



Volunteer to Career

Volunteer to Career Programme

Findings report

Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust

June – 2024



Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough
NHS Foundation Trust

funded by NHS England

in partnership with
helpforce

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The steering group and project leads came together to discuss the needs of the NHS and how it reflects to the needs in CPFT.
Looking at areas of high staff vacancy matched with the demand in the wider NHS
The VtC program pinpointed 4 roles and teams to pilot the program.



The bigger picture – demand for the service

“The NHS vacancy statistics for the East of England from March 2022 – March 2023 is 11,434 full time equivalent (FTE) positions.

The NHS vacancy statistics on Trac for the East of England Health Care roles from March 2022 – March 2023 are:

1,748 full time equivalent nursing positions

747 full time equivalent allied health professionals

568 full time equivalent additional clinical services

The NHS vacancy statistics on Trac for the East of England Administrative and Clerical roles from March 2022 – March 2023 are:

Averaged 1,055 full time equivalent (FTE) positions

The second highest rate of vacancies alongside nursing.

Workforce supply challenges are expected to continue as demand rises. For the past decade, workforce growth has not kept up with the increasing demands on the NHS. There is more competition for the workforce. The UK faces a labour shortage, linked to the ageing population, which results in more people leaving the jobs market than entering it. Alongside this, demand for health and care services is growing, also due to the ageing population, so a larger workforce will be needed. – NHS England.”

Our VtC Career Pathway

1. Informal Discussion: Volunteer applies for the Volunteer To Career Vacancy on the CPFT Volunteer Vacancy website. Provide an initial meet and greet with the Volunteer Co-Ordinator; discuss their goals and how they could align with the vacancies in the program. The Volunteer will then have an informal interview with the clinical lead / supervisor of the volunteer vacancy, provide a space to ask questions and hear from clinicians about career progression, agree on what support is needed to help them achieve their goals.

2. Recruitment and Induction: Provide robust and clear induction and recruitment to ensure volunteer has all that is necessary to begin volunteering effectively. For example; ID badge, Access to IT systems, IT equipment, Building access etc.

3. Start date & Onboarding: Detailed on-boarding into their new team; opportunity to meet all relevant team members roles and responsibilities. Their clinical lead / supervisor will provide ongoing structured career-based conversations with relevant mentors and team members throughout active volunteering. They will now complete 90 hours of volunteering.

4. Employability Skills: Volunteers will be enrolled onto English, Maths or IT functional skills (if applicable). Mentored and educated through the [Care Certificate](#). Invited to the Recovery College East' Making Work, Work for me course. All to support employability.

5. Desired Outcomes: Volunteers are encouraged and supported in viewing relevant vacancies and given references along with their enhanced CV to apply for vacancies in the trust. Or they are equipped to go into further education to achieve their career goals.



Programme overview

The **Helpforce Volunteer to Career (VtC) programme** is designed to support volunteers to take up a career in health and care. Helpforce has worked alongside health and care organisations to set up and implement volunteering projects which incorporate career pathways for volunteers. They have worked in partnership with organisations, such as ours, to implement the Volunteer to Career Pathway and to provide support in evaluating its impact. The VtC programme has been designed to support **organisational** improvement across **three key strategic components, identified as essential to achieving systemic change**:

- **Clinical/health and care leadership** - Developing a network of senior clinical/health and care leaders to harness their expertise to positively influence wider effective engagement, and ultimately adoption of, VtC projects.
- **Environment and culture** - utilise best practices to raise the value of the volunteer workforce in the health and care environment to enhance the likelihood of volunteers wanting to adopt a career in health and care.
- **Volunteer to Career Pathways** - Develop innovative and impactful volunteer roles and career pathways, linked to local recruitment needs, to encourage and enable volunteers to use this as a route to a career in the NHS.

Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust programme overview and objectives :

This VtC pilot project will help volunteers to gain experience in the following pathways.

- **Clinical – ward assistant.** In a ward environment. With the vision of this leading into entry level vacancies; health care assistant, activity co-ordinator, or onto studies around allied health professional, nursing etc.
- **Occupational Therapy Assistant.** In a ward environment. With the vision of this leading into entry level vacancies; Occupational therapy assistant, Activity co-ordinator, Integrated care worker, Therapeutic support worker. Or onto studies in the allied health professional field.
- **Individual Placement Support Volunteer.** In a community / hospital environment. With the vision to joining the IPS workforce as an outcome.
- **Administrative – admin assistant.** In an administration environment. With the vision of meeting the person specifications of a band 2 / 3 administrator vacancy. OR the opportunity to complete a Business Administration apprenticeship.

The aim of the VtC Pathway is to support volunteers to explore their career goals / interests whilst simultaneously building a skilled potential workforce of volunteers seeking employment within CPFT and the vacancies within the trust. Offering; career focused conversations with a clinical/trained lead, mentoring, training and exposure, employability support. Along with information and guidance on career paths

Our VtC programme objectives

The VtC programme began in March 2023 and the initial programme ran until May 2024. With programme management and evaluation support provided by [Helpforce](#), we implemented and delivered our VtC programme to achieve these programme objectives.

1. **Deliver a sustainable VtC Pathway that is ready to address wider workforce needs by the end of the project.** Success measures included: an increase in positive volunteering culture, integration of volunteers within workforce planning strategies, clinical sponsorship of volunteering programmes, community integration and partnerships, integration of volunteering within strategic and operational priorities, and volunteer to career pathways. All of these measures will be assessed via the VtC self assessment tools (more details on this are provided within the evaluation approach slide).
2. Produce and distribute an **advert for the volunteer role** that will provide the experience, exposure, skills and confidence needed to develop a pipeline of volunteers interested in a health and care career. Success measured included: role live, successful recruitment of volunteers, evidence of the role positively impacting volunteer career goals.
3. **Steering group in place** to support the delivery of the project. Success measures included: Identify and establish key relationships/partnerships/mentors to support the delivery of the project, steering group in place, evidence of value to the project demonstrated and documented, provision of training and employment support by internal colleagues.
4. Integration of VtC components into Volunteer vacancies to identify what volunteers applying within CPFT are volunteering with ambitions of turning it into a career.
5. **Organisational agreement to sustain** the VtC pathway following the completion of the initial delivery period, with ambitions to scale the programme to support wider workforce needs. Success measures included: VtC built into workforce strategy and people planning, funding secured for resource to support the pathway after the initial delivery period, VtC pathway processes embedded into business as usual. There are ambitions to scale the VtC programme, however the business case which will support such opportunity has been put on hold amidst financial constraints in the organisation

Helpforce's evaluation approach

Using its established [*Insight and Impact*](#) evaluation service, Helpforce follows a consistent methodology to determine the impact of volunteering roles on health outcomes. Target outcomes are identified across a range of beneficiaries representing the people and organisations involved, and then the necessary data is collected to prove and evidence the outcomes.

The evaluation sought to answer three key questions.

- What was the impact of the VtC programme on:
 - Corporate behaviours towards volunteering?
 - Enabling individual volunteers to progress towards a career in health and care?
 - The attitudes of front-line staff towards volunteer services?

The outcomes the evaluation aimed to measure included...



Note: The analysis in this report is provided by the Helpforce Insight and Impact team, and the contextual information has been provided by Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust's Volunteer to Career team.

Evaluation approach: methodology

Within the VtC programme, Helpforce utilises three data collection methods:

- A **'VtC Self-Assessment Tool'** (referred to as SAT) was completed by the project's clinical/health and care lead at the start and then again near the end of the project. The tool measures the organisation against a series of identified categories and questions associated with their volunteering strategy. Also, as part of the SAT, volunteers and staff are invited to complete some additional feedback surveys to provide insight into their perceptions of organisational change.
- **Volunteer surveys** were designed to capture data around the volunteers' level of interest in a health/care career, how they are finding their volunteer role and the VtC programme. The surveys were completed twice, both at the beginning of their volunteering and at a later period (referred to as 'start' and 'latest').
- **Staff surveys** were completed at the start and near the end of the VtC project (referred to as pre and post surveys).

During the course of the VtC programme the following surveys were completed:

5

volunteer pre-surveys
were submitted

5

volunteer post-surveys
were submitted

15

staff pre-surveys were
submitted

13

staff post-surveys were
submitted

Volunteering activity

Across the duration of the initial delivery period, there was a great deal of volunteering activity within our organisation:

10

volunteers were recruited

10

staff were supported
by VtC volunteers

VtC volunteers supported patients and 10 staff within the 14-month initial delivery period. This support was delivered by 10 volunteers undertaking their volunteering role , delivering 900 hours of volunteering support.

Staff and patient support tasks included:

- HCA: Help the HCA's and Nurses with support on the ward i.e. replenishing drinks, sitting with patients, preparing and serving meals, support activities.
- Admin: Systemone work, referral processing, consent forms, letters.
- IPS: Liaise with the employment specialists to find out about the employment sectors that their caseload are interested in working and make the initial phone calls to employers to introduce the IPS service and set up face to face appointments with the employment specialists. Manage waitlists and support patients struggling to engage.
- OT: Liaise with Occupational Therapy Team staff regarding patient therapy goals and how achieving these goals can be supported during their time on the wards. Assist Occupational Therapy staff with the delivery of 1-1 therapeutic interventions and assist with Occupational Therapy-run groups. Spend social and activity time with patients.

Evaluation findings: volunteers

At the time of evaluation, 10 volunteers started the pathway with 7 volunteers completing the VtC career pathway. Through the pathway and career support provided, volunteers applied for jobs and attended interviews. These applications resulted in 6 of the 10 **volunteers securing employment**, into roles such as; administrator, activity support, health care roles. Additionally, 4 **volunteers secured places on further education courses** related to health and care, including Cognitive neuroscience, Psychology, Data Analytics, Peer Support Work, In total, 9 volunteers secured an employment or education outcome.*

6

volunteers have taken up
employment in the Health
and Care sector

4

volunteers secured further
education or training related
to health and care

100%

of volunteers who completed
the VtC pathway secured
employment or FE/training

Volunteers provided some additional insights into their experience of being a VtC volunteer...

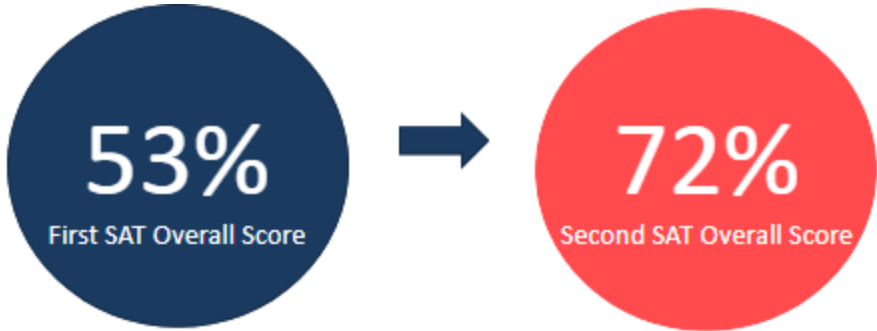
"The volunteering experience is a great way to gain an inside view of an organisation, it's people, processes and deliverables."

"The experience has allowed me to gain clinical experience on the wards with the patients, which [was] far beyond my expectations."

"The volunteering experience has built my network and has led to other opportunities within the trust."

*Individuals might have secured both employment and further education / training, so the two are not mutually exclusive.

Evaluation findings: organisation

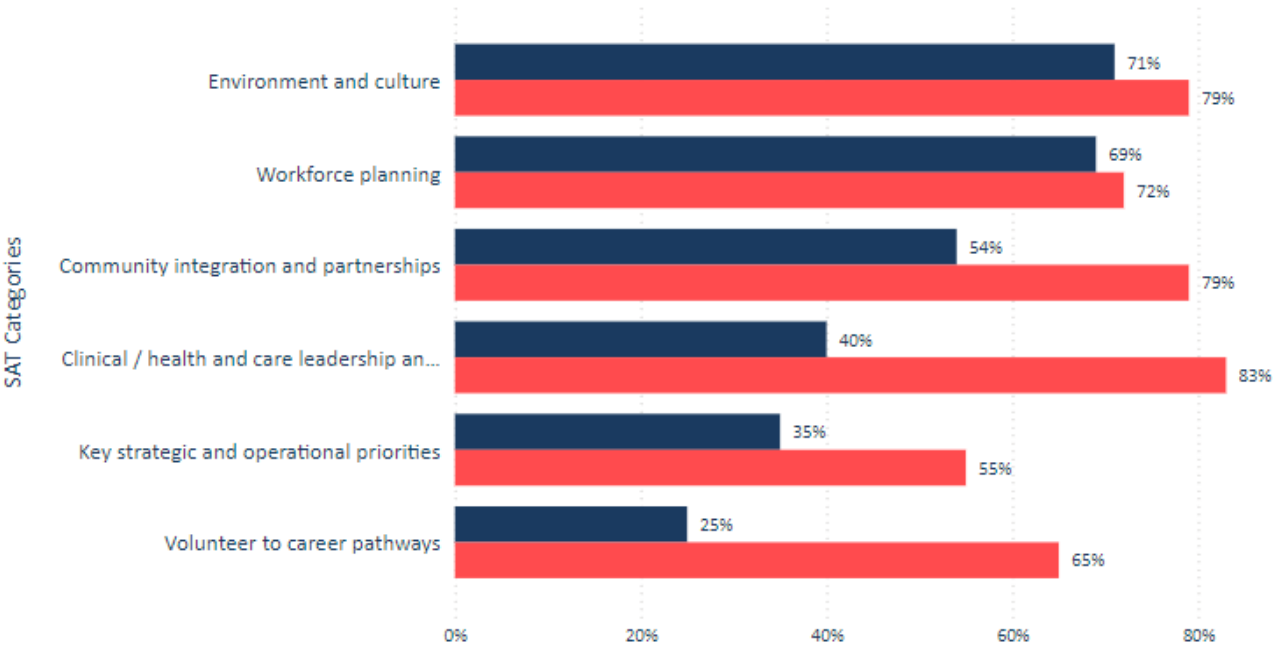


After completing the VtC programme, there was an **increase in the overall SAT score, which improved from 53% to 72%.**

Similar to the positive change in the overall SAT score result, **we have observed an improvement in the scores for all six individual elements of organisational improvement for volunteering.**

First and Second Average SAT Scores Overview

Submission ● First ● Last



Evaluation findings – Volunteers

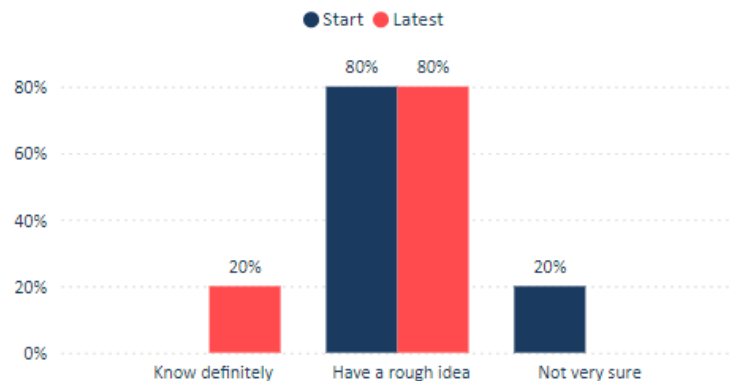
After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who **knew definitely what they wanted to do with their working lives increased from 0% to 20%**. Additionally, **100% of volunteers maintained or increased their certainty** in their ambitions through the VtC programme.

The proportion of volunteers who had **high confidence in their career ambitions remained the same at 40%** at the end of the programme. In addition, 100% of volunteers maintained their confidence in achieving these ambitions through the VtC programme.

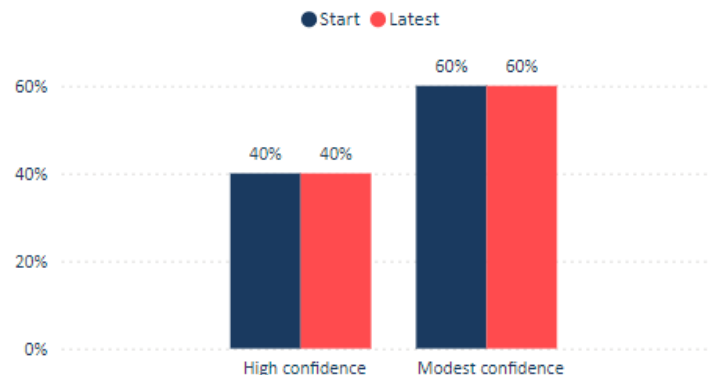
After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who were **very interested in an NHS or social care career also remained the same at 100%**. **100% of volunteers maintained their interest** in this career pathway as a result of participating in the VtC programme.

N= 5 pre- and post-surveys

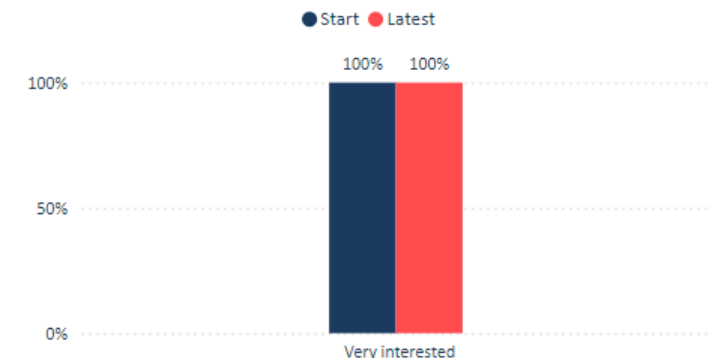
Ambitions for working life over the next 5 years



Confidence in career ambitions



Level of interest in NHS or social care career



Evaluation findings – Volunteers

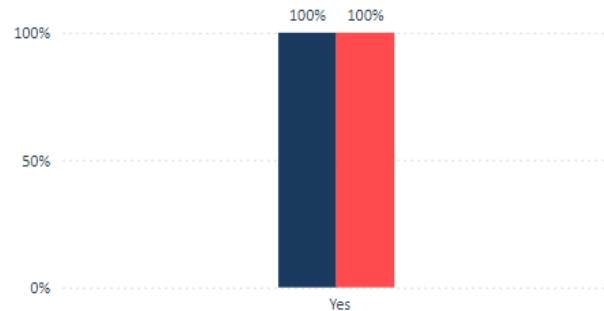
Volunteers were also asked about their hopes and if they wished their volunteering role would result in certain outcomes related to their careers, future education, and training:

- **5 volunteers** hoped their volunteering role would lead to employment with our organisation.
- **5 volunteers** hoped their volunteering role would lead to employment in a similar health or care organisation.
- **5 volunteers** hoped their volunteering role would lead to further education aligned to their career goals.

N= 5 pre- and post-surveys

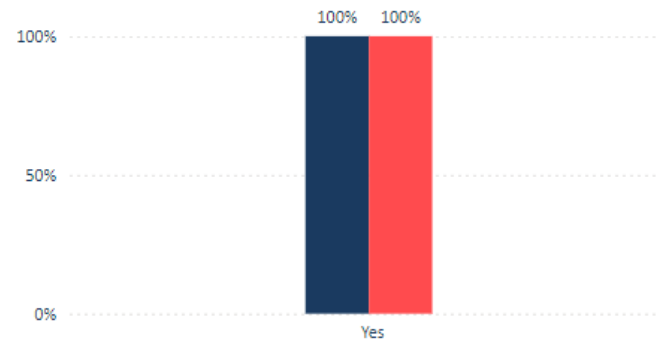
Hopes to work in this organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



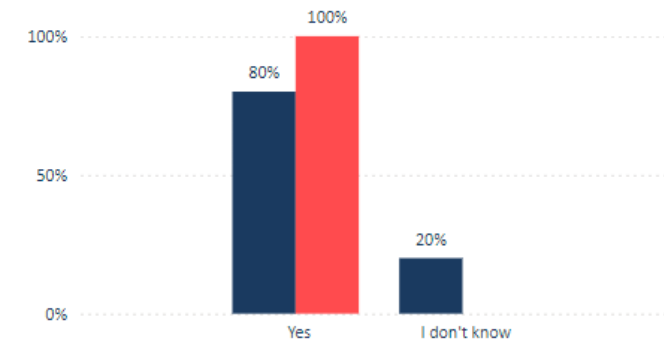
Hopes to work in a similar organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Hopes to secure further education

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study

“

The Gift of 'No': How Volunteering Opened a Door for Me

The phone call informing me I didn't get the job could have been a crushing blow. Instead, it became a life-changing opportunity. The OT team lead in Mulberry Wards, went beyond feedback delivery - they suggested the 'Volunteer to Career' programme, a chance for someone like me lacking experience.

Since day one, the OT team's dedication has been inspiring. Every discussion about a client involves a detailed exchange of observations and interactions. Each person's unique situation and support network is carefully considered. This is 'Person-Centred Care' in action, not just a textbook concept.

Working alongside the team, I experienced the wards' diverse environment firsthand. They constantly found opportunities for me to learn by shadowing them, patiently answering my questions, and generously sharing their experiences. The best lesson I learned from them is how empathetic words can light up the faces of clients and how professional demeanour can build genuine trust.

The VtC team's dedication to the Care Certificate training went beyond the workbooks. They brought in experienced speakers to share real-life challenges, giving me a solid foundation before I even started volunteering. Their enthusiasm for healthcare quality was infectious.

Last but not least, the unwavering support from the Voluntary Services Department throughout my journey was invaluable. They helped me explore growth paths and discover new opportunities.

Now I regard the initial rejection as a luck. It pushed me, a shy introvert, outside my comfort zone. The 'Volunteer to Career' programme offers a unique opportunity to learn by doing, providing a stepping stone for those who are eager to contribute to the healthcare field. And for that, I am incredibly grateful.

”

Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study

Occupational Therapy Assistant Volunteer



Voluntary Services
Department



NHS
Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough
NHS Foundation Trust

Ward Assistant Volunteer

Individual Placement Support Volunteer



Voluntary Services
Department



NHS
Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough
NHS Foundation Trust

How has the VtC programme helped you, what skills have you learnt?

The programme has enriched my knowledge base and practical skills for working in healthcare settings. Supervised by my manager, I have practised writing therapy session notes and learned about various therapy tools and models.



Is there anything else you would like to say about your volunteering experience?

The experience was amazing. With the exposure to the real-life application of occupational therapy, I am now more confident about my goal to pursue further studies.

Thousands of 'THANK YOU' to you! You may not be aware of but your help really changed my life.

It is such a shame that the 'Volunteer to Career' programme is coming to an end. I think it is an excellent opportunity and have gained a lot from it.

How do you intend to use your volunteering experience in the future?

The volunteering experience has helped me become better at communication and I'm also learning counseling skills which should hopefully support me in my goal to become a music therapist.

How has the VtC programme helped you, what skills have you learnt?

I have developed my communication skills focussing on positive strengths based messaging, putting into practice lessons learned on the peer support training. In addition exposure to a wide range of situations discussed in team meeting has further extended my objective of gaining exposure to a wider range of cases.

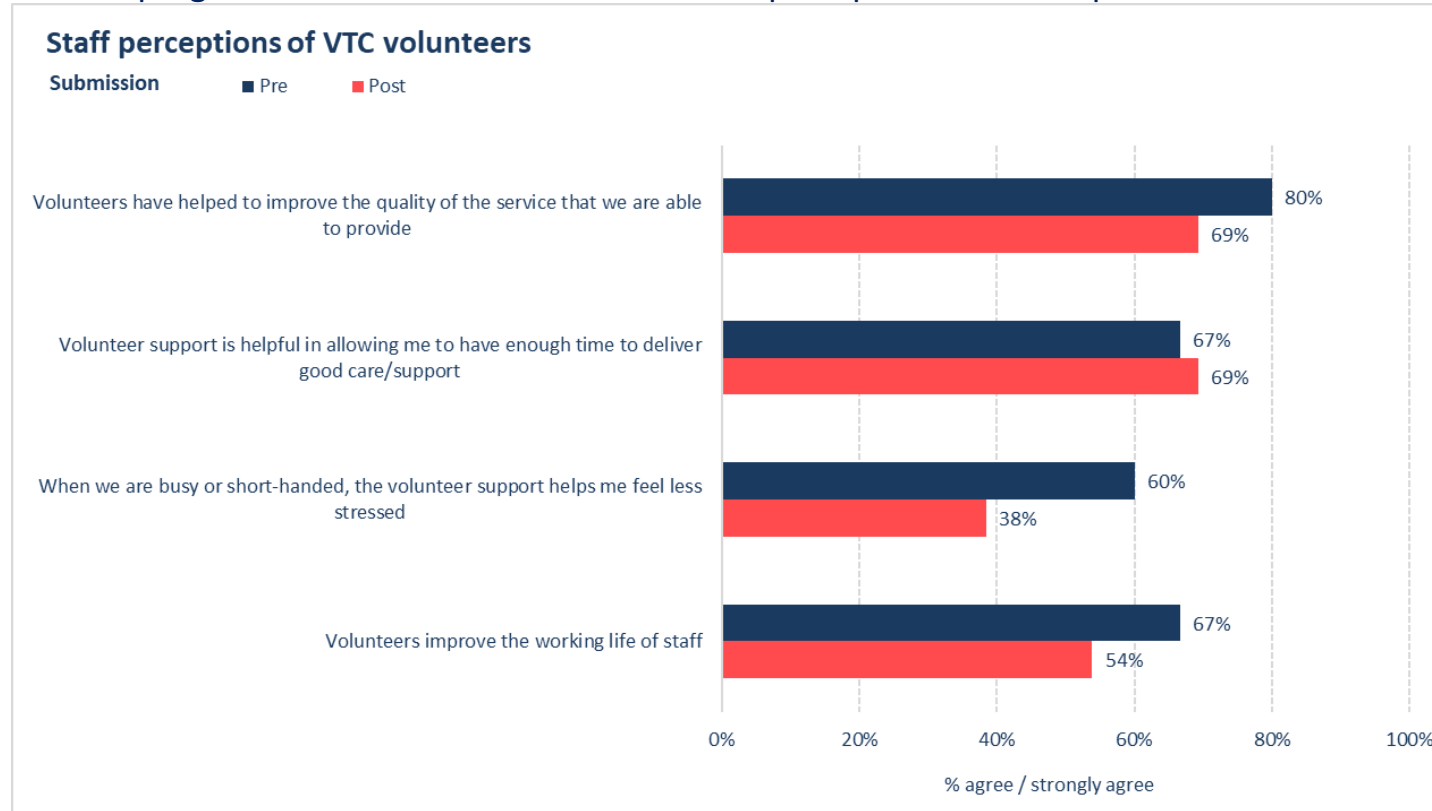
Is there anything else you would like to say about your volunteering experience?

Overall the volunteering has been very positive with a very supportive and inclusive team who have all been willing to take time out to share their knowledge.



Evaluation findings: staff

The VtC programme illustrated a decrease in staff perceptions of the impact volunteers can have for them and their organisation.



n= 15 pre-surveys, 13 post-surveys

We feel this data proves the need for quality data over quantitative. We did not have 13 members of staff who worked with VtC volunteers to enable accurate post survey responses.

We believe if these surveys were given just to VtC staff the data would reflect differently.

Evaluation findings: staff case study

**What's it like to be hosting volunteers in the VtC programme?
What do you enjoy most about it?**

Hosting volunteers has been like having a student nurse which most nurses tend to enjoy. The volunteers have consistently been keen and asked challenging and thought provoking questions allowing for some good discussion amongst the team.

How has the VtC programme helped your team?

It has helped with some staff becoming more confident at supporting volunteers.

Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience?

The people who volunteer are very good stuff attitude is spot on.

**What's it like to be hosting volunteers in the VtC programme?
What do you enjoy most about it?**

It has been a positive experience. We have been able to welcome a volunteer who had been unaware of our team before joining. They have been a huge support to the team at a time when we are very busy and unable to be funded to recruit more staff.

How has the VtC programme helped your team?

Mian support has been around managing our referrals and waiting lists. Has been able to support clients when team members have been off sick. Has brought their own experiences and expertise from another sector into the team.

Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience?

Our volunteer is considering applying for a permanent paid role in the team. I expect that without this placement it is not a role that they would have been aware of.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions:

- The implementation of the VtC programme in Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust has been successful in organisational improvement related to volunteering, maintaining volunteers' interest in working for this organisation.
- Volunteers' confidence about their career ambitions and interest in a health and care career remained high, with a significant proportion showing interest in working for this organisation and pursuing further education.
- The programme has helped the Trust to further integrate volunteering into workforce strategies and aided the development of effective career pathways for volunteers which have resulted in relevant paid employment in the NHS and volunteers securing further education.
- Some decreases observed in staff perceptions of the impact that volunteers can have. Further investigation into the reasons behind this would be beneficial.

Recommendations:

- Scaling the programme
- Sustaining and identifying further funding for the programme. The Trusts charity is looking at sourcing funding for the programme.
- Pending the outcome of the funding opportunities we will be able to look at up scaling the voluntary services to provide this program.

Acknowledgements:

Our Volunteer to Career (VtC) programme was carried out in partnership between our organisation and Helpforce, with funding from NHS England.

Helpforce has been an invaluable partner in helping us set up and deliver this programme and has also supported us in analysing the data, setting out the impact evidence of this programme.

With special thanks to:

- Stephen Legood – Corporate Sponsor
- Voluntary Services Department, Learning and Development, Recruitment, RCE Wellbeing Hub, Workforce Projects, New to Care / Care Certificate Team
- The team in Mulberry Wards, Administration Hub colleagues and supervisors, IPS team manager and colleagues, Occupational Therapy Team

All findings, conclusions and recommendations are from the Voluntary Services Department at Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

About Helpforce:

Helpforce works with health and care organisations across the UK to accelerate the growth and impact of volunteering to keep people healthy in their communities and support them during treatment and after. It is an independent, not-for-profit innovator, focused on co-creating on and evaluating volunteering projects, and rapidly sharing insights and best practice. To learn more about the charity, visit www.helpforce.community.



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Thank you



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Analysis completed by Helpforce, 2023.