



National Association of Voluntary Services Managers
Leading volunteering in the NHS and Healthcare

Chairs' Opening Remarks 2016

I can hardly believe it has been 12 months since I was elected to Chair NAVSM. It has been an exceptionally busy year, both with my work as the Patient Experience lead at Walsall NHS Trust, but also with all the work I have been involved with NAVSM.

As you all know, NAVSM is an Association, an Association of people who have been brought together by a common aim – to make volunteer management better for all.

We are not a union or staff side organisation like UNISON or the TUC, that represents workers or fights industrial disputes.

We are not a professional body that people need or are required to sign up to do their jobs such as nurses, physios or counsellors do, with a paid workforce to administer, manage and lead. We are an Association.

We do not have a paid workforce to administer our business or provide management or leadership for what we want to achieve.

As members of our Association, we all agree that we will work together, share one voice to better volunteer management in the NHS. We have elected members who sit on our 5 regional groups and we have elected members who sit on the NEC on your behalf to do the administration, management and leadership – for which we all pay on average less than £1 per week.

Like me, Committee members do most of the work in their own time, or as volunteers on behalf of the Association, on behalf of you and me.

The last 12 months, since our conference, has provided both challenges and opportunities for NAVSM. We were set a challenge to implement the 5 year strategy that has been developed under the leadership of Carol Rawlings, our previous Chair.

The strategy set out what NAVSM aspired to – to lead volunteering in the NHS and Healthcare to enhance the patient, user and staff experience. It set clear aims and objectives, providing a strategic lead for promoting and driving forward the future of volunteering in the health sector through our values:

- Promoting best evidence based practice in the management of volunteers
- Be the voice of members
- Sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise
- Pro-actively influencing
- Working with integrity

To ensure the strategy was implemented earlier this year, objectives were developed to detail how the National Executive Committee were going to do it – I and the NEC will be giving you feedback on progress so far later this morning.

During the course of the last year, NAVSM has gone from strength to strength. Membership increased substantially in the last financial year, and we represented more NHS Trusts than ever before. This is fantastic, but it is not enough. To make our voice louder, to make it heard, to have the influence we need over decisions that impact upon us, and those volunteers we manage, we need all VSM's who are working in the NHS & associated healthcare to want to be part of us. I and the members of NEC cannot do this alone – we need your help and support to encourage others to join us.

One of our aims is to get Volunteering and Voluntary Services Managers recognised for the contribution they make. Some of you here will be fortunate enough to have the support of your executive team and be well recognised for the benefits of having a well managed proactive voluntary services – however, we know that it is often more likely that Voluntary Services is the poor relation to other services within an organisation – often the first to be cut when finances are tight, not supported to grow, and not recognised for the huge benefits to patients, carers, visitors, staff and volunteers.

To improve this we all need to be aware of what makes organisations tick. Where the priorities lie, what influences these, and the landscape that they operate in. Without this information we cannot begin to tackle the issues to bring about change. If any of you are fans of the Great British Bake Off – the technical challenge always rocks the boat and sorts the experts from the novices. I see our challenges in much the same way – we have most of the ingredients but no recipe – therefore some of us may know what is missing and how to deal with it, whereas others may not be so well informed. Therefore, we need to seek out the missing ingredients, publicise it to our colleagues and develop our recipe for success.

Enough of the analogies - 2016 has been an interesting time politically and policy wise so some boats have been rocked – sorry another one there.

The programme for the next two days reflects what members have told us are important to them at this time. It also includes some sessions which will help to identify the context in which we all work to help us to understand some of the potential decision making that we may come up against.

I am sure that as you have browsed through it, you will have been inspired and motivated. The conference planning team have worked very hard to pull all of it together to ensure as much as possible has been packed in – including a little light relief and socialising.

On a personal note, I want to thank you all. This has been the busiest year I have had since I joined the NHS. I am quite sure that if I had been aware of the amount of work I would need to do as Chair, I would not be standing here today. But, I am passionate about volunteering in the NHS and the impact it has, not only on the patient, user and staff experience, but on the volunteer and their family as well. To ensure the impact is always positive, we need first class volunteer management, from competent, informed and motivated volunteer managers.

I hope that over the last 12 months the work I have done has helped to beat the path, build the bridges and knock down some of the walls that will enable NAVSM to raise the profile of Voluntary Services Managers to get the recognition you all deserve and start the journey we need to take to ensure we sustain what we have done and continue to grow.

We have a packed programme over the next two days.

I hope you have an enjoyable, interesting and informative conference and I look forward to speaking with you all over the next two days.