

Creating a Volunteer Programme within your Organisation



Who are Community Ambassadors?

Community Ambassador Volunteers help to develop, implement and improve the North East Hampshire and Farnham Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG's) programme of engagement.

Due to our success and the interest from other organisations in our Community Ambassador Programme we have produced this guide to share our learning to support you to develop your own Community Ambassador programme.

The CCG's Community Ambassador programme was born out of a will to better engage with the local community on the provision of health care services locally. Starting in 2016, our Community Ambassador programme has evolved to become a key part of our engagement plans, assisting in every aspect of new care model's design, delivery and in the review of existing services.

Community Ambassadors are members of the public and representatives of third sector groups, residing within or representing the five locality towns within our CCG boundaries. They have volunteered to help us actively live our vision to develop and co-design services with patients, carers and the wider community.

We believe service provision may be improved if we can learn more about the views, experiences and concerns of patients and service users. Community Ambassadors help us to connect with local people to understand how they feel and gain insight into their experiences. Through the

Community Ambassadors' own networks and affiliations we are able to connect with groups that may have been harder to reach without these local connections. The Community Ambassadors range in age from 16-80 and come from a wealth of different backgrounds.

We have people who have previously worked within the NHS, former local councillors, community leaders, parents and those who have experienced care pathways or live with long term conditions. Some are helping us around their school, work or caring commitments; all Community Ambassadors have important links to their communities and bring skills that we can benefit from.



Steps to success:

Decide on the role

If involving volunteers it's really important you have a clear idea on their role and what you would like them to assist you with. Of course this can change over time as opportunities become more apparent and feedback is taken on board, but there has to be a starting point. A well-defined role description will describe the tasks to be undertaken, the expected commitment, whether expenses are paid and outline the training and support offered by your organisation.

Ideas for recruiting

A key resource for anyone involving volunteers within their organisation is your local voluntary council or sector, who are experts in this field. They can help with many areas of best practice, including advertising the role. These organisations often host volunteer fayres or hold regular forum meetings that could allow you to launch the new role to a wide cross section of your local community.

Other ideas for recruiting:

- Make contact with existing groups, use local events, local press and community noticeboards to get the word out.
- Ask partner organisations and practice managers whether they can assist in displaying information.
- Don't forget your own website and on-line presence. We have created a Get Involved page which holds lots of information about the Volunteer programme and forthcoming engagement events. Something similar could catch the eye of those already on your site or drive new traffic to it.

Have a framework

When involving volunteers in your organisation it's important to recognise that both they and the organisation need a framework within which to work and carry out the volunteer role. This framework will need to be specific to your organisational needs but may include:

1. **A role description**
2. **A volunteer agreement** – outlining your promises to the volunteers and what you expect in return, whilst also touching on the important issues for your organisation such as health and safety and/or confidentiality.
3. **A code of conduct**
4. **Policies** - for example:
 - Confidentiality
 - Expenses (alongside a claim form and process)
 - IT and Social Media
 - Complaints
 - Lone working
 - Equipment handling
5. **A consent form** – an agreement that the volunteer will abide by the policies in place and any other requirements outlined in the Code of Conduct and agrees to have their details held/to be contacted in line with their preferences.

If involving young people in your volunteer programme (below the age of 18), different criteria apply in terms of the roles and hours they can undertake. Your framework

may have to be altered for those under 18, seeking consent of a parent or guardian for involvement within your volunteer programme. Your local voluntary council can advise you on these restrictions and requirements.

Due to the nature of the tasks your volunteers may become involved in and the business of your organisation you may wish to include a Declaration of Interests form so that you can hold a register.

Prepare a well thought out induction

Good preparation can avoid issues further down the line and all volunteers joining your organisation will require a well thought out induction. This may be carried out on a one to one basis or within a group depending on the circumstances and the individual's needs. During this induction training the purpose of the role must be clearly laid out in order for the expectations of the volunteer and organisation to be clear.

As well as organisational information, role information, the background to your volunteer programme and key points from the framework; you may wish to include a glossary and check lists that volunteers can refer to when asked to undertake a task so they feel prepared.

You may find it helpful to run a buddy system and pair new volunteers with those who have been in the role for some time. This can allow confidence to grow and a stronger community feel within your volunteers.

Integrating Volunteers into the organisation

To ensure buy-in from staff and partner organisations when you first introduce volunteers you need to promote the benefits of including volunteers. Staff may have more confidence if they are aware of the role of the volunteers and of the induction training that volunteers have completed. You may choose to set up informal meetings for your staff and volunteers to meet and get to know each other.

How to support your volunteers

Within the North East Hampshire and Farnham Clinical Commissioning Group we have chosen to have a Community Ambassador Coordinator, a single point of contact for the volunteers and staff. The Coordinator is responsible for recruitment, induction and ongoing support for the Community Ambassadors, matching them appropriately with projects and tasks as they arise.

When matching volunteers with tasks and projects you need to make sure that they have all the information required. Not only do we choose to have a check list for the Community Ambassadors, so that they don't forget anything, we also have one for staff who are leading the areas of work. Each request for Community Ambassador assistance should outline the role that they will play in the task or project so that the individual is comfortable and understands their role.

Getting to know the volunteers as people is important as you start to identify their skills and areas of interest and life experiences. Our Community Ambassador Coordinator regularly talks to the volunteers to seek their opinions on tasks and projects they have been involved with and how their experience may be improved. We may identify staff training opportunities, procedural changes, improve flexibility to suit personal circumstances or offer further training for the volunteers themselves.

If anyone chooses to leave the volunteer programme a brief and informal exit interview takes place to learn if we could have done anything differently to meet the needs of the Community Ambassador.



Thanking your volunteers

“Volunteers are individuals who freely give their time to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task”

(oxford dictionary). As such we need to recognise their contributions and the benefits it brings to our organisations.



At the North East Hampshire and Farnham Clinical Commissioning Group we chose to recognise these efforts firstly by paying appropriate expenses and secondly by making sure the feedback loop is always completed so that Community Ambassadors know how their assistance has impacted tasks or projects.

We hold quarterly Community Ambassador events, which allow the volunteers to come together to share experiences of where Community Ambassadors are making a difference and to keep updated on the latest news.

These events take different forms, depending on the feedback received and can often be organised with the assistance of the Community Ambassadors themselves.

Many people chose to volunteer to enhance their skills. As such we inform our Community Ambassadors of local and online courses and opportunities we think may be of interest to them and which tie in with the role they carry out.

Young volunteers often require evidence of the time given and the nationally recognised website VInspired allows them to log their volunteering hours and print certificates to use as evidence.

In addition we have chosen to promote a local time bank which allows volunteering time credits to be swapped for services provided locally. However you may also choose to recognise individuals with awards, cards or gifts and take part in the national volunteer week events which run annually.

Contact Details:

Community Ambassador Coordinator

 07391 533 314

 nehfccg.ambassadors@nhs.net

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Having worked within and now as a volunteer for the NHS for almost thirty years, I have never known Commissioners or Providers to the NHS to embrace the local community as much as they have over this period. They have listened and are still listening to ideas and solutions we can offer to help develop the correct services for our local community.

Diana Martin
Community Ambassador

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As it became clearer what the role involved I have become really proud to have signed up. It gives me opportunities to work alongside the Clinical Commissioning Group and their staff and partners.

Valerie Fabry
Community Ambassador

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Summary

Individuals volunteer for many different reasons and it's important to balance the needs of the organisation and role with the needs of the individual. Having volunteers assist your organisation can be extremely rewarding but may require a shift in expectations and ways of working.

This guide has been produced as a tool to assist you to set up your own Community Ambassador programme. If you would like further advice or support please contact the Communications and Engagement team.

