

An update from the Chief Executive



Catherine Hodgson
Chief Executive
The Brigitte Trust

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Since my last update in Summer 2013, The Brigitte Trust has undergone further exciting change and expansion.

For the first time in our history our service can be accessed by clients in West Sussex. We are actively accepting referrals in Crawley and Horsham Districts whilst a new cohort of trained volunteers is already providing vital help and support.

We are delighted that our presence in West Sussex will further strengthen with the launch of our service in Horsham District this Spring. A training course with 10 new volunteers will support clients in West Sussex and the south of Surrey.

I'm immensely proud that The Brigitte Trust's catchment area now stretches from the Surrey/Berkshire border, west to Woking, south to East Guildford and the Mole Valley and to the east to the Surrey/Kent border. We have successfully recruited new volunteers from right across the catchment - volunteers who have actively chosen to train with, and give their valuable time and input to, The Brigitte Trust.

The Brigitte Trust is currently supporting 149 clients and 295 people in total (including clients' carers and family members). The majority of our clients have cancer and we are actively supporting clients with a range of neurological conditions, stroke and heart conditions.

- As of March 2013 the Trust has 89 volunteers working with clients and 11 currently in training and due to start visiting within the next few weeks

- Between September and December 2013 our volunteers provided 1,200 hours of support.
- Of clients who died during this period, 50% did so at home, compared to the national average of 25%

Throughout our expansion we have continued to work closely with our statutory and voluntary partners and we have sought to build and nurture new relationships. We are currently supporting 8 families with dependent children. We have recently explored how we might work more closely with organisations specialising in providing support to children whose parents have life-threatening conditions.

Our expansion will continue into early 2015 to cover the rest of Guildford, once again, with funding from Macmillan Cancer Support who I would like to thank for their continued valuable support. I would like to thank Dorking & District Age Concern for its support and the recent grant that will enable us to train volunteers in Dorking during the Summer. My thanks also to the Mercer's Charitable Trust, and to Elmbridge Borough Council.

The Brigitte Trust has made significant progress, and we fully intend to continue moving forward, seeking opportunities to offer our service in better ways and providing our high quality support. Please do refer your patients to us.

Catherine Hodgson - Chief Executive
Spring 2014

Emotional Support and Practical Help at Home

Jane Bellingham - Service and Development Manager

You will be aware more than anyone else that treating patients isn't only about giving medication, dressing wounds, managing pain control, and providing all that is expected from a health professional. I wonder how many times you have visited a patient and that patient starts to talk to you about their concerns, fears and anxieties about their illness? Probably too many times to mention I hear you say. If only you had more time to stay to listen... but of course that isn't always possible.

A Brigitte Trust volunteer can help you to provide more holistic care for your patients who have a life threatening illness, focusing on those you are supporting in the community, in their own homes.

Our volunteers are trained and DBS checked. The volunteer training concentrates on good communication skills when talking with people who have a life threatening illness, some of whom may be towards the end of their life. Volunteers will have developed their listening skills and considered how to respond appropriately, particularly to those difficult questions that can be asked.

Who can you refer? Anyone who has a life

threatening illness, at whatever stage of the illness, can be referred for support. It may be that someone has recently been diagnosed or they may be somewhere on their journey with their illness. It may be that they are towards end of life (Gold Standards Framework).

You may visit a patient and identify that the carer would greatly benefit from some respite support. That too would be an appropriate referral. Bereavement support can also be offered after a volunteer has been involved with a family member.

One of our volunteers has explained the support that can be offered in the article that follows.

Referrals can be made to any one of our area organisers (please see their details on the back page) or to The Brigitte Trust office 01306 881816.

The team at The Brigitte Trust look forward to working with you and helping to support your patients. Please give us a ring today.

Jane Bellingham

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Jane Bellingham
Brigitte Trust
Macmillan Service and
Development Manager

A Brigitte Trust Volunteer's Visits

Once I make my first visit it's decided between my client and myself which days are best and what we might do in the time available. The service I can offer is one of listening – and giving a client and carer non-judgmental listening time can be of enormous benefit when so much is going on. The medical teams have much to do in their day and patients waiting for them with complex needs. Brigitte Trust volunteers can offer three hours of one-to-one time... and we also know the value of silence!

I can also offer practical help, like taking someone out to do the weekly shop and stop off for coffee, a trip to the library or to the doctor's or regular trips to hospital for appointments and treatment. When someone is seriously ill and bedbound it's often a case of sitting quietly with them whilst their carer has a break – they may feel like walking the dog, having coffee with a friend, playing a round of golf or going to a class. They know I will be there every week for three hours so they can plan their time.

It's also good to be able to share some of the worries and concerns with carers, who may be feeling very stressed and alone, so when they return from a morning out I can offer them some time. Volunteers often do a lot of listening on car journeys and regular visits can build trust over time. I will continue to visit when my client is admitted to hospital or Hospice and if it is requested I can offer bereavement support for up to six months.

Whilst I am visiting a client I attend Supervision once a

month and my Area Organiser is always at the end of the phone in the meantime for me to talk through any issues that come up. The peer support I receive in supervision is priceless and my skills have grown as we help support each other.

I am proud of the work we do to support people and their families at the end of life and I would recommend the Trust to anyone.

A Brigitte Trust volunteer



Library Photo

Our Service

The Brigitte Trust provides additional non-medical support at home for people with a life-threatening illness, their carers and family members. The service, which has been available for thirty years is free of charge and our volunteers help in many ways, providing:

Emotional support and a listening ear
Respite for carers
Support for those living alone
Transport, shopping and trips out
Bereavement support

The service, normally for three hours per week, is flexible according to the needs of the client.

The service may be accessed during and after a course of treatment or surgery, where the health or wellbeing of the client or carer is poor, where support is needed to sustain a caring role, and towards the end of life. Bereavement support for up to six months is also available to the family.

Practical help such as mentioned above is greatly valued by carers, who appreciate the opportunity for a weekly respite break.

In providing emotional support our volunteer will be sensitive to the individual and cultural needs of each person supported, with confidentiality maintained and respected.

Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds. All are required to attend an intensive initial training course as well as monthly supervision and ongoing training. All volunteers have undergone full DBS checks.

Volunteers are not trained or insured to offer nursing or personal care.

How to make a referral to the Trust

You may simply telephone one of the Area Organisers or the Brigitte Trust office with the details of the patient you wish to refer. The Area Organiser will contact the patient to set up a visit to discuss how the Trust may help. Area Organiser contact numbers appear on the back page.

A suitable volunteer will then be allocated and will make an introductory visit as soon as possible. Regular visits will be arranged according to the needs of the patient and/or carer.

"During the past five years we have been associated with your organisation our volunteer has always been professional, committed, compassionate and caring. This, together with her wise counsel and sense of humour, has made a huge difference to all our lives during what has turned out to be a much longer and more difficult illness than anyone could have imagined"

A Brigitte Trust family member

www.brigitte-trust.org



Volunteer training courses 2014

Our next volunteer training courses run in June and September 2014.

Sessions include:
Active Listening Skills
Assumptions
Awareness of Beliefs
Boundaries
Loss and change
Bereavement

Please check our website for more details.

An information pack for potential volunteers can be found on the training page of our website. Alternatively please ring Sharon Sillitoe on 01306 881816 to find out more.

Areas Covered

BY OUR FREE SERVICE



Please call our Area Organiser for referrals within each borough



Emotional Support and practical help at home to people and their families facing life-threatening illness

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