The Dorothy House Hospice Care RUH Compassionate Companions service is a joint partnership between Dorothy House Hospice Care and the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust (RUH) Palliative Care and End of Life Team. This inspiring and progressive approach to caring for people was launched on 15 May 2019 with the support from the RUH Forever Friends Appeal and funding from the Sper- ring Trust for three years.

- To support the provision of compassionate and dignified care at the end of life for those dying in hospital, whilst aiming to improve carer outcomes reported through the bereavement feedback questionnaire;
- The service will supplement the quality nursing care that patients require in their final days or hours of life. Being able to spend time sitting with a dying patient, talking to them and their family and listening can be an enormous comfort at an emotionally challenging time for patient, family and ward;  
- To provide a 7 day service that meets the needs of patients, carers and their families throughout the hospital. Volunteers work up to three–hour shifts from 9 am – 9 pm;  
- Provide extra care and support for patients who are thought to be in the last 48 hours of life, are inpatients at RUH, and have limited or no family support or have family that would benefit from respite;  
- The service is starting with three wards and will expand to cover the whole hospital.

### Methods

- May 2018: met with Volunteer Communications Tutor for initial consultation and model planning;
- June 2018: Scoping for volunteers;
- July 2018: Focus group with hospice multidisciplinary staff;
- Aug–Oct 2018: Final volunteer recruitment;
- Sept 2018: Staff awareness sessions;
- Nov 2018: volunteer training delivered by Volunteer Communications Tutor. Volunteers visit local established bedside companion scheme to ‘shadow’;
- Jan 2019: Service begins, comprising of mostly rostered scheduled sessions with a written summary recorded and reviewed by ward Sister. Six–weekly debriefing/supportive sessions between volunteers and staff are on-going.

### Results

- 8 volunteers recruited. Pilot from January – end April 2019;
- 81 shifts;
- 257 visits;
- 41 patients;
- Taking 114 hours;
- Positive qualitative data collected from volunteers, inpatient staff and patients.

### Conclusion

Oakhaven’s response to the challenges of a changing health and social care landscape by empowering volunteers with the skills to ‘be with’ hospice patients, as suggested by literature, has shown to be supportive to inpatient staff and new volunteers in hospital are an integral part of this. By enlisting the support of volunteers, patients in hospital who are reaching the end of their lives have an empathic presence and companion by their side. We aim to support more people dying in hospital and communicate with secondary care colleagues ensuring all professional boundaries are respected. Training and support of volunteers ensures retention and continuation of a worthwhile service.