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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

## Why have psychology volunteers on the wards?

- currently over 2/3rds of patients on our wards are over 65 years old.
- levels of anxiety and depression in this group of people are significantly higher than in any other age category.

Poor mental well-being can lead to:

- deterioration in physical health
- difficulty in engaging with rehabilitation
- a prolonged stay in hospital.

Many people find it difficult being away from their own safe and familiar environments as well as friends and family. Being in hospital can be isolating and lonely.

Patients can lose a sense of their identity when entering somewhere unfamiliar such as a hospital.

### Our aims:

To improve the amount of cognitive and social stimulation people receive to help decrease levels of anxiety and depression, build self esteem, confidence and recreate a sense of identity that can often be lost when entering a hospital.

Our volunteers are specially trained to help our patients to overcome all these issues.

### How do we select and train our volunteers?

- volunteers undergo a strict application process
- they must send us a CV and application letter.
- if they are successful they will be invited for an interview.
- if they are offered a voluntary position they must then undergo a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check and Occupational Health check.

**For further information please call Clinical Psychology on extension 2105**



- once these have been cleared they will have an induction day which covers all the information needed to work safely in a hospital and the training necessary to work with a diverse group of people.

Volunteers are all offered regular training on subjects such as:

- anxiety
- depression
- cognitive impairment and communication difficulties
- dementia
- communication skills.

Volunteers receive regular supervision from one of our clinical psychologists and generally receive help and support from the Clinical Psychology department.

## **Who can the volunteers see?**

People suffering from:

- anxiety
- depression or low mood
- dementia
- cognitive difficulties including memory, concentration and comprehension
- communication difficulties.

People who are:

- bored
- frustrated
- lonely.

Any older patient who would like to be seen!

## **What kinds of things do the volunteers do with patients?**

- reminiscence therapy
- memory games
- crosswords, word searches, Sudoku
- cards
- read magazines, books and newspapers
- patient-led discussion
- practical tasks such as filling in menu cards.

Groups can be arranged on wards.



## How do they fit in with the wards?

Our volunteers understand that the wards are busy and we work hard to ensure we work in a way that is most suitable for each ward.

- Some wards prefer the volunteers to have a hand-over at the beginning of their shifts where a member of the nursing staff can tell the volunteers who to see.
- Some wards operate a 'star' system on the ward white boards where they 'star' the names of patients who they feel might benefit from being seen.
- Other wards prefer the volunteers to just go from bay to bay on each visit.

Volunteers will always let a member of staff know when they are on the ward but, other than that, we can be as flexible as necessary to fit in with the specific requirements of the ward.

## FAQs

### How many volunteers will be on the ward at a time?

This varies. Some wards like to give us a maximum number at a time. We usually have 2 or 3 volunteers on a ward at a time and the shifts are from 9.30am - 12.30pm and from 2.00pm until 4.30pm.

### How many times a week will they visit the wards?

Wards with many patients over 65 years old like us to go every day, wards with only a few older people often prefer us to go in on set days per week. We are happy to accommodate the needs of each ward. We can work any time between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

### Can volunteers deal with patients with communication difficulties?

Absolutely. Often these patients can be more isolated and lonely than patients who are able to communicate. Volunteers are specially trained to communicate with people with a wide range of difficulties whether this is speech and language, physical or cognitive difficulties.

### Can any patient be seen?

We are more than happy to see any patient over the age of 65 years, a patient doesn't have to be feeling anxious or depressed to see us, we are happy to see any one who feels we might be able to help them.

### Who do the volunteers report to?

The volunteers are all trained and supervised by the Department of Clinical Psychology. The whole project and its volunteers are managed by Tora Mathias-Jones, Psychology Coordinator, The head of department is Dr Nigel North.



## Contact details

### Engage Coordinator

Sarah Homer

email: [engage@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:engage@salisbury.nhs.uk)

### Head of department:

Dr Nigel North (Consultant Clinical Psychologist)

For more information visit our website at [www.engageprogramme.org.uk](http://www.engageprogramme.org.uk)

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