



BDA

Volunteer Corner

Dietetics student **Shani Anderson** shares her experience of volunteering with the Renal Nutrition Group AND the South Wales Branch

Volunteer name: **Shani Anderson, Postgraduate Dietetics student (second year)**

Place of study: **Cardiff Metropolitan University**

BDA Volunteer role: **Renal Nutrition Group: Social Media/Website Co-ordinator; South Wales**

Branch: **Student Member**

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

A I moved to Leeds in 2020 to pursue a job opportunity but, coupled with the impact of COVID-19, I found myself quite socially cut off outside of work due to the restrictions and new area. I was interested in learning more about renal dietetics after completing my dissertation on kidney health and CKD awareness. I discovered BDA volunteering and saw vacancies on the RNG committee – I jumped at the chance and applied! Volunteering within the BDA provided an opportunity to build knowledge and confidence in new areas but ultimately allowed me to feel more connected to the dietetic community across the UK.

Q Briefly describe your BDA volunteer roles.

A My RNG role is a bit of a mash-up of two positions currently! I help behind the scenes to keep our BDA webpages up to date and add in our announcements for our monthly newsletter. I also support with all things social media. I've recently set up our Instagram account, and I'm excited that our two RNG Student Members (Rutian and Hannah) are going to be supporting with this project to create new content on a regular basis.

I'm also looking forward to spending the next year working with the South Wales Branch as a student member to support the relaunch – hopefully we can set up some further opportunities for dietetic students to be actively involved with the BDA and branch.

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

A Volunteering for the BDA has helped me grow my confidence; I enjoy presenting my own ideas at committee meetings and reflecting on ways we can grow and optimise RNG membership. I love being able to work collaboratively alongside a dynamic and passionate group of people. It's really empowering to see all their hard work completed behind the scenes leading up to an event, publication or resource creation. It's fulfilling feeling like I can contribute to our profession in my own small way too.

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

A I didn't realise how many resources, training courses and events were available for volunteers to access. I attended my first Volunteer Support Day in July, and it was a lovely experience. Most of my volunteering is currently through my laptop – so being able to meet in-person and engage with other members was such a valuable opportunity to listen, learn, and be inspired. Teresa Howes (Project Lead for the RNG committee) and I were messaging each other on the journey home with all sorts of ideas we wanted to share with our committee – the event definitely left a positive and lasting impression!

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

A Yes, 100%. Volunteering for the BDA is incredibly rewarding. I'd encourage any member to try a volunteer role and see how the experience shapes them – it's unique for everyone. I've volunteered whilst working as an assistant practitioner and currently as a student – we are a varied and diverse workforce; many roles don't necessarily need to be filled by dietitians. Volunteering isn't just exclusively committee or branch roles either – many specialist groups have ongoing project work that require support too. The BDA Volunteer Team are excellent with supporting volunteers, so you'll be in safe hands if you decide to embark on a new role and need guidance along the way.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Check out our volunteer opportunities online: bda.uk.com/news-campaigns/get-involved/volunteers.html and look out for vacancies in our Members' Monthly e-zine.