

# Making Moments Matter

## The Volunteer Charter



Volunteering is a driving force of hope! In all the activities we develop, we count on the participation of many – happy! – volunteers who, by sharing a little of themselves, help us achieve a lot for others.

We start by recognising that volunteering is a two-way process that makes a difference in the lives of people living with dementia, their loved ones and our volunteers.

This Volunteer Charter has six pillars of agreement which are based on the Investing in Volunteers framework: (1) Vision for Volunteering, (2) Planning for Volunteers, (3) Volunteer Inclusion, (4) Recruiting & Welcoming Volunteers, (5) Supporting Volunteers and (6) Valuing & Developing Volunteers.

# Understanding the Volunteer Charter

An organisation that facilitates volunteer programmes for people living with dementia must be grounded in the aim of improving the lives of these individuals within care homes. This charter is designed based on the six essential pillars of the Investing in Volunteers best practice framework, ensuring a comprehensive approach to volunteering that positively impacts people living with dementia, their families, and our dedicated volunteers.

Over the next few pages, we elaborate on each pillar within the context of volunteering in care homes for people living with dementia.



# About St John of God Dementia Care at St Joseph's



**We are the largest home in Ireland solely dedicated to dementia care. Sixty people call St Joseph's their home and we also provide a Day Care Club and respite service.**

We hold the Butterfly Approach accreditation from Meaningful Care Matters, where people living with dementia are free to be themselves. In 2020 we won the Charity Impact Award in Ireland and in 2021 we received the Investing in Volunteers Award, the national quality mark of excellence in volunteer management in Ireland

## About Hope! Respostas Sociais



**HOPE is an organisation that focuses on global health and social inclusion, specifically within the realms of aging and dementia.**

Over the past 9 years, we have conceived, executed, and overseen a range of local and regional projects aimed at community intervention for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. These initiatives encompass social inclusion, enhancement of quality of life, advocacy for fundamental rights, and the empowerment of caregivers and professionals providing care. As a non-profit and social solidarity entity, we

and the United Kingdom. We have over 100 volunteers who enhance the quality of the care that we offer to residents, Day Care Club members and their families. Our volunteer team help us to make that all happen.

For more information visit:  
[www.saintjosephsshankill.ie](http://www.saintjosephsshankill.ie)

were established to address emerging societal challenges comprehensively and inclusively. Our efforts extend to older people, those dealing with mental health issues, people living with dementia, and those facing the threat of social exclusion.

For more details, please visit our website at: [www.hope.pt](http://www.hope.pt).



# 1. Vision for Volunteering

## Volunteer Strategy

Volunteers engaging with people living with dementia require additional support and understanding due to the unique challenges and sensitivities involved. Therefore, an organisation that facilitates volunteer programmes for people living with dementia must develop strategies specifically addressing the needs and well-being of these individuals, ensuring that volunteers are adequately prepared to provide meaningful support and companionship. This includes initiatives such as specialised training programmes, regular supervision and support from experienced staff, peer mentorship programmes, flexible scheduling options, resource libraries and toolkits, opportunities for continuing education and professional development, and feedback mechanisms.

## Organisational Strategy

People living with dementia in care homes require personalised attention and love that allows them to feel that the care home is truly a home. Therefore, care homes must recognise the vital role of volunteers in enhancing the quality of life for people living with dementia. It is crucial for the organisational strategy to acknowledge and prioritise the inclusion of volunteers in dementia care initiatives, ensuring alignment with the organisation's overall mission to provide person-centred care. This also implies that the organisation should be capable of listening to people living with dementia and their loved ones in defining its own organisational strategy, considering them, as well as volunteers, as fundamental stakeholders in this process.

## Support from Management and Staff

Given the complex nature of dementia care, volunteer programmes must receive unwavering support from management and staff. This includes providing guidance, resources, and supervision to volunteers, as well as fostering a culture of appreciation and recognition for their invaluable contributions to resident well-being.



## 2. Planning for Volunteering

### **Volunteer Policy**

Recognising the unique needs and vulnerabilities of people living with dementia, each care home must implement a comprehensive volunteer policy that addresses specific considerations for volunteer engagement in dementia care. This policy includes protocols for communication, behaviour management, and protection/safeguarding procedures tailored to the needs of people living with dementia. Additionally, it specifies training requirements for volunteers and outlines mechanisms for supervision and support. Regular review and updates of the policy ensure that it remains relevant and aligned with evolving best practices in dementia care.

### **Volunteer Support Team**

Designated individuals within each care home, such as volunteer coordinators or dementia care specialists, must be responsible for overseeing and nurturing the volunteer programme. These support professionals should be trained to handle the unique challenges and complexities associated with dementia care, ensuring that volunteers feel adequately supported in their roles. They play a crucial role in providing guidance, feedback, and emotional support to volunteers, facilitating their understanding of dementia care principles and their ability to effectively engage with people living with dementia. Additionally, these individuals serve as points of contact for volunteers to address any concerns or questions they may have, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment within the volunteer programme.

### **Volunteer Committee**

As volunteer programmes evolve, care homes should consider establishing volunteer committees that include representatives from the dementia care team. These committees should provide a platform for volunteers to share insights, concerns, and feedback related to their experiences engaging with people living with dementia, fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach to volunteer engagement. By involving volunteers in decision-making processes and soliciting their input, care homes can ensure that volunteer programmes are responsive to the needs and preferences of people living with dementia. This collaborative approach also promotes a sense of ownership and investment among volunteers, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the enhancement of dementia care services within the care home setting. Additionally, volunteer committees serve as forums for knowledge sharing and capacity building, enabling volunteers to learn from each other's experiences and best practices in supporting people living with dementia.



## Stakeholder Feedback

Regular solicitation of feedback from residents, family members, staff, and volunteers is essential for continually improving the volunteer programme in dementia care environments. By actively seeking and responding to volunteer feedback, care homes demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement and the value they place on volunteer contributions in enhancing quality of life for people living with dementia. This feedback loop allows care homes to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement within their volunteer programmes, ensuring that they remain responsive to the evolving needs and preferences of people living with dementia. Additionally, by incorporating the perspectives of residents, family members, and staff, care homes can gain valuable insights into the impact of volunteer interventions on resident well-being and overall satisfaction with care. This collaborative approach fosters a culture of transparency, accountability, and shared responsibility for optimising the quality of dementia care within the care home setting.



## 3. Volunteer Inclusion

### **Inclusion of People from All Backgrounds**

Care homes must actively recruit volunteers from diverse communities, including individuals with personal or professional experience in dementia care. By embracing diversity in volunteer recruitment, care homes can better reflect the varied needs and preferences of people living with dementia, enhancing the quality and relevance of volunteer support services. This diversity not only enriches the volunteer pool but also ensures that volunteers bring a wide range of perspectives, skills, and cultural sensitivities to their interactions with people living with dementia. Moreover, recruiting volunteers from diverse backgrounds allows nursing homes to tailor their volunteer programmes to meet the unique needs of a multicultural and multilingual resident population. By fostering an inclusive environment where volunteers from all backgrounds are valued and respected, care homes can create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for both volunteers and people living with dementia, promoting social inclusion and enhancing the overall quality of life in the care home setting.

### **Celebrating Diversity**

The unique cultural identities, experiences, and backgrounds of both residents and volunteers must be celebrated and respected within care home environments. This inclusive approach not only promotes a sense of belonging and acceptance but also enriches the volunteering experience by fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation between volunteers and people living with dementia. Embracing diversity allows for a more holistic and person-centred approach to care, where volunteers can draw upon their diverse cultural perspectives and experiences to better connect with individuals from different backgrounds. Furthermore, celebrating diversity creates an environment of mutual respect and openness, where residents feel valued for their unique identities and volunteers feel empowered to learn from and engage with the rich tapestry of cultures present in the care home community. By embracing and celebrating diversity, nursing homes can create a more vibrant and inclusive environment that enhances the well-being and quality of life for both residents and volunteers alike.



## 4. Recruiting and Welcoming Volunteers

### Role Descriptions

Clear and concise role descriptions should be provided to volunteers, outlining the specific responsibilities and expectations associated with volunteering in dementia care environments. These role descriptions should highlight the importance of empathy, patience, and flexibility when interacting with people living with dementia, as well as the potential impact of volunteering on overall resident well-being. Additionally, role descriptions should emphasise the significance of fostering meaningful connections and creating positive experiences for residents, recognising the invaluable role volunteers play in enhancing the quality of life for people living with dementia. Volunteers should be informed about the various activities and tasks they may be involved in, such as facilitating reminiscence sessions, assisting with recreational activities, or simply providing companionship and emotional support to residents. By providing comprehensive role descriptions, care homes ensure that volunteers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are equipped to contribute effectively to the well-being of residents living with dementia.

### Comprehensive Vetting Process

Given the vulnerability of people living with dementia, care homes must implement a rigorous vetting process to ensure the suitability of volunteers. This includes background or reference checks, and interviews designed to assess the volunteer's understanding of dementia care principles and their ability to communicate and engage effectively with people living with dementia. Additionally, the vetting process should include training on confidentiality and privacy regulations, as well as protocols for handling sensitive information related to resident care. By conducting thorough vetting procedures, care homes can mitigate potential risks and safeguard the well-being of residents, while also ensuring that volunteers are adequately prepared and qualified to provide compassionate and responsible support in dementia care environments.





## Matching Skills to Roles

Careful consideration must be given to matching the skills, experiences, and interests of volunteers with appropriate roles within dementia care environments. Volunteers with specific talents or expertise, such as music therapy or reminiscence activities, can be paired with roles that capitalise on their strengths and enhance the overall quality of care provided to people living with dementia. For example, volunteers with a background in music therapy can lead group singing sessions or provide personalised music playlists to residents, leveraging the therapeutic benefits of music to improve mood, reduce agitation, and stimulate cognitive function. Similarly, volunteers with a passion for arts and crafts can organise creative workshops or assist residents with artistic projects, providing opportunities for self-expression and engagement in meaningful activities. By aligning volunteers' skills and interests with appropriate roles, care homes can optimise the volunteer experience and maximise the positive impact on resident well-being in dementia care settings.

## Induction and Orientation

Comprehensive induction and orientation programmes should be conducted to familiarise volunteers with the unique challenges and dynamics of dementia care. These programmes should provide volunteers with essential knowledge and skills related to dementia awareness, communication strategies, and person-centred care principles, ensuring they feel confident and prepared to fulfill their roles effectively and compassionately. Additionally, induction and orientation sessions should include hands-on training and simulations to help volunteers gain practical experience in interacting with people living with dementia.

Volunteers may also receive guidance on recognising and responding to common behaviours and symptoms associated with dementia, as well as strategies for promoting dignity, autonomy, and well-being in resident interactions. By equipping volunteers with the necessary tools and competencies through comprehensive induction and orientation programmes, care homes can enhance the quality of care provided to people living with dementia and create a supportive and inclusive environment for volunteers to thrive in their roles.



## 5. Supporting Volunteers

### Peer Support

Opportunities for peer support should be facilitated, allowing volunteers to connect and learn from each other's experiences in supporting people living with dementia. Peer support groups should provide a platform for volunteers to share challenges, strategies, and successes, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual support within the volunteer community. Additionally, peer support initiatives may include informal mentoring relationships where experienced volunteers provide guidance and encouragement to new recruits, helping them navigate the complexities of dementia care and build confidence in their roles. These peer support networks can also serve as avenues for sharing resources, such as activity ideas, communication tips, and self-care strategies, further enhancing volunteers' ability to provide high-quality care and support to people living with dementia.

### Volunteer Meetings

Regular volunteer meetings should be organised to provide a platform for collaboration, reflection, and ongoing learning. These meetings should offer volunteers the opportunity to receive updates on dementia care practices, share feedback and insights from their interactions with residents, and participate in discussions aimed at enhancing the volunteer experience and optimising the quality of care provided to people living with dementia. Moreover, volunteer meetings can serve as forums for guest speakers, workshops, and training sessions on relevant topics such as communication skills, activity planning, and self-care strategies for volunteers. By incorporating educational components into volunteer meetings, care homes can ensure that volunteers receive ongoing support and professional development opportunities to enhance their effectiveness in supporting people living with dementia.

### Volunteer Handbook

A comprehensive volunteer handbook should be developed, serving as a valuable resource for volunteers to navigate their roles and responsibilities within dementia care environments. The handbook should provide practical guidance on communication strategies, behaviour management techniques, and ethical considerations relevant to volunteering with people living with dementia, ensuring volunteers feel supported and empowered to deliver person-centred care. Additionally, the handbook may include information on resident rights, confidentiality policies, and emergency procedures, as well



as tips for maintaining professional boundaries and addressing challenging situations with sensitivity and compassion. To further enhance accessibility and usability, the handbook can be supplemented with visual aids, case studies, and real-life scenarios that illustrate key concepts and best practices in dementia care.

## **Volunteer Feedback**

Mechanisms for feedback should be established to solicit contributions from volunteers regarding their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. By actively seeking and responding to volunteer feedback, care homes demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement and the value they place on volunteer contributions in enhancing quality of life for people living with dementia. Feedback mechanisms may include surveys, focus groups, suggestion boxes, or regular check-ins with volunteer coordinators, providing volunteers with opportunities to voice their concerns, offer insights, and participate in decision-making processes related to volunteer programme development and implementation. Additionally, care homes can establish transparent communication channels for sharing feedback outcomes and action plans with volunteers, demonstrating accountability and reinforcing a culture of open dialogue and collaboration within the volunteer community.



## 6. Valuing and Developing Volunteers

### Opportunities for Development

Care homes should provide opportunities for ongoing learning and development for volunteers, including training sessions, workshops, and skill-building activities tailored to the unique needs and interests of volunteers in dementia care environments. These development opportunities should enhance volunteers' knowledge, confidence, and effectiveness in supporting people living with dementia, while also promoting personal growth and fulfillment. For example, care homes could offer specialised training sessions on topics such as music therapy, art-based interventions, or sensory stimulation techniques, providing volunteers with practical tools and techniques to enrich their interactions with residents. Additionally, workshops on communication strategies, empathy-building exercises, and stress management techniques can help volunteers cultivate essential skills for engaging with individuals living with dementia in a compassionate and person-centred manner.

### Training Programme

Comprehensive training programmes should be offered to volunteers, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to deliver high-quality care and support to people living with dementia. Training sessions should address a range of topics, including dementia awareness, communication strategies, behaviour management techniques, and person-centred care principles, ensuring that volunteers feel prepared and capable of meeting the diverse needs of residents living with dementia. Moreover, training programmes can incorporate experiential learning opportunities, such as role-playing exercises, case studies, and interactive simulations, to help volunteers develop practical skills and enhance their understanding of dementia care best practices. By providing hands-on training experiences, care homes can ensure that volunteers feel confident and competent in their roles, ultimately contributing to improved outcomes for residents living with dementia.

### Celebrations

Care homes should recognise and celebrate the invaluable contributions of volunteers in enhancing the lives of people living with dementia. Regular recognition events, appreciation ceremonies, and milestone celebrations should be organised to acknowledge the dedication, compassion, and commitment of volunteers, fostering a culture of gratitude and appreciation within the care home community. These celebrations can take various forms,



such as volunteer appreciation luncheons, awards ceremonies, or themed events honouring volunteers' contributions. Additionally, care homes can create personalised recognition initiatives, such as volunteer of the month programmes or handwritten thank-you notes from residents and staff, to express appreciation for volunteers' efforts in supporting people living with dementia. By demonstrating appreciation for volunteers' contributions, care homes can cultivate a positive and supportive environment that encourages continued engagement and commitment from volunteers in dementia care initiatives.



st John  
of God 

Dementia Care

[www.saintjosephsshankill.ie](http://www.saintjosephsshankill.ie)



Co-funded by  
the European Union



[www.hope.pt](http://www.hope.pt)