

# Hospice Volunteering in the United Kingdom



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## Introduction

In the UK volunteers have always played a significant role in hospice and palliative care, indeed, many hospices were founded by volunteers. Today they are still a vital resource in enabling hospices to deliver services.<sup>1</sup>

Naylor, Mundle and Weaks<sup>2</sup> suggest that volunteers play a key role in improving how patients experience care, in addition to enhancing the role of paid staff.

Findings from the UK Commission into the Future of Hospice Care and from recent literature suggest that volunteering will become even more important to hospices and palliative care services in the future if they are to meet the needs of increasing numbers of patients and families.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Recent research suggests that there are many opportunities for volunteers to become more fully integrated into the professional team and to further develop roles in care.<sup>1,6</sup>

## Facts and Figures

- UK hospice sector supports 120,000 people with life limiting conditions every year.<sup>7</sup>
- Only 34% of funding comes from the government.<sup>7</sup>
- 125,000 -160,000 volunteers involved in hospices.<sup>1</sup>
- 23 million hours of time donated per year.<sup>1</sup>
- Estimated economic value of volunteering £150 million.<sup>1</sup>
- Hospice costs would increase by 25% without volunteers.<sup>2</sup>
- 98% of senior staff indicated that their hospice could not function without volunteers.<sup>1</sup>

## Roles



### Governance

Independent hospices have a Board of Trustees who have significant responsibility for the strategic direction and effective management of the hospice. All are volunteers.

### Patients and Families

Volunteers provide practical and emotional support to patients and families for example:

- Providing transport
- Helping with feeding and personal care,
- Listening, counselling, befriending
- Bereavement support
- Complementary therapies
- Pet Therapy
- Practical support at home: shopping, gardening, sitting with patients, taking patients out.

### Organisational

Volunteers also support the organisation with:

- Administration
- Helping to prepare and serve food,
- Housekeeping,
- Gardening
- Fundraising, working in hospice shops
- Raising awareness of the work of the hospice

## Legislation and regulation

### Legislation

There is no legal definition of volunteers or of volunteering in the UK. There is, however, a wide range of other legislation that still applies to volunteers whether directly or indirectly which hospices need to consider. Examples include: Employment law, Health and Safety law, requirements, to undertake criminal records checks on certain volunteer roles with children and vulnerable adults.

### Care Standards

Hospices all must be registered and meet regulatory care standards in order to be able to provide services. This includes regular planned and unplanned inspections of many different aspects of the service. Whilst volunteers may not be specifically mentioned in the standards, it is important to ensure that their work also meets the standards required of staff in similar roles.

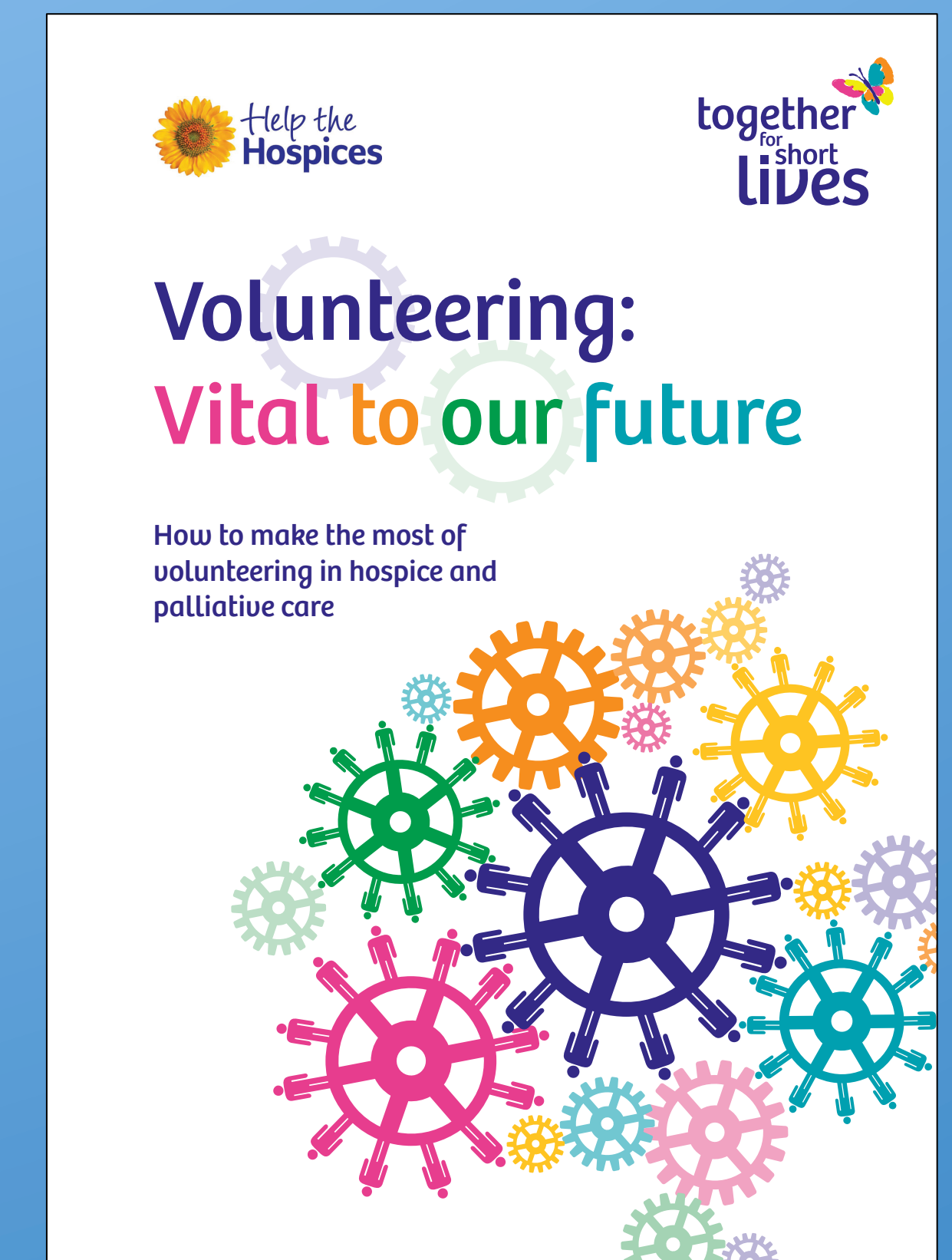
## New developments

Volunteers play an increasingly important role in providing social and emotional support to patients and their families in hospices and in the community.

Hospices are piloting new approaches to volunteer led services in the community for people with life-limiting conditions. This can involve partnership with other charities to share skills and expertise improving the range of support offered to patients and families.

In order to encourage and support such developments a new resource "Volunteering: Vital to Our Future"<sup>5</sup> was developed. The purpose is to promote effective practice and provide ideas and guidance to help services to consider new approaches to volunteering. Combining guidance, signposting and an Evaluation Toolkit the resource is illustrated by case studies from a range of services in the UK and Europe.

## New resources



## References

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6. Morris, S., Wilmot, A., Hill, M., Ockenden, N., & Payne, S., (2013). A narrative literature review of the contribution of volunteers in end-of-life care services. *Palliative Medicine* 27 (5), 428-36 Doi:10.1177/0269216312453608.Epub 2012 Jul 24
7. Hospice UK <http://www.hospiceuk.org/about-hospice-care>