

Helen Harrison, explains how she got involved in volunteering with the Head and Neck Sub Group Committee

Volunteer name: Helen Harrison

Place of work: University College London Hospital

Position: Senior Dietitian, Head and Neck Oncology

BDA volunteer role: Ordinary Member of the Head and Neck Sub Group Committee

Q How and why did you get started volunteering with the BDA, and why?

A I inherited a committee role in the Head and Neck Sub Group from my colleague Steven. When I started in the University College London Hospital Head and Neck team in 2015, it was he who told me about the committee and encouraged me to join. I wanted to learn more about the speciality and improve my understanding of the BDA sub group and its activities. I saw opportunities to network and share practice with other dietitians nationwide, working in head and neck. After having two children, I have re-joined the committee recently, again for CPD opportunities and to meet new people working in head and neck.

Q Briefly describe your BDA volunteer role

A As an Ordinary Member, I work alongside my fellow committee members to raise the profile of dietitians in head and neck oncology, using our specialist knowledge and experience to benefit others. As a sub group, we are involved in various projects, from preparing for the British Association of Head and Neck Oncologists annual conference, to supporting members involved with education and research, creating patient resources, planning webinars, supporting CPD and promoting dietetics within head and neck oncology. Our social media representative has recently created an Instagram account to reach out to more of our members, and we plan to post regular updates.

Q What's the best thing about volunteering for the BDA?

A Finding out what everyone is involved in doing aside from their day job! It amazes me how much it is possible to get involved in and it reminds me how varied and exciting our profession can be. Also learning about how other teams work and how other services run in different areas. You can always learn from others and their experiences, be they good or not so good, and that for me is the best thing – meeting others and sharing experiences.

Q What didn't you know about the BDA before you started volunteering?

A That there were so many specialist groups and sub groups! In the Oncology Specialist Group alone, we are one of five sub groups. Having so many specialist dietitians with the technology to be able to network and share ideas and best practice more than ever before, volunteering is a great opportunity to learn from each other and help influence policy, practice or research – whatever your interest!

Q Would you encourage other members to volunteer for the BDA?

A Definitely! It is great to have the opportunity to meet dietitians from around the UK that work in the same speciality, and to get involved in activity that can influence others in your field. It certainly keeps things interesting!