# Volunteer recruitment and support programme
## Portsmouth City Council

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit back in March, Portsmouth City Council (PCC) knew that support for the sector at this time would be vital, and that they had plenty of volunteers in their community who were willing and able to help the existing workforce. However, these volunteers had to first be recruited and then supported with the training that they needed to provide rapid support to the frontline. To achieve this, a focused group of PCC staff, including representation from the local volunteer bureau and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), worked with a number of key stakeholders to recruit and manage volunteers and ensure they had the necessary knowledge to be deployed on the front line.

To begin, PCC had support from Skills for Care endorsed learning provider Grey Matter Group to create an e-learning platform where volunteers could be referred to before they were deployed, to get a head start on the training they needed to support the frontline. This created a main landing page for volunteers where they could complete an online Care Certificate as well as gain key information about the role they would be fulfilling. The provision of e-learning through this platform was particularly key throughout the outbreak given the push to minimise face to face contact as much as possible.



To boost their volunteer numbers and direct people through the Portsmouth County Council's social care volunteer system, PCC worked with a local volunteer bureau, Hive. PCC also linked into existing volunteer initiatives such as Project Wingman where aviation staff who were furloughed or made redundant by the pandemic were also supported to join the army of volunteers or connected to vacancies in the sector.

> "We employed a number of initiatives to make recruitment and deployment of volunteers as easy as possible. This included a quick guide to each of our services, enabling volunteers to hit the ground running in any role they were deployed to and meant that valuable time was saved by providing the necessary information quickly and easily."
>
> Roland Bryant
> Learning and Development Business Partner, Portsmouth City Council

To support the frontline teams with the impact of the pandemic, PCC also deployed members of their own learning and development team as a wellbeing resource in their own care homes. These staff were able to directly support homes by providing employee assistance to staff and helping with important tasks such as keeping residents and their loved ones in touch through calls so frontline staff could focus on delivering frontline care.

This was initiative was extremely successful at attracting a number of people who may not have considered social care roles in the past. These candidates are equipped with the transferrable skills to enable them to begin the role and were supported with the sector specific knowledge through the landing page, guides and e-learning modules. The programme continues and can be scaled up in response to the current pandemic, or any situation, depending on the need in the community and provided vital support to the sector when it was sorely needed.

## Top tips for a volunteer programme

### Help people realise what they can offer and highlight transferable skills

When looking for volunteers or recruits, PCC found that it was important to explicitly state the transferable skills which are needed. Many people wouldn't consider the transferrable skills they had which made them suitable for the role, but if the candidate sees that the role requires skills they have, such as good communication, customer service skills, or basic first aid for example, they will be more likely to apply.

### Be clear what the role is

Any ambiguity or lack of explicit role descriptors may cause potential candidates to make assumptions that either cause them not to apply for the role or apply but realise later the role is not for them.

### Recruit for values, train for specific skills

Once you find a candidate who is kind, caring and dedicated, you help them to learn anything they need to know.

To find out more contact Roland Bryant, Learning and Development Business Partner, Portsmouth City Council on Roland.Bryant@secure.portsmouthcc.gov.uk.