Intensive Care Unit (ICU) - Patient / Visitor Companion – Stoke Mandeville Hospital

Role Description:
ICU are looking for volunteers to assist the nursing staff in enhancing the overall patient experience. The ICU patients that need assistance are those that are recovering from being critically ill but are still very poorly. We are looking for volunteers who could provide a listening ear and assist in making visits to the unit a bit friendlier and less daunting for our visitors. They will work cooperatively with ICU staff to ensure the non-clinical and support needs of patients and attending family/carers are met. The Intensive Care Unit caters for patients with severe and often life-threatening illnesses and injuries, which requires constant monitoring and support from specialist equipment and medication. This can be daunting and sometimes distressing for families. Inevitably, there are occasions where the outcome is not good news. Therefore volunteering in the Intensive Care environment would require resilience and the ability to handle difficult unpredictable situations.

Time Commitment:
2 to 3 hours in the afternoon 13:00 – 16:00 1-2 days per week Tuesday and Friday (can be negotiable) for a minimum of 6 months

Key tasks:
- To report to the ICU ward clerk at the beginning of your shift and gain an understanding of how the department is functioning on any given day
- Liaise with clinical staff regarding appropriate access to the patient concerned
- Provide company and stimulation for patients such as reading to them e.g. Newspaper, books, doing a crossword, plays cards. Talking/listening to them
- If authorised by clinical staff – to provide refreshments to patients
- Where patients are still ventilated but awake, they may need to communicate using non-verbal means such as letter boards or lip reading the patient
- Welcome visitors to the unit and put them at ease. Show them to the relative’s room and explain use of the facilities
- Support visitors who are distressed and escort them to an appropriate area for privacy
- Where the persons’ needs are straightforward, help them access available services, e.g. refreshments, use of mobile phones, overnight accommodation, parking, and local amenities
- Maintain the visitor’s room, keeping drinks stocked, noticeboards up to date including visitor information leaflets, magazines etc.
- Assist visitors in adhering to relevant infection control procedures for the patient they are visiting
- Liaising with patients and staff as requested to communicate non-clinical information
- Work within the policies, systems and procedures of the ICU and the Trust
- Maintain strict confidentiality of all information that volunteer becomes aware of while on duty
- Attend required volunteer training and department updates
- To debrief at the end of the session with the ward clerk
Desired Skills and Experience:

- Ability to empathise
- Resilience and ability to handle difficult situations
- Maintain a calm and sensitive manner when dealing with distressed individuals
- Listening skills and the ability to respond appropriately
- Understanding of Confidentiality
- Friendly and approachable
- Ability to work part of a team
- Physically fit; able to stand/walk for 3 hours
- Experience in a healthcare setting
- Would understand and apply CARE values
- Motivation and willingness to learn and complete training
- Demonstrate a person centred approach
- Good interpersonal skills and able to interact with a diverse range of people
- Understands the importance of commitment
- Experience in a healthcare setting might be helpful
- Administration skills

We will provide:

- You would be part of a busy but dedicated team of nurses and doctors who are caring for the sickest patients within the hospital. You will receive an induction and orientation programme and then the support and help from a group of “mentors” who will guide you through the Critical Care environment, the different patients that are cared for in the ICU and their possible different needs. Although ICU can appear to be daunting and not like any other ward in the hospital, all the patients and their relatives will welcome a friendly and reassuring face and smile. Whilst the clinical team care and look after the medical needs and treatments for the patients, you would play a vital role in the emotional and psychological support and help for the patients and visitors. Hours can be adaptable to suit you and the number of hours and days per week could be discussed to accommodate individual wishes.
- Supervision and support from a dedicated member of staff,
- Local induction to the ward or Department
- Re-imbursement of travel expenses
- Being part of a friendly team
- A busy, fulfilling role
- An opportunity to gain skills and experience