Returning to the Involvement Centres

Background

The Involvement Centres have predominantly been closed since the end of March 2020, in response to the global pandemic and national restrictions, As these ease, volunteers are being returned to physical roles within services and the Involvement Centres are reopening.

The Involvement, Experience & Volunteering Team took this opportunity whilst the Centres have been closed to consult with volunteers as to the purpose of the DMH and Rosewood Involvement Centres and how the inclusion of virtual working would impact volunteering.

This document details a proposal as to the role the Involvement Centres play in supporting volunteers across services. A date hasn't been set for when these ideas may be put into place completely; this is intentional. As a team, we wouldn't have been able to predict the past year and the restrictions that have been put in place nationally. Although we hope that the restrictions will ease as the Government are currently predicting, we will be phasing any changes in gradually in accordance with guidance. This will allow us to best support staff and volunteers during this transition.

Quick links:

Themes from discussions with volunteers

During February and March 2021 Laura and Lyndsy met with a group of volunteers to have conversations about returning to the Involvement Centres. These meetings were publicised by email, in newsletters, by social media and in the Volunteer Hub. Anyone who was unable to attend the virtual meetings was given the alternative to speak by telephone or email. The themes arising from the conversations were shared in a similar way. In the discussions it was acknowledged that the desire for social interactions may be heightened at the moment due to prolonged periods of lockdown and isolation.

Laura and Lyndsy posed several questions to help structure the conversations:

- What's the purpose and ethos behind the Centres from your point of view?
- What would the Centres look like?
- What would they be used for?
- When should they be open?
- How will working virtually change the Centres?
- What's the role of volunteers in the Centres?
- What's the role of staff in the Centres?

Themes about the Purpose & Ethos of the Involvement Centres (25/02/21)

Involvement Centres help provide:

- A sense of community and belonging
- A base to help an individual's growth and development
- A safe environment for volunteers, service users and carers.

Bringing volunteers together:

- Peer Support (look out for one another)
- Allows people to use their lived experience and share with others.
- A sense of community and understanding.

Volunteering & the Centres impact on recovery

- Socialising
- Providing routine
- Can act as a lifeline for some
- Provides a sense of purpose
- Chance to "give back"
- Grounding

We need to ensure:

- Balance and equality between the Centres and what is offered out to all volunteers.
- The profile of Centres and Volunteers should be raised across the Trust to increase awareness.
- Increasing the diversity of volunteers – perhaps a mix of virtual and face to face could help this.

- Accurate information to staff who may provide an introduction to the Involvement Centres for future volunteers.
- Ongoing dialogue and conversations about the Centres.

Themes about how the impact of virtual working and benefits of regular Centre meetings (12/03/21)

Virtual & Physical volunteering:

- Virtual and physical volunteering are not entirely the same thing and one is not a replacement for the other.
- Each may require slightly different skills.
- Virtual working may increase accessibility if there are barriers to attending Centres/volunteering roles.
- There can be issues with technology which reduce its effectiveness– camera quality, video lag, clarity of audio.
- Virtual could be used when unable to attend physically (i.e. patient forums), although a physical attendance helps build relationships.
- Attending virtually can be more anxiety provoking as it can feel more remote and inequal.
- Virtual working may be useful for staff to reduce commute, but also can limit the "neutral ground" of the Centres.

Support needed for virtual working:

- Offering more training on digital/virtual volunteering.
- Chance to debrief.
- Support with technology.
- Encouraging screen breaks.
- Space to work virtually outside the home.

Purposes and benefits from regular Centre meetings:

- Able to speak to others about meetings, or opportunities.
- Gain information
- Sense of community, belonging, friendships
- Chance to offer peer support within meeting, help with understanding
- Guest speakers
- Gives structure for new people starting.

The Involvement Centres pre-March 2020

Previous regular meetings & diary events run by Volunteering staff within IEV Team:

Meeting	Purpose	Duration & Frequency	Location
Volunteer Opportunity Meetings	Formal minuted meeting. Chaired by Laura/Lyndsy. Standing Agenda: • Reviewing the upcoming fortnight • Volunteer opportunities • Feedback from volunteers • Trust updates • Partner updates • Guest speaker (not every meeting)	2 hours, fortnightly	DMH Rosewood
Comms Group	To review communications from IEV Team and Trust.	1.5 hours, monthly	Rosewood
Volunteer Update	To review volunteering, training and the development of volunteering in the Trust.	1.5 hours, monthly	Rosewood
Patient Information Group	Reviewing, designing information for publication from the Trust.	2 hours, weekly	DMH
Hub	Time for peer support and connect with staff team. Included Music Practice & Gardening Group	1.5 hours, weekly	Rosewood

Involvement Centre opening times:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
DMH	10-4	10-4	12-4	10-4	Closed
Rosewood	10-4	Closed	Closed	10-4	10-4

Expenses

- Volunteers were eligible to claim travel expenses if attending a meeting at DMH or Rosewood.
- Volunteers were asked to attend the Opportunities Meeting at the Centre closest to them unless exceptional circumstances.
- Volunteers could claim travel expenses for one additional trip to the Involvement Centres a week, to enable them to check emails and get updates.
- Volunteers were entitled to a meal voucher or lunch expenses if volunteering over three hours.
- Meal vouchers and lunch expenses were provided for volunteers attending the Volunteer Opportunities Meeting. Volunteers at Rosewood opted to pool this money to provide a buffet prepared by volunteers and staff members.

The Involvement Centres – proposed changes

Proposed regular meetings & diary events run by Volunteering staff within IEV Team:

Meeting	Purpose	Duration & Frequency	Location
Weekly Catch Up	Informal check in, not minuted. Hosted by Laura/Lyndsy/Volunteer Standing Agenda: - Centre update - Volunteers feedback - activity, meetings & themes in previous week - New volunteer opportunities - Can be joined through MS Teams Volunteer Hub	1 hour, Weekly	DMH Rosewood Virtual
Volunteer Team Meeting	Formal minuted meeting. Chaired by Joanna, co-chair Laura/Lyndsy, admin support Max/Teresa. Standing Agenda: - Volunteering in Notts Healthcare - Updates from Trustwide Volunteering Group - Update from Involvement, Experience & Volunteering. - Can be joined through MS Teams Volunteer Hub	2 hours, monthly	DMH Virtual (This may alternate with Rosewood depending on numbers and capacity)
Training & Digital Support	Time to book a computer to access online training where a member of the team will be on hand to support if needed.	1.5 hours, Weekly	DMH Rosewood
Patient Information Group	Reviewing, designing information for publication from the Trust.	2 hours, weekly	DMH Virtual
Music Practice	For volunteers who play music within services to practice together and co-ordinate attending requests from services.	1 hour, Weekly	Rosewood

Proposed Involvement Centre opening times:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
DMH	10-4	10-4	10-4	Closed	Closed
Rosewood	10-4	Closed	10-4	Closed	10-4

Expenses

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- Volunteers were entitled to a meal voucher or lunch expenses if volunteering over three hours.
- Meal vouchers and lunch expenses are provided for volunteers attending the Volunteer Team Meeting. When the meeting is held at Rosewood, Volunteers can opt to pool this money to provide a buffet prepared by volunteers.

Methods of Volunteer Support & Contact

This table details the main reasons for the Volunteering Team to have contact with volunteers and the variety of methods in which a volunteer can engage.

	Involvement Centres	Website	NottsHC Volunteer Hub	Email	Monthly Newsletter	Telephone	On site/In services
Recruitment	• Potential volunteers can visit weekly catch up as a taster and speak with other volunteers • Hand in applications • Interviews • Induction	• Process explained in detail with FAQs • Opportunities advertised		• Applications • Registration process • MS Teams interviews		• Deal with enquiries • Telephone interviews	• Dedicated noticeboard promoting volunteering • Digital display screens
Training	• Open booking slots to access Computers and staff support. • Bespoke training Interview, mentor collecting feedback	• Dedicated Training pages.	• Training channel. • Video sessions hosted on Hub	• Reminders when training requires updating	• Training spotlights • Dates advertised		• Dedicated notice board for info and other training options available to volunteers
Reviews	• Face to face reviews		• Video call reviews	• Email reviews		• Telephone Reviews	• On-site reviews
Expenses	• Receiving postal forms.	• Expense form and		• Electronic forms			• Forms available to

	• Forms can be handed in.	policies on site.			submitted by email.			be internally posted
New Volunteer Opportunities	• Noticeboard • Weekly Catch up	• Opportunity page	• Advertised on dedicated channel • Catch up & Meetings recorded	• Roles emailed as needed	• Roles highlighted	• Deal with enquiries	• Team promoted with information on noticeboard
Development Opportunities	• Noticeboard	• Blogs & training resources	• Advertised on channel	• Emailed with newsletters.	• Links shared		
Updates from IEV Team	• Weekly catch up • Volunteer Team Meeting • Noticeboard	• Blogs	• Put on channel • Catch up & Meetings recorded	• Emailed with newsletters. • Meeting minutes emailed.	• Brief updates		
Updates from Trust	• Volunteer Team Meeting • Noticeboard	• Blogs	• Links and info shared • Catch up & Meetings recorded	• Emailed with newsletters. • Meeting minutes emailed.	• Brief updates		
Updates from partner organisations	• Volunteer Team Meeting • Noticeboard	• Blogs	• Links and info shared • Catch up & Meetings recorded	• Emailed with newsletters • Meeting minutes emailed.	• Links shared		

Addressing Themes Raised by Volunteers

Supporting Volunteering Virtually

- All volunteers are eligible to have a Trust account to allow them to log on to the Trust intranet and Trust email account.
- Although volunteers may still be able to attend meetings virtually from home, computers within the Centre can be booked during Centre opening times. This will allow extra support if needed in utilising the technology or debriefing afterwards.
- Computers will be available in the Centres to check emails, Connect or similar.
- Private office computer space is available to be booked out during Centre opening times to allow volunteers to attend virtual meetings that require more privacy, for example, interviews, patient forums or gathering feedback.
- Training Support sessions where staff are available to support volunteers in accessing online training within the Centres.

Equity between Volunteers

Our volunteers are from a large geographical area and a range of backgrounds. We support those people in roles across Nottinghamshire Healthcare. As best we can, we want to ensure equity in the offer of support to those volunteers. Not all volunteers will be able to physically attend an Involvement Centre regularly, and some volunteers may not want to. The table of "Methods of Volunteer Contact & Support" details how we as a team can be flexible in the offer to volunteers and they can choose how to access that support.

Personal Development, Wellbeing & Support

The Involvement, Experience & Volunteering Team are not a clinical service. We do not accept "referrals" to us to become volunteers from other clinicians or services after their treatment pathway. However, we do acknowledge that for many of our volunteers, their involvement in Nottinghamshire Healthcare and their voluntary role helps maintain their wellbeing and recovery through providing meaningful activity, routine, social contact and a supportive environment.

Our volunteers have specific roles supporting Nottinghamshire Healthcare and we want to ensure they have the opportunity for development. This may be through training, achieving the National Volunteer Certificate, regular reviews, through mentoring by staff or fellow volunteers, or external training opportunities with partners.

Sense of Community

Similarly to the topic of wellbeing, providing a community isn't necessarily a primary function of the Involvement, Experience & Volunteering Team. However, we acknowledge the importance of the support, enjoyment, and sense of identity that volunteers gain from feeling part of a community; and that this may play a factor in people remaining to volunteer with Nottinghamshire Healthcare over the course of years.

The act of bringing a group of people with similar interests and a shared altruistic trait, by its very nature, is likely to form the start of community. We hope that some of the proposed changes will help foster and support this:

- Weekly Catch Ups – provide a chance to feedback and debrief about volunteering role, offer peer support
- Responsibility in Centres – The Involvement Centres are not only working bases for the IEV Team, but also for volunteers. Volunteers will receive updates about the physical centres in Weekly Catch Ups, they can also book out computers during opening times and rooms where necessary for their role.
- Newsletter – monthly newsletters will help keep volunteers up to date, where they are unable to access Centres regularly. Volunteers are able to contribute to the newsletter and take responsibility for sections.
- Volunteer Team Meeting – this allows volunteers to link into volunteering within Nottinghamshire Healthcare and within a wider national context. By alternating Involvement Centres, we hope to improve connections between volunteers who would previously mainly be linked to one Centre.
- NottsHC Volunteer Hub – the continuation of the MS Teams for volunteers allows volunteers to connect to others in a space virtually, just as they would in the physical building. This means that people can collaborate on projects or join in virtually when they may be physically unable to attend.

An example month

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	**DMH**	1.30 -2.30 Weekly Catch Up	10-12 PIG 2 –3 Training Support	10-12 Training & Support All Pm reviews & Interviews		
	Rosewood	10-12 Training Support		Reviews & Interviews		10-12 Music Practice 1-2 Weekly Catch Up
Week 2	**DMH**	10.30 -12.30 Volunteer Team Meeting 1.30 -2.30 Weekly Catch Up	10-12 PIG 2-3 Training Support	10-12 Training & Support All Pm reviews & Interviews		
	Rosewood			10-12 Training Support Reviews & Interviews		10-12 Music Practice 1-2 Weekly Catch Up
Week 3	**DMH**	1.30 -2.30 Weekly Catch Up	10-12 PIG 2-3 Training Support	10-12 Training & Support All Pm reviews & Interviews		

	Rosewood	10-12 Training Support		Reviews & Interviews		10-12 Music Practice 1-2 Weekly Catch Up
Week 4	**DMH**	1.30 -2.30 Weekly Catch Up	10-12 PIG 2-3 Training Support	10-12 Training & Support All Pm reviews & Interviews		
	Rosewood	10-11:30 Training Support		Reviews & Interviews		10-12 Music Practice 1-2 Weekly Catch Up
Week 5	**DMH**	1.30 -2.30 Weekly Catch Up	10-12 PIG 2-3 Training Support	10-12 Training & Support All Pm reviews & Interviews		
	Rosewood	10-11:30 Training Support		Reviews & Interviews		