

## Q&A – 17.04.20

# NHS Volunteer Responders

1. **An issue coming up a lot in Great Manchester is homecare providers and care homes having to spend huge amounts of time queuing to collect prescriptions, groceries, etc. They're hoping to increase their capacity to support people directly by asking for help from volunteers. Would this be something that the NHS volunteer's app could be used for? Many of the care homes now have an NHS email address, but how would you recommend homecare providers referring into the service?**

Private home care providers and care homes would need not be able to complete online referrals however would be able to call the Support Centre to log a referral.

With regards to the specific example about collecting medication for homecare providers & care homes. Pharmacists could put a referral in for a batch medication for clients, requesting the NHS Transport volunteer support role.

2. **How to log referrals for NHS professionals?**

If you are a health professional with an NHS or Gov email address, you are able to make log referrals using the online referral form. By having an NHS or Gov email address, you do not need to register. If it is your first referral go to the GoodSAM website; [www.goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral](http://www.goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral). I would suggest you read the instruction guide at the top of the form and you can then add a referral on the online form. You will be asked to verify your email address, you will also receive a password to be able to log and review referrals in the future.

When adding a referral, the referrer is able select the frequency of the support task (one off, daily, weekly or monthly), the priority of the referral (low, medium or high). Once the request is complete, the referral is matched to an 'on duty' local volunteer automatically. The referral will also ask if the patient has any significant vulnerabilities or cognitive impairments. These referrals will be held until our new **Community Response Plus** role has been activated.

3. **Multiple questions requesting if we are able to supply demographic data/regionalised volunteer information and statistics etc.**

At present we are unable to provide data for specific areas of the country. As you will be aware, we have had over 750k volunteers register interest across the country which has resulted in great coverage across most areas of England. We have around 385k volunteers signed up to do support with the 'Community Response' volunteering role, with lots of volunteers selecting multiple roles. Currently we are achieving a **99.67% matching rate** of volunteers matched to client tasks.

Our statistical team are working on the reports/data to produce reports to break down information on geographical area which should be available in due course. It is worth noting that Royal Voluntary Service, NHS England and GoodSAM are working closely around this area.

#### 4. What support and advice is given to 'higher risk' volunteering groups?

Volunteers that fall under the 'higher-risk groups' that include over 70 & underlying health conditions are only permitted to volunteer for the 'Check in & chat' volunteer role. This role involves short-term telephone support to isolated/vulnerable individuals to provide companionship. The role does not involve any requirement to leave their home.

#### 5. Can RVS share what their 'getting started pack' looks like?

You can find the most up to date versions of our 'Getting you started packs' on the NHS Volunteer Responders website: [www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk](http://www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk). All volunteers are required to read the guidance prior to volunteering and check for any updates via the website.

#### 6. What are the safeguarding and risk assessment procedures in place?

The safeguarding of patients and or volunteers is paramount. Royal Voluntary Service have a safeguarding framework to support NHS Volunteer Responders this includes:

- A trained safeguarding team working 9am – 6pm 7 days a week picking up concerns from volunteers and or patients
- A patient safety letter detailing what patients can expect from a volunteer and what to do if their volunteer experience falls below this expectation
- No 1-2-1 volunteer to patient relationships. GoodSam is a dynamic platform of matching available volunteers to tasks that are live.
- All volunteers have an identification page within the App which they must show the patient
- Safe guidelines around payment of shopping and prescriptions
- A volunteer agreement which details expected behaviours of volunteer
- A volunteer problem solving team to help with low level volunteer concerns or issues
- A process for removal and or banning of volunteers or patients from the service for inappropriate conduct or behaviour.

How do I raise a safeguarding concern with Royal Voluntary Service

Safeguarding concerns can be raised by e-mailing [safeguarding@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk) or calling the Support Team (0808 196 3382) who will pass you to the safeguarding team.

#### 7. There has been an incident when an NHS Responder Volunteer has asked a service user/client for their bank details – are we exposing vulnerable people to financial abuse/exploitation?

Due to the huge quantity of volunteer responders, we are unable to avoid all issues of non-conformance or safeguarding. All volunteers are provided clear instructions within their 'Getting Started' packs to not take bank details/cards from patients for payment of groceries & shopping. All clients are also provided a patient safety letter detailing what patients can expect from a volunteer and what to do

if there is a safeguarding concern. Safe guidelines around payment of shopping and prescriptions is clearly detailed on the 'Getting Started' packs which we ask all volunteers to read. Any safeguarding concerns are to be reported as above.

- 8. We have been actively recruiting to a Pharmacy Drivers volunteer role for collection and delivery of medication for our cancer patients and have tried to recruit from NHS Responders but to date, we have had no- one offering, in spite of our understanding that local volunteers have signed up for this role through the scheme)**

Can I ask you phone the NHS Volunteer Responders Support Team – 0808 196 3382 to check your referral(s) to look into this please?

- 9. Driving patients to appointments; how will social distancing be managed?**

The healthcare professionals we are working with will not refer individuals for driving support if they have or could have COVID-19. These individuals will continue to be supported by other options and not by our volunteers. Our volunteers will be supporting those people who need to attend their routine health care appointments so that other infrastructure can focus on transporting patients with Covid 19.

Guidance on the Patient Transport role can be found on the NHS Volunteer Responder website. Some of the guidance measures include cars transporting patients to be cleaned before and after a patient transport task. We regularly review government guidelines and advice and update our documents: [www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk](http://www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk).

- 10. Concern in inconsistency in receiving timely updates on progress with NHS Responders initiative and how to refer – information gets through eventually – but how can this be improved? Ashfa**

We are working on improving updates and progress with the program. As discussed above, we have now provided guidance online via our NHS Volunteer Responder website and our Support team call centre are able to provide further information as requested. We've been working closely with NHS England to ensure that we have a consistent and effective approach to sending updates and progress in a timely manner. We have used health journals, GP webinars and other forums & publications to promote the service. The program has been set up at speed and it has taken a while to cascade but we are now seeing improvements in referral numbers coming through which should consequently result in more tasks for volunteers to complete.

- 11. What training will volunteers undergo?**

All volunteers will receive a 'Getting You Started' pack appropriate to the roles they sign up to so they will have specific, clear and detailed guidance which will enable them to provide support safely. Please note that our volunteers are there to provide a preventative service to isolation/shielding and not a treatment or care delivery service for those with; significant mental health conditions; receiving treatment for suicidal thoughts or actions; receiving support for drug and/or alcohol abuse and or have life limiting health conditions, disabilities or cognitive impairment where a carer is responsible for their daily care needs/support in normal circumstances.

We are also finalising guidance for our new **Community Response Plus** role which will support patients with significant vulnerabilities and cognitive impairments.

## **12. Can I track whether my referral has been completed?**

After you have confirmed your first referral a link will be sent to your email address (please ensure you look in your junk mailbox if you don't receive this). You will also receive a password. This will then become your log in and you will be able to view the referrals you have made and cancel referrals if needed. If you have any problems, please contact the support team on **0808 196 3382**.

## **13. When I put in a repeat referral how do I know if this has been matched to a volunteer?**

Unfortunately the system does not tell you when a repeat referral has been met after the initial match, however if your task has not been matched/completed with a volunteer in 3 days you will be notified via the portal. We are currently working with the app developers to provide system updates to improve this.

## **14. Are the responders sufficiently trained to be able to support Mental Health service users who are isolating at home and may have heightened anxiety?**

NHS Volunteer Responders isn't designed to provide this level of support, however if a volunteer comes across this, within the 'Getting you started' guidance packs that all NHS Volunteer Responders receive contains guidance on supporting individuals that are living with poor low level mental health.

If a referrer knows someone is living with low level mental health, they should refer them to other local provisions which can provide suitable ongoing support rather than the check in and chat volunteer role.

## **15. Is the app the only way of requesting support? Is telephone support available (if so is this a secondary option or something we can use to support our system coordination?)**

We are advising health care professionals to request referrals via the online referral form: [www.goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral](http://www.goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral) – The benefit of completing referrals on the online form is that referrers will be able to manage their referrals via the form (i.e. cancel/change referrals) and add further referrals as and when required. The Support Centre is also able to take referrals however they will advise health care professionals and local authorities to use the website.

## **16. What information is given to volunteers regarding local established voluntary sector services available to local residents**

NHS Volunteer Responders are not provided with information on other locally established voluntary sector services already available to local residents. The NHS Volunteer Responders program is not to duplicate or replace existing voluntary support provisions already in place, but to compliment them. Health Care professionals will be able to decide how best to co-ordinate required referrals, whether through the NHS Volunteer Responder program or local voluntary support groups. We remain in constant discussion with other third sector organisations including the Richmond Group.

NHSE/I are also working with STPs/ICSs and regional structures with aim of limiting overlap of resources in local areas and ensuring complimentary.

## **17. Is there a follow up system in place for those clients who receive a 'one off' service or would they need to be re-referred**

If a referral has been submitted for a client as 'one off', the referrer will need to complete another referral. If a volunteer supports an individual and believes they require further voluntary support, they are able to contact the call centre who will be able to contact the referrer to advise.

**18. Could you explain the system in place regarding confidentiality of client information?**

Nothing confidential or private is shared between the program and the volunteer. When a request is sent out to the volunteer, it will only share the clients name or address. Within the 'Getting You Started' guidance packs which all NHS Volunteer Responders receive, it details clear expectation around confidentiality and data protection. Within the guidance, there is also a clear 'Volunteering Agreement' which volunteers must accept and agree as part of their volunteering role. Within the guidance it also provides information to protect the volunteer and all volunteers are asked to withhold their number when contacting the client.

**19. What documentation is maintained and where is it stored?**

There are two types of data which is stores – Volunteer information and Client referral information. All data is held in servers securely by GoodSAM. Not accessible by RVS/NHS/GoodSAM unless there is a safeguarding concern. The volunteer information we hold is what they input on their application form and for the client, whatever the detail on the referral form and the status. We will delete any data that is requested by either a volunteer, referrer or client via calling the Support Team.

Data gathering is done by TLS 1.2, the highest industry standard for data transfer in flight and data is stored using AES 256, the highest industry standard for data of this type. Royal Voluntary Service, which is managing this process, is ISO 9001 and 27001 accredited. GoodSAM is operating the app to connect volunteers with individuals who need help, is GDPR compliant.

**20. Does the GP practice get to know every client that has been referred if from other sources?**

The Support Centre are able to confirm if a referral has already been made for a client if a GP practice requests this. If patients want to self-refer via the Support Centre, the call handler will check the system to confirm there isn't already a live referral from a health professional. In all cases, the referrer will be notified of any changes to request.

**21. Can you clarify liability?**

Royal Voluntary Service liability Insurance Policy covers up to 2 million volunteers. We will only accept liability if the volunteers are following the guidelines and boundaries that we have set.

**22. Who is the responsible organisation for the volunteers?**

Royal Voluntary Service

**23. How are volunteers mentored/supported?**

All volunteers are able to call the NHS Volunteer Responders Support Centre for any support or guidance. We also have the NHS Volunteer Responders portal as detailed above which has useful support information & details for volunteers.

**24. Are there any plans for social care employers to access potential volunteers?**

Local Authority social care are able to request referrals (as long as they have an NHS or Gov email address– (Social workers/Housing teams within councils/link workers etc.). This does not extend to private home care / care home providers who will need to have their own support provisions in place.

**25. Should a single nominated person set up an account on behalf of each organisation?**

This is open to each organisation to decide. We have left this flexible to suit different needs.

**26. What happens if my task is not completed by a volunteer?**

The referral task will remain in the system for 3 days to hopefully be matched with a volunteer (*for info – most volunteers are being matched to tasks within 24 hours currently*). If it is not matched after 3 days, you are notified in the referral portal if you use correctly.

**27. Security of medicines when collected on behalf of individual patients or transported in bulk between sites/DBS checks for those handling medicines - Ashfa**

These tasks will be undertaken by Community Response Volunteers and Patient Transport Volunteers, neither of which are required to hold a DBS. Some pharmacists have questioned this, however The Home Office has issued updated DBS guidance that states that volunteers are able to collect medication and shopping for those unable to leave their homes without DBS clearance.

The General Pharmaceutical Council and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society have also issued a joint statement about the use of NHS volunteers to deliver medicines in England.  
<https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/news/joint-statement-rps-and-gphc-use-nhs-volunteers-deliver-medicines-england>

All volunteers have had their identities verified as part the application process, and follow clear procedures for the safe delivery of medicines and prescriptions, approved by the Deputy Chief Pharmaceutical Officer. Volunteers are required to show both their GoodSAM ID and another form of photographic identification upon arrival at the pharmacy, and at no time does a volunteer enter a client's home.

Also if requested as a community responder, the volunteers are expected to contact the patient via telephone before undertaking any task to check on shopping/pharmacy collection needs. This ensures the patient knows the volunteer should be bringing them and if the client is able to report if not received.

**28. How long will the program last and what will happen to the volunteers at the end?**

At present the program is scheduled to continue for the rest of this year in supporting clients during the covid-19 pandemic. There are no definitive plans on what will happen with volunteers at the end of the program. Royal Voluntary Service and NHS England are having active conversations with this currently and various options are being explored. It is also important that we abide by data protection rules on all of our decisions.