

Information for Bereavement Service Volunteer Applicants

The Hospice

Saint Francis Hospice opened to in-patients in July 1984 and now has 18 inpatient beds; day therapy unit for 20 patients per day on three days each week, a Specialist Community and Crisis Support Team of Specialist nurses, including a telephone helpline and a Hospice at Home team that can provide up to 24 hour care for someone in the last couple of days of their life. The hospice is situated in the village of Havering-atte-Bower, about three miles north of Romford. However, its catchment area covers the London Boroughs of Havering, Barking and Dagenham and parts of Redbridge as well as Brentwood and Hainault.

The Bereavement Service

The Bereavement Service was started in 1992 with the addition of a counselling service starting in 2008. These services are available to all families and carers of people, who have received a service from the hospice, be it from the inpatient unit, day therapy unit, the Specialist Community Crisis Support Team or the Hospice at Home Team. The Family Support Services Manager manages the Bereavement Service supported by the Family Support Services Team and there are approximately 30-35 volunteers working with the service at any one time.

The Bereavement Service is designed to support bereaved relatives, carers or friends of those who have died in the care of the hospice who are finding it difficult to cope with their grief. The aim of the Service is to guide and support distressed people through their grief in line with the National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance on cancer services.

Selection and Training

Although some volunteers have a counselling qualification, or are working towards this, you do not have to have any prior bereavement expertise to become a Bereavement Service volunteer. Volunteers must have a genuine interest in people, understand the difference between supporting bereaved people and befriending them, and be prepared to make a commitment to acquiring new skills. The main criteria for the training are that applicants should not have had any close bereavement within the past two years.

After completing the application form, you will be invited for an interview before determining whether to offer you a place on the initial training course.

Training will include elements of basic counselling contracting, understanding the bereavement process and self-awareness regarding death and dying. Initial training will normally be spread over a number of days. On completion of the training, there will be an assessment interview before seeing any clients.

(There is no charge for the training course, which is held at Saint Francis Hospice).

Probationary Period

As a new volunteer there will be a probationary period of 6 months and during this time you will be required to attend regular monthly supervision, and any group meetings and your work will be monitored through clinical supervision. At the end of the probationary period there will be an opportunity to discuss, with your supervisor and/or Family Support Services Manager, how you are feeling, before being accepted as a full member of the Bereavement Service.

Following Acceptance as a Bereavement Volunteer

1. As a volunteer you should be prepared to work with at least three clients at any one time. Usually new clients will be seen weekly for a fifty minute session. Some people may require only a few visits, whilst others may be seen over a period of 6 -12 months, on the rare occasion this may be longer, you are required to perform regular reviews with your clients.

Clients are initially assessed, and copies of this assessment are provided with the client file. It is important that the assessment is read as this highlights an introduction to your client as well as identifying any concerns that you should be aware of before meeting with your client.

2. On-going Support and Training

Group meetings are held quarterly and group supervision takes place every month. You will be expected to attend both groups meetings and supervision on a regular basis and this is monitored for appraisal purposes.

Volunteers are required to keep case notes which will be discussed with their supervisor.

The hospice runs a series of workshops on various subjects which are a mandatory training requirement. You will be notified of these courses from the Voluntary Services Manager throughout the year and cover subjects such as Health and Safety, Fire Safety etc.

3. Commitment

Regular commitments include:

- i) Client contact time: Approx. minimum of 3 hours per week plus travelling
- ii) Group meetings: 1.5 hours quarterly
- iii) Group supervision: 3 hours every month (minimum) and is mandatory.
- iv) Ongoing training: Approx 8-10 hours per year
- v) Thank you evenings: An opportunity to meet and socialise with other Hospice volunteers.

Bereavement Service Volunteer Person Specification

E = Essential		D = Desirable
Education & Training		
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Certificate in Counselling Skills	E
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently studying or having completed a Diploma in counselling	E
	<input type="checkbox"/> To be competent in using a theoretical model of counselling in sessions with clients	D
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Good standard of general education	E
Skills/Abilities/Knowledge		
4	<input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of difference between "befriending", bereavement support work and counselling.	E
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Ability to communicate clearly, both verbally and in writing	E
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Ability to be concise and focused	E
7	<input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding of bereavement issues	D
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of need for supervision and willingness to receive supervision	E
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Ability to grasp theoretical concepts	E
Personal Qualities		
10	<input type="checkbox"/> Ability to listen	E
11	<input type="checkbox"/> Warmth and sensitivity	E
12	<input type="checkbox"/> Self confidence	E
13	<input type="checkbox"/> Ability to cope with stress/loss in others and in self	E
14	<input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of how we present to others	E
15	<input type="checkbox"/> No unresolved issues regarding own bereavements	E
16	<input type="checkbox"/> Ability to remain non judgemental	E
17	<input type="checkbox"/> To evidence strong abilities in communicating with team members	E
Experience		
18	<input type="checkbox"/> Working with people from different backgrounds	E
19	<input type="checkbox"/> To demonstrate experience of supporting vulnerable adults in a professional/personal capacity	E
20	<input type="checkbox"/> Previous experience as a bereavement support worker/counsellor	D
21	<input type="checkbox"/> Counselling experience	E
Other Requirements		
22	<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to the Bereavement Service	E
23	<input type="checkbox"/> Own transport (The hospice is difficult to get to by public transport)	D
24	<input type="checkbox"/> Driving license	D
25	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimum volunteering commitment of 2 years	E
26	<input type="checkbox"/> No recent significant bereavement/psychological issues within 2yrs	E
27	<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to attend mandatory clinical supervision groups	E