

David Hyde, 76, from Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, has been volunteering for Macmillan for two years. He decided to volunteer because he had additional time to do volunteer work and help other people.

David has had cancer and felt this was an appropriate role where his experience would be useful. After leaving hospital after completion of each cancer treatment, there was no personal follow up which David thought would happen and he felt like he needed to chat with someone about his feelings. David feels his role offers others this kind of support. Here David tells us more about his role.



How did you become a volunteer?

I completed a number of Macmillan courses online after being accepted. I believe having personal experience of cancer was a big factor.

What does your role involve?

I work at the Macmillan Cancer Information Hub in the foyer of Furness General Hospital. My role is to listen to visitors and provide information in the direct form of booklets on cancer and associated issues and guidance on what help is available from Macmillan. If I am unable to provide the information required I am supported by Macmillan staff based in Lancaster.

Occasionally I visit some of the people on the wards. I also occasionally attend the monthly meeting of the local prostate cancer group who are always willing to offer help and advice.

What have been the best bits and challenges of your role?

The best part for me is when someone calls in the hub in a distressed state and leaves smiling and gives me a hug. Visitors who have just received a cancer diagnosis and are upset and confused, call in to sit down, gather their thoughts and just want to talk to someone sympathetic with time to listen, before going home to break the news to their family. Helping people is the main reason for me doing the role. A lot of my visitors become friends and drop in for a chat on their way to receiving treatment. Unfortunately, some don't make it and that can be very upsetting.

I love working in the hospital environment and meet a lot of very helpful, friendly people especially my work colleagues who I can go to for advice. The Chaplain in particular has been really helpful and not someone I knew was available, to call on for help.

The location of our hub means we are the first and last official point for people leaving and entering the hospital main entrance and as such, every person visiting the hub is different and don't always ask for cancer information. We can get queries on things like wheelchair location and taxis. One of the main challenges is learning to be patient and know when to listen and when to talk.

Top tips for people wanting to get into volunteering:

Feel that the job you are volunteering for is something you enjoy, such that you look forward to going into work and feel satisfied when you get home, that you've helped someone or made their day a bit brighter. Be interested in helping people and supporting your local hospital.

Don't be afraid that you haven't got the experience for a particular role there's always someone to advise you and give you help.