, when you recruit a new volunteer, you will need to make time to provide an induction, supervision and debriefing but as volunteers get more confident and competent in their roles you will find that you have extra time to deliver your service.

What is the cost of a volunteer?

Volunteers are not free but when they are involved properly they provide fantastic value for money. There will be some additional costs to involving volunteers, such as travel expenses and, possibly, extra equipment. Your employer is responsible for paying volunteer expenses, not Macmillan. As a very rough estimate, you should allow around £10 per day per volunteer to cover travel and subsistence costs.

You should also remember that there is also the cost of your time in supporting volunteers, although you should make this back (and more) as a volunteer takes on more responsibility. Research suggests that every £1 invested in volunteering produces a return of up to £14 in the work carried out.

What are the benefits to the service, professional, organisation and volunteer?

A well planned and supported volunteer should be of benefit to everyone. Your service should be able to provide more and better services that meet the needs of the local community. You will have more time to focus your professional skills where they are most needed. Your employer delivers more services and gets invaluable word of mouth recognition. Finally, volunteers can meet their personal motivations for volunteering so long as you understand each individual's reasons for giving their time to your service.

What are the differences / similarities between a Macmillan volunteer and other volunteers in my organisation?

There should be lots more similarities than differences, and all volunteers in your organisation work under your employer's policies and procedures, but we want volunteers in our funded services to also feel part of Macmillan. To enable this to happen, volunteers in Macmillan

services should receive information from and about Macmillan, be invited to join our on-line volunteering community and are eligible for Macmillan volunteer awards. We'll also need you to provide us with some basic information about the volunteers in your service.

How do I involve and manage a volunteer?

You will be responsible for the day to day management of the volunteers in your service and should be involved in the interview process for new volunteers. If your organisation employs a volunteer co-ordinator make sure that you are both clear about the responsibility for induction, support and management.

Managing volunteers uses a lot of the same skills as managing paid staff coupled with really good people skills. You need good organisation and communication skills and to be able to understand what motivates each volunteer. You will need to provide individual and/or group debriefing and support and provide objective feedback on how someone is doing in their role. Planning and time management are important, particularly making sure that each volunteer is kept busy and knows what is expected of them. Macmillan runs a course that can help you understand more about managing volunteers.

Are volunteers reliable? How do I hold them to account?

Most volunteers will be reliable if the role they are doing is interesting and they feel properly supported and appreciated and you may well find that some of your volunteers are more reliable than some paid staff! Check at interview that they understand the time commitment you are asking for. Volunteers should understand the standards required in your service and be clear that they are expected to work to certain common standards. If a volunteer is consistently unable to meet agreed standards then you have the right to withdraw the offer of a volunteer role at any point, although you should always try to support a volunteer to reach the required standards.

How do I reward a volunteer and keep them motivated in their role?

To keep a volunteer motivated you should regularly check with them that the role is meeting their expectations. Offer appropriate training opportunities and the chance to develop new skills. Keep them updated with information about your service and any changes that might affect them. Thanking and recognising the quality and impact of a volunteer's work is also important. You could organise an annual thank you event or a social activity to say thank you. Try to find a time when as many volunteers as possible can attend – sometimes an evening is more convenient than office hours.

Who is allowed to volunteer?

The vast majority of people in the UK are allowed to volunteer. Some visas, such as tourist visas, will not allow someone to volunteer. Asylum seekers are not generally allowed to volunteer in statutory (NHS/local authority) services, but can volunteer for charities and voluntary organisations. Under 18s usually need parental consent to volunteer, and some organisations cannot accept volunteers under 16 due to insurance reasons. You should check your employer's policy with your volunteer co-ordinator (if you have one) or Human Resources department.

There is no penalty for an organisation who takes on someone who is not allowed to volunteer and there is no legal requirement to ask for evidence that someone is allowed to volunteer.

Are people receiving benefits allowed to volunteer?

Yes. People receiving benefits are allowed to volunteer and, apart for a few exceptions (such as full time volunteering where an allowance is paid), benefits will not be affected. There is no restriction on the number of hours that someone receiving benefits can volunteer.

People of a working age who are volunteering while job seeking need to be able to attend an interview for a paid job with 48 hours notice and start work with one weeks notice.

Volunteers should tell their benefits adviser before they start volunteering.

What expenses can I pay volunteers?

Volunteers can be reimbursed genuine expenses related to volunteering. These include travel expenses, food and drink purchased when volunteering involves being away from home during mealtimes and, in some cases, childcare. Your employer should have guidance on what expenses volunteers are allowed to claim.

You should never pay a volunteer flat rate expenses e.g. £5 per day, as this could lead to a volunteer being liable for tax or getting the right to be paid the minimum wage for their work.

Are there restrictions on what a volunteer can do?

There are very few legal restrictions on what work a volunteer can do but you should make sure that there is a clear difference in the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and paid staff. This will make sure that volunteers who are not working do not risk losing benefits.

Your employer may have guidance on what volunteers can and cannot do. If your workplace is unionised, you should make sure the union is involved in discussions about new volunteering roles.

Should volunteers sign a contract?

No. You should make your expectations of volunteers clear in a role description and a volunteer agreement. These will set out what behaviours you expect of volunteers and what support you will provide to volunteers.

Make sure you avoid using words like job in documents to differentiate with paid staff – refer to roles and tasks rather than jobs.

Are volunteers covered by employment law?

As long as the advice above is followed, volunteers cannot be considered to be employed and therefore employment law does not cover them. Volunteers are covered by health and safety and data protection law.

What support can Macmillan give me when I am working with volunteers?

Macmillan employs Volunteer Advisers who work with Macmillan Professionals across the UK. They can advise you on good practice, help you to plan recruitment of volunteers and provide you with training and individual advice to help you make the best use of your volunteers. You should contact your local Macmillan contact for further details of how a volunteering adviser can help you.

Volunteer roles in health and social care settings identified by Volunteering England

- Administration helper / medical records assistant
- Administering eye drops to post operative cataract patients in the community
- Advocacy
- Ambulance first responder
- Anti-coagulant assistant
- Artist
- Arts & crafts (knitters, blanket maker, art therapist)
- Audiology Visitor (helping people use their hearing aids)
- Befriending / buddying (in-patients and community)
- Benefit advice
- Birds of prey (volunteers bringing birds to children's units)
- Breast Feeding Peer Mentor
- Carer support
- Chapel organist
- Chapel service helpers
- Chapel service singers
- Chapel services names collector
- Chaplaincy (pianist, lay preacher)
- Chaplaincy Visitor
- City guides (guides who conduct hospital tours)
- Clerical helper
- Clinic assistant (baby/well-being etc)
- Counsellor
- Curtain matcher (collecting odd curtains in hospital and putting them in pairs for re-hanging)
- Dental Complaints Service volunteer panel member
- Dining Companion
- Discharge lounge assistant
- Drama assistant
- Entertainment
- Events helpers
- Exercise to music
- Expert patient
- Fish tank maintenance
- Focus groups for research
- Flower arrangers / flower care on wards
- Fundraising
- Games players (e.g. chess player companion)
- Garden (including pond maintenance)
- GP patient participation group member
- Governance & Trustees
- Hairdresser for In-patient & Day Care units
- Hand holders (for surgery etc.)
- Hearing Aid Service Volunteers
- Home care
- Home escorts for vulnerable patients
- Hospital radio presenter
- Hospital radio request collector
- Information/leaflet checkers
Information provider (e.g. in epilepsy clinic)
- Interpreter
- Interviewer
- IT volunteers (database work)
- Knitters for premature babies
- Lay assessor (for the Quality & Outcome Framework)
- Letter writer
- Librarian
- Magazine delivery
- Massage and aromatherapy massage
- Medicinema
- Meet and greet / welcomer
- Menus - help patients choose their meals
- Musicians
- Occupational therapy activities assistant
- Packs (making up maternity packs, patient emergency toilet kits)
- PALS volunteer
- Palliative care
- PAT dogs/ animal visits

- Patients council representative
- Pastoral
- Peer educators (various projects)
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapist assistant
- Plain language volunteers (to de-jargon written materials)
- Playing board games
- Playroom helpers
- Post room assistant
- PPI forum member
- Print room
- Reading newspapers to people with poor sight
- Reception/Information/Enquiry desk/Welcome desk
- Recruitment & selection of staff
- Recycling assistants
- Reflexologist
- Run current affairs discussion groups
- Run singing groups
- Runner (of errands in and out of hospital)
- Running a book group
- Running music appreciation sessions
- Running poetry sessions
- Security
- Shop helper (food, clothing etc)
- Shoppers (for patients)
- Skin camouflage
- Social events organisers /helpers
- Speech and language volunteers
- Sport companions for mental health service users (e.g golf buddy)
- Sport organisers for mental health service users (e.g angling groups)
- Support groups for specific health conditions
- Taxi escorts
- Tea bar / café / bar
- Teacher helping with schoolwork on children's ward
- Theatre (drama)
- Trainers (e.g. life saving technique)
- Therapeutic hand care
- Transport (drivers)
- Trolley service (meals, drinks, toiletries, newspapers etc)
- Visitor screening helpers
- Walking companions for people recovering from knee and hip operations
- Ward and Department volunteers (various, including A & E, Outpatients, Occupational Health, X-Ray etc)
- Wheelchair pushers
- Yoga teacher
- Youth group helpers

Macmillan Cancer Support improves the lives of people affected by cancer, providing practical, medical, emotional and financial support. Working alongside people affected by cancer, Macmillan works to improve cancer care.

One in three of us will get cancer. Two million of us are living with it. If you're living with cancer, the good days really matter. Macmillan is there to help you have more good days.

For answers, support or just a chat, visit www.macmillan.org.uk or call Macmillan on **0808 808 00 00** – no matter what your question.