Why are volunteers important in the care of people with dementia?
Almost 50% patients at Kingston Hospital over the age of 75 have dementia. This is almost double the national average for a hospital of our size. Volunteers play an important role in supporting patients with dementia and their families to have the best possible experience in hospital.

Taking the time to get to know each patient and engaging them in activities that are tailored to their individual interests and abilities can significantly improve the patient’s wellbeing and help prevent functional decline. The skill, empathy and knowledge of Dementia Volunteers’ can also provide reassurance to family members that their loved one will receive the personalised care they need.

What is the role of a Dementia Volunteer?
Dementia Volunteers work closely with the Dementia Activities Coordinator and Ward staff to create the best possible environment and personalised care for patients with dementia whilst in hospital.

Each visit with a patient with dementia will be different. Part of the role of a Dementia Volunteer is to build rapport with relevant staff, patients and carers and agree the activities that will most benefit each patient at that time.

However, there are a range of tasks and responsibilities that all Dementia Volunteers are encouraged to do:

- Complete of 8 Things About Me – working with relatives, carers and the patient as appropriate to learn about the patient’s likes and dislikes and ensure they are accurately captured and expressed using the patient’s own language.
- Companionship – sitting with the patient (and their carers as appropriate) to stimulate and engage in conversations on topics of interest to the patient.
- Bedside or group therapeutic activities
- Dining Companion – providing companionship, conversation and assistance to ensure mealtimes are pleasant and sociable for patients with dementia.
- Encouraging independence – ensuring that patients have access to their hearing aids, spectacles, dentures and other items of personal care that promote dignity and independence.
- Tasks of daily living: helping patients maintain their likes, dislikes and routines e.g. hair-brushing, nail painting, running small errands e.g. purchasing a newspaper from the hospital shop which are known to make the patient more content.
- Advocacy – represent patients’ and carers’ needs and feedback to Ward staff to improve the quality of care they receive.
- Help at group activities designed to promote wellbeing for patients with dementia, e.g. communal meals, vintage sing-alongs, Bingo e.t.c.
How volunteers shape the care we provide
At the end of each shift you do, all volunteers complete an Activity Log and Mood Forms. These forms are an important way to handover to our therapists and ward staff and ensure they know what help you have given and how patients responded.

Volunteer’s notes are read daily by the Senior Sister to ensure the support you offer is fully integrated into the care of each patient with dementia.

How we will support you
When you arrive, you will meet with the Therapeutic Activities Coordinator, or a member of Ward staff who will guide you to which patients need your help.

Regular group supervision is provided for all Dementia Volunteers.

What makes a good Dementia Volunteer?
Dementia Volunteers do not need to have any professional skills or prior experience of working with people with dementia. You just need to be enthusiastic, patient, reliable and willing to learn from experts how to communicate with and support people living with dementia.

Volunteers will be expected to demonstrate the following:
- Caring, reliable and enjoys being with older people
- Ability to communicate well with patients, their relatives/friends
- Ability to work alongside staff for the benefit of patients
- Ability to take the initiative and assume responsibility for ensuring staff are aware of any difficulties patients and carers are experiencing
- Strong personal boundaries and confident to sign-post patients and carers to alternative sources of support, advocacy and information e.g. PALs.
- Understand the importance of maintaining patient confidentiality at all times.
- Engage in training and supervision as appropriate to carry out the role
- Comply with all Trust Policies and Procedures as relevant to this role and the training provided.

What is the commitment?
We ask all Dementia Volunteers to make a regular commitment, where possible, e.g. 1.5hrs per week for a six month period. However if you can give more or less than this, please apply and we can create a placement that suits you.