

P 015 **MARIE CURIE COMPANIONS AT MUSGROVE PARK HOSPITAL**

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Introduction The Marie Curie Companions are a group of volunteers who have been specially trained by Marie Curie and Musgrove Park hospital to provide emotional support to dying patients and their families.

Aim(s) and method(s) An information session was advertised to attract companion volunteers from a cross section of the community. Advertisements were placed on the Marie Curie website, volunteer bureau and in the local press. 21 people attended the event with 17 people attending an interview 1 candidate was not accepted. 16 people (4 males and 12 females) went on to complete the training programme over 5 weeks.

The training programme was based on that used for the Marie Curie Helper core training for volunteers and consisted of topics about death and dying, communication skills, spirituality, the hospital environment and bereavement and loss.

3 pilot wards were chosen a medical, surgical and the medical assessment unit, to commence delivery and the hours of work were from 18.00–21.00 on weekday evenings and 15.00–21.00 (2 shifts) at weekends.

Ward based training was delivered to provide hospital staff teams with the information about the project and how to refer.

Results 15 Companion volunteers work across the hospital and since delivery commenced in mid July 2014, 47 referrals have been received to the service resulting in more than 70 support visits to dying patients and their families.

Conclusion(s) The support provided was mostly companionship and emotional support including being a listening ear to patients and their families, alongside short term respite care in the form of sitting with the

patient, while families took a break. The support provided was felt to be needed by ward staff at the hospital and the early evidence suggests that dying patients and their families are already benefiting from this service. We will report on the impact that the service has had on the ward staff and perceived impact on patients and their families’.