

Volunteer involvement in rapid transfers of care from hospital to the community for people nearing the end of life

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Abstract: This study explored whether and how formal volunteers could support people at end of life to transfer quickly from hospital to their preferred place of care. 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders. Participants stipulated that involving volunteers in this context would require robust vetting and support from a volunteer-co-ordinator. To be effective and sustainable, volunteers would need to be affiliated with a healthcare service. Healthcare organisations would also need to embrace an element of risk.

Related publications: Blake J, Peryer G. (submitted), Volunteer involvement in rapid transfers of care from hospital to the community for people nearing the end of life: an exploratory study. *Health and Social Care in the Community*. 2008.



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Background

- 37% of bereaved families felt their relative did not have enough choice over their place of death (1)
- 32% of those who are 'fast-tracked' in hospital wait a week or more to be transferred to their preferred place (2)
- NHS England aims to double the number of healthcare volunteers by 2022 (3)
- The COVID-19 pandemic offers new perspectives on the management of healthcare volunteers

AIMS

- Stakeholder experiences of rapid transfers of care from hospital to the community for people who are dying
- Attitudes towards involving volunteers in rapid transfers of care.
- Whether and how volunteer involvement could be integrated effectively and sustainably into healthcare services

(1) The End of Life Care Coalition. *On the Brink: the future of end of life care*. Available from <http://endoflifecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/End-of-Life-Report-WEB.pdf> [Accessed 25 September 2020]. (2) Marie Curie. *Making Every Moment Count*. Available from: https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/globalassets/media/documents/policy/policy-publications/the_state_of_fast_track_continuing_healthcare.pdf [Accessed 25 September 2020]. (3) National Health Service. *The NHS Long Term Plan*. Available from: <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-long-term-plan/> [Accessed 25 September 2020].

Methods and Results

- Exploratory and theory-generating qualitative study
- Conducted in Norfolk and Waveney (East of England)
- Convenience sampling approach
- Semi-structured interviews with 13 stakeholders who were professionally involved in end of life care.
- Inductive thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews and notes (4).

KEY THEMES

Barriers to rapid transfers

- *'difficulty co-ordinating the fast-track process'*
- *'scarcity of social care'*

Volunteer involvement

- *'psychosocial and practical support'*
- *'robust screening and training'*
- *'strong leadership'*
- *'locality-specific integration'*.

Conclusions

- A lack of social care is a key barrier to rapid transfers of care to the community.
- Provided there are robust vetting procedures, volunteers can provide valuable support, possibly as part of a primary care network.
- Training and investment in a volunteer co-ordinator will encourage mutually beneficial volunteer engagement.

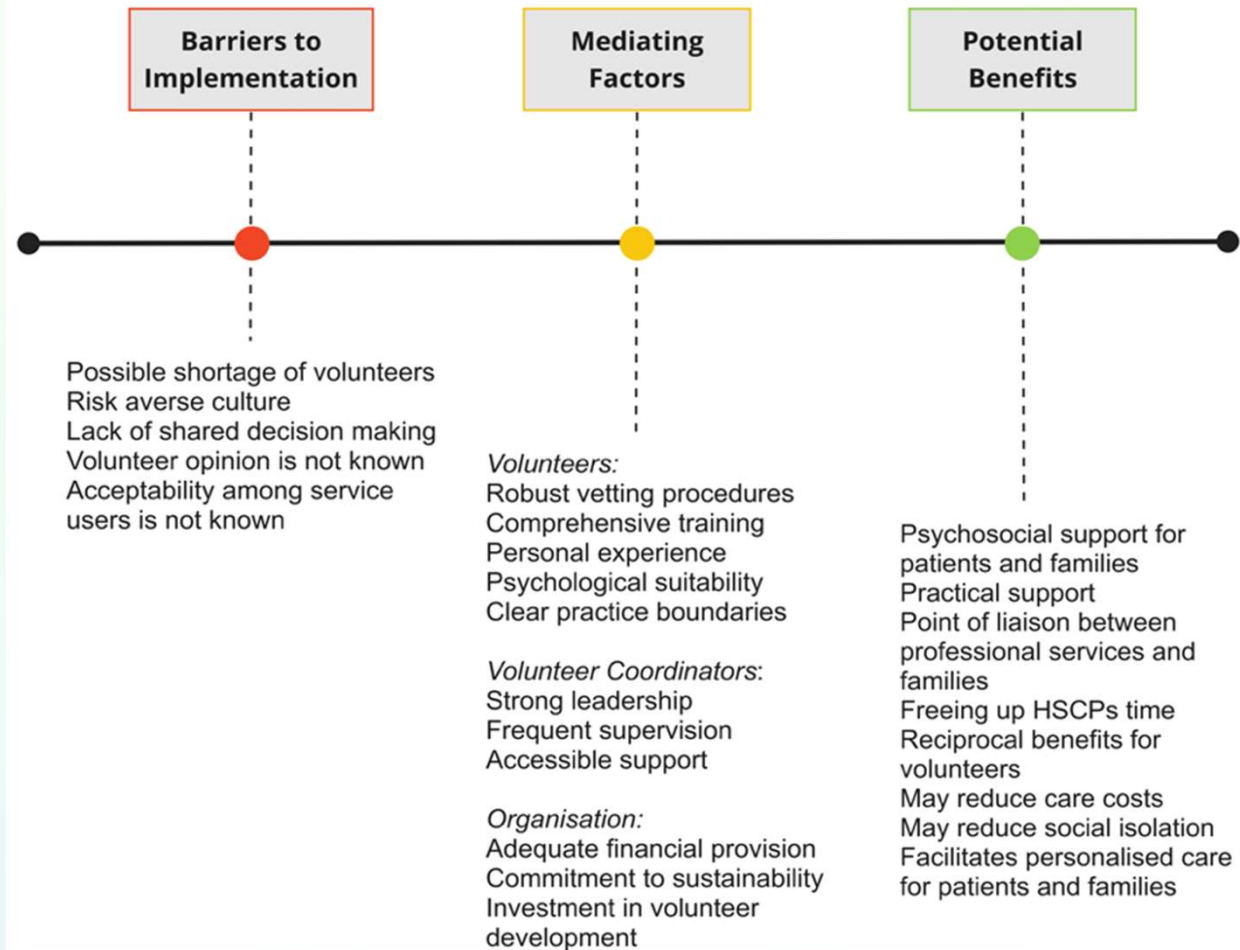


Figure 1. Identified barriers, mediating factors and benefits of involving volunteers in rapid transfers of care from hospital to the community.