

Introduction

The Volunteer to Career Programme is designed to support volunteers to pursue a career in health and care. Funded by Health Education England HEE Helpforce has worked alongside North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust to set up and implement volunteering projects which incorporate career pathways for volunteers.

The VtC programme has been designed to support organisation improvement across 3 key strategic components identified as essential to achieving systematic change:

- **Volunteer Project Officer** – developed a network of senior clinical/health/administration leaders to harness their expertise to positively influence wider effective engagement and ultimately adoption of the VtC project.
- **Environment & Culture** – utilise best practices to raise the value of the volunteer workforce in the health/care/administrative environment to enhance the likelihood of volunteers wanting to adopt a career within the NHS.
- **Volunteer to Career Pathways** – Develop an innovative and impactful volunteer roles and career pathways, link to local recruitment needs, to encourage/enable volunteers to use this as a route to a career in the NHS.

North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust run non clinical volunteering roles as part of the VtC programme, ward support and admin support supporting 11 Managers from wards/administration offices.

Volunteer to Career Programme

Findings report

North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust

13th May 2024



North Cumbria
Integrated Care
NHS Foundation Trust

funded by NHS England

in partnership with
helpforce

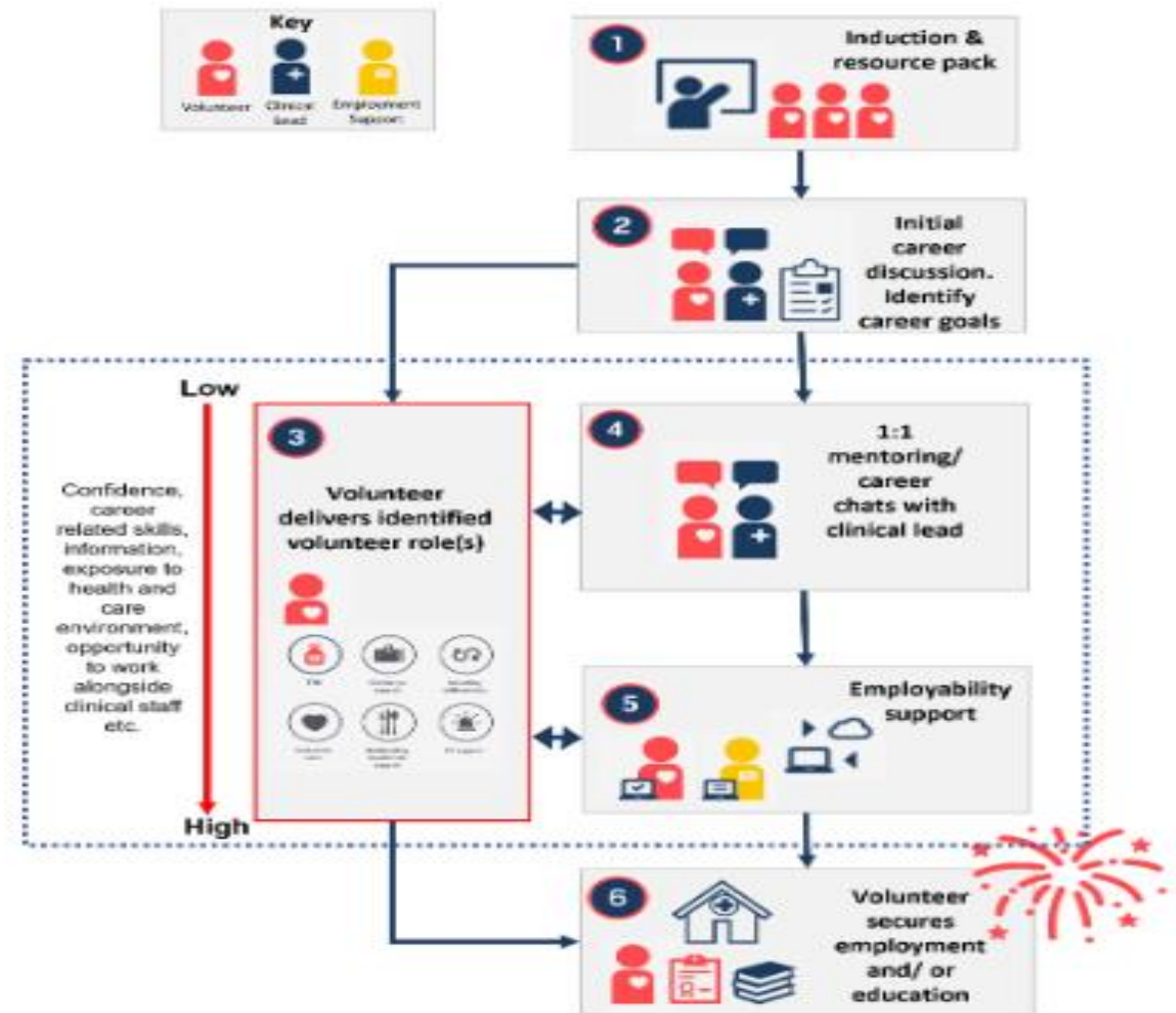
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Our VtC Career Pathway

- 1. Volunteer induction and resource pack:** provide an initial meet and greet forum, receive a welcome resource pack with information about the role, organisation and pathways available to them. It's also an opportunity for new volunteers to meet their peers, hear from clinicians and ask questions.
- 2. Initial career goals discussion/interview:** The career conversation is important to have early on with the volunteer to establish their career ambitions. Working with the Programme Lead, the volunteer will identify their career goals and agree on the steps needed to support them to achieve them through the VtC pathway.
- 3. Impactful volunteer roles:** the volunteer role is mapped to local recruitment needs to help the volunteer to develop the required skills, experience and exposure. HR and clinicians are collaborated throughout the role design process to ensure the role is well designed, meet the needs and enables the volunteer to move through the pathway.
- 4. Mentoring and ongoing career support:** ongoing opportunities for volunteers to receive a mix of information and more structured career-based conversations with relevant identified mentors and the VtC programme lead.
- 5. Work experiences through volunteering:** Volunteers attend volunteering sessions in the clinical/administration environment, approximately 60 hours over a maximum of 6 months. Support and mentoring are available from healthcare/admin professionals.
- 6. Employability support:** Provision of employment skills such as interview techniques and CV writing will be offered to volunteers through HR and or local community providers.
- 7. Securing employment or education:** Volunteers will be supported to undertake applications be added to our Bank register or identified relevant employment opportunities or further education.



Programme overview

The **Helpforce Volunteer to Career (VtC) programme** is designed to support volunteers to take up a career in health and care and administration. Helpforce have worked in partnership with our organisation 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**:

- **Volunteer Project Officer** – developed a network of senior clinical/health/administration leaders to harness their expertise to positively influence wider effective engagement and ultimately adoption of the VtC project.
- **Environment & Culture** – utilise best practices to raise the value of the volunteer workforce in the health/care/administrative environment to enhance the likelihood of volunteers wanting to adopt a career within the NHS.
- **Volunteer to Career Pathways** – Develop an innovative and impactful volunteer roles and career pathways, link to local recruitment needs, to encourage/enable volunteers to use this as a route to a career in the NHS.

North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust Programme overview and objectives :

The Volunteer to Career Programme supported 11 wards/department across our Trust.

- The volunteering roles, VtC volunteers undertook and what this involved. “The VtC programme created 2 roles, ward and administrative support volunteers. These roles were designed to assist and support staff on the ward and in the admin offices to meet the needs of patients/staff and to enable ward/admin staff more time to carry out their clinical/admin duties. In order to undertake the volunteer role, individuals must go through a structured application, vetting and training process”.
- An overview of the VtC Programme. “The VtC programme enabled our Volunteers to explore their career interests, while simultaneously providing them with an opportunity to gain experience of volunteering within a health and care environment or administration. Volunteers were provided with the opportunity of working alongside existing staff as they are supported to understand their volunteering role. As the Programme Lead I informed all my volunteers of all the career opportunities within NCIC and supported to undertake any additional training that was being delivered by our learning and development team i.e. interview skills, applying for a job and learning about dementia”.
- An overview of the benefits you anticipated the programme would have for the organisation. “The VtC programme was also designed to result in several positive benefits for NCIC. Alongside building a skilled volunteer workforce we also provided support to our staff and service users. It aims to build a skilled potential workforce for NCIC”

Our VtC programme objectives

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

1. Delivering a sustainable VtC Pathway that addresses 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, community integration and partnerships, integration of volunteering within strategic and operational priorities and volunteer to career pathways. All of these measures were assessed via the VtC self assessment tools (more details on this are provided within the evaluation approach slide).
2. The production and distribution of an advert for the volunteer to career role that provides 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. The creation of a Volunteer to Career Steering group to support the delivery of the project. Success measures included: steering group in place, Terms of Reference agreed, evidence of value to the project demonstrated and documented.
4. Identify and establish key relationships/partnerships to support the delivery of the project, including internal and external connections. Success measures included: community organisations established as a source for recruiting volunteers to the pathway, provision of training and employment support by internal colleagues.
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.

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 and administration?
 - 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 North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust's Volunteer to Career Programme Lead.

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 Programme 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/admin 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:

14

volunteer pre-surveys
were submitted

14

volunteer post-surveys
were submitted

18

staff pre-surveys were
submitted

15

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:



VtC volunteers supported 19 patients and 11 ward or administrative managers within the 7-month initial delivery period. Whilst 25 volunteers were recruited, 5 did not remain on the programme, therefore this support was delivered by 20 volunteers undertaking their volunteering role, delivering 480 hours of volunteering support.

Staff and patient support tasks included:

- Talking to patients, changing bedding, feeding patients, helping with teas and coffees, playing games with patients and taking messages in absence of Ward Clerk.
- Filing, taking telephone messages, booking patient appointments and welcome visitors onto the Ward.

Evaluation findings: volunteers

6 volunteers completed the pathway out of 20 volunteers who pursued the VtC programme.

Through the VtC programme and the career support provided, volunteers applied for jobs and attended interviews. These applications resulted in **6 out of 6 volunteers securing employment in the NHS.**

6

volunteers have taken up
employment in the NHS

100%

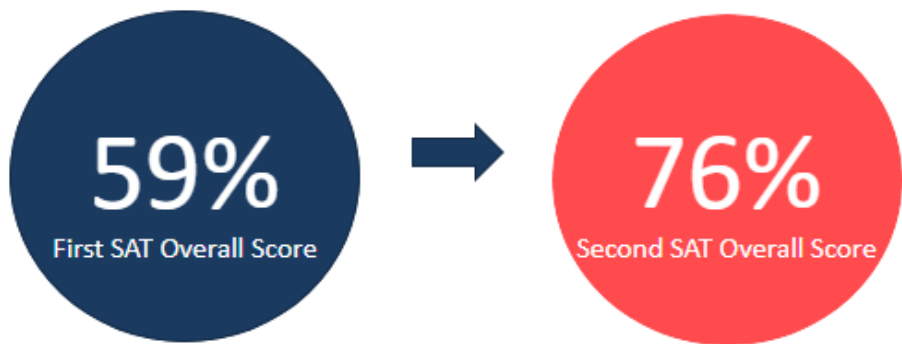
of volunteers who completed
the VtC pathway secured
employment

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

"The Volunteer to Career Programme gave me direct contact with the Trust and the work culture, so that I could mold myself in accordance with Trust's expectations. People who I worked with during the programme were very welcoming and helpful, the doors were always open to ask any questions and discuss different areas of work. I learned a great deal on the programme like planning and organising skills and working as a team. The VtC programme definitely helped me to find a permanent role within the Trust. The online training that I had to complete whilst on the programme was really relevant to role I was in. My skills and knowledge have greatly improved since completing the programme and I'm now really excited about starting my new permanent role at NCIC."

Simon Sabu - VtC volunteer

Evaluation findings: organisation



After completing the VtC programme, there was an increase in the overall SAT score, which improved from 59% to 76%.

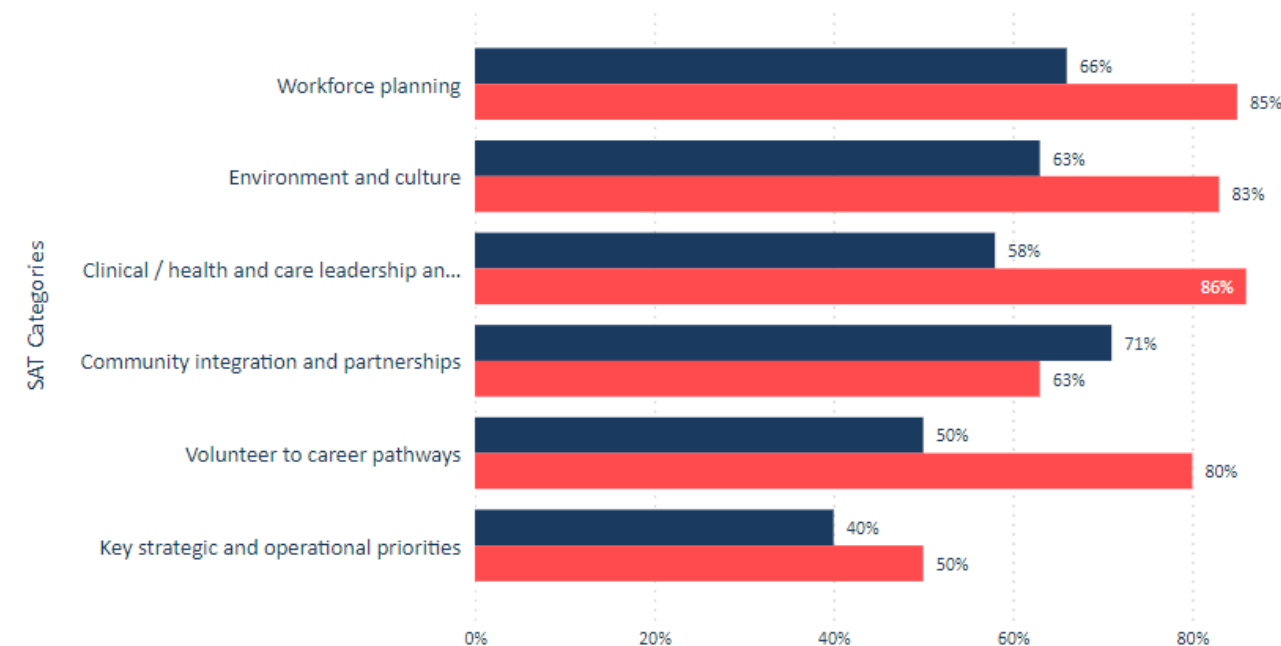
Similar to the positive change in the overall SAT score result, we have observed an improvement in the scores for five of the individual elements of organisational improvement for volunteering.

These charts provide an overall score, as well as a score in each of the 6 categories. After the programme, there is a majority of increased scores that clearly indicate a positive impact on the organisational outcomes of VtC.

Community integration had the only decreased score due to no capacity to mentor a Volunteer during the winter pressures.

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 21% to 29%**. Additionally, **93% 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 increased by 14%** by the end of the programme (29% to 43%). **93% of volunteers maintained or increased their confidence** in achieving these ambitions through the VtC programme.

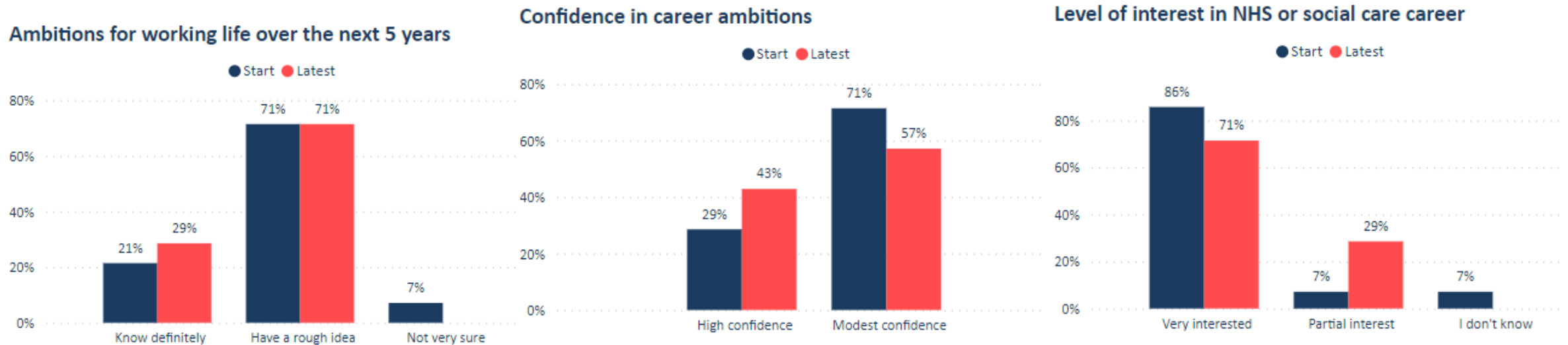
After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who were **very interested in an NHS or social care career decreased from 86% to 71%**. However, **85% of volunteers maintained their interest** in this career pathway as a result of participating in the VtC programme.

As part of the VtC Programme 20 volunteer to career support plans were in place.

Through the VtC programme and career support provided, volunteers applied for 15 jobs and attended 15 interviews.

These applications resulted in 7 volunteers securing jobs within NCIC including roles such as Casual Health Care Assistant, PALS officer, Ward Clerk and Admin Assistant.

N= 14 pre- and post-surveys



Evaluation findings – Volunteers

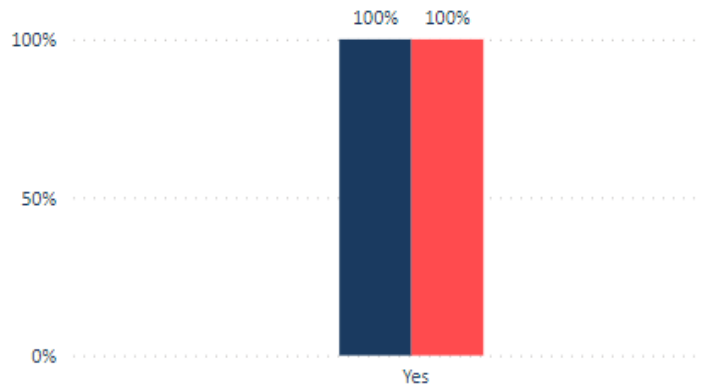
Volunteers were also asked about their hopes and if they wished their volunteering role would result in certain outcomes related to their careers, future education, and training. At the end of the programme:

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

N= 14 pre- and post-surveys

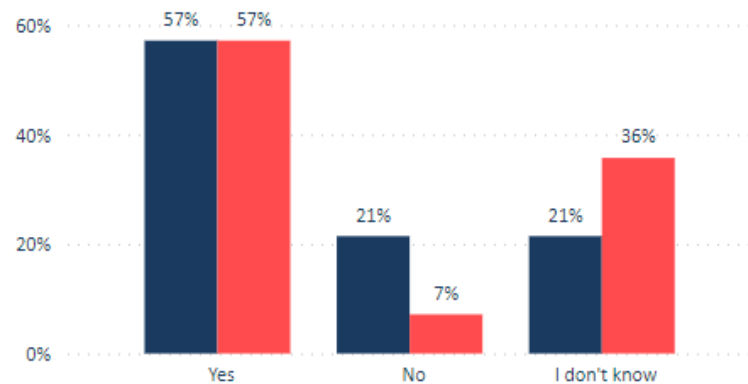
Hopes to work in this organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



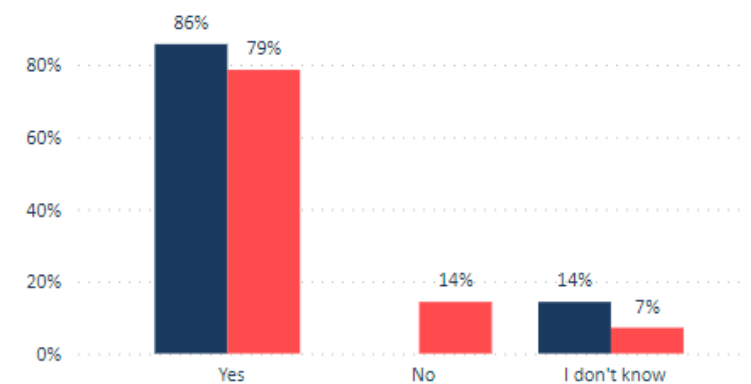
Hopes to work in a similar organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Hopes to secure further education

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Interpreting these charts and focussing on the distribution of responses among categories, there are positive outcomes that are indicated when a high proportion of volunteer responses fall within the 'YES' category, signifying optimism and certainty among volunteers. Also, the shifts in volunteers' responses over time with a positive change is evidence when a higher or similar proportion of individuals respond 'YES' in follow up survey, indicating the VtC experience has maintained or increased their employment.

Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study



“

I decided to embark on the Volunteer to Career programme to gain further experience and learn more about the different roles on a ward. Volunteering is such a worthwhile option as it enabled me to learn through observation and conversations with staff members on the ward.

Throughout my time as a volunteer, I have found that all members of the ward team have been welcoming and friendly. They have stated on several occasions how much they value and appreciate me volunteering and that it enables them to focus more on patient care and support. The team have always been willing to allow me to observe their day to day duties and have talked me through what they are doing and the reasoning behind it. I have been able to observe several different roles on the ward, this has been valuable in the development of my knowledge about different roles. The nurses have even talked me through medical procedures, which I found very beneficial as it enabled me to gain further knowledge around medical conditions and the treatment provided. The knowledge gained through this programme has been so beneficial and I really appreciate the staff for taking the time to explain things or answer any of the questions I have asked them.

I believe that the Volunteer to Career programme it has helped me to not only gain further knowledge which will help in my future career, but it has als, increased my confidence with interacting with patients and staff members.

The knowledge learnt in person was further developed through completion of online learning. The online learning enabled me to have basic knowledge before I started to volunteer, which reduced my feelings of being nervous. I was then able to further develop the knowledge through more online learning and put what I had learnt into practice.

Overall, I would say this programme has been so beneficial to the development of my skills and knowledge. It has massively increased my knowledge around patient care and support. It has also increased my communication and interaction skills. Additionally, it has enabled me to grow in confidence.

Alicia Jackson - VtC volunteer

”

Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study

“

I applied for the Volunteer to Career programme within the Outpatients department at North Cumbria integrated Care NHS Trust because I wanted to gain some insight into working within an administrative role within the NHS.

One of the main factors of choosing this volunteer programme was that the programme offered lots of flexibility around the hours I needed to complete and the training and support that was provided. But the main factor was that from completing this volunteer programme I could then apply for roles within the NHS and have the necessary skills to achieve this.

From the initial interview I was kept informed at every stage, and once all the employment checks were completed, I was given a start date. All of this process was very straightforward. My induction session was highly informative, and I left really energised and really looking forward to getting started.

My first day I was very anxious but once I met with my manager those feelings soon disappeared as they totally made me feel extremely comfortable in this unfamiliar environment. The team I have had the pleasure of working with are amazing, they have always been available to coach me in learning lots of new skills and have been incredibly supportive.

The training for this role has been a blended approach from e-learning and face to face training, all of which has been interesting and something I have really benefited from. It has been invaluable.

For anyone thinking about applying for a Volunteer to Career role with NCIC I would highly recommend doing so, as it is a fantastic opportunity and so rewarding, and something I have learned so much from.

Justine Williams - VtC volunteer

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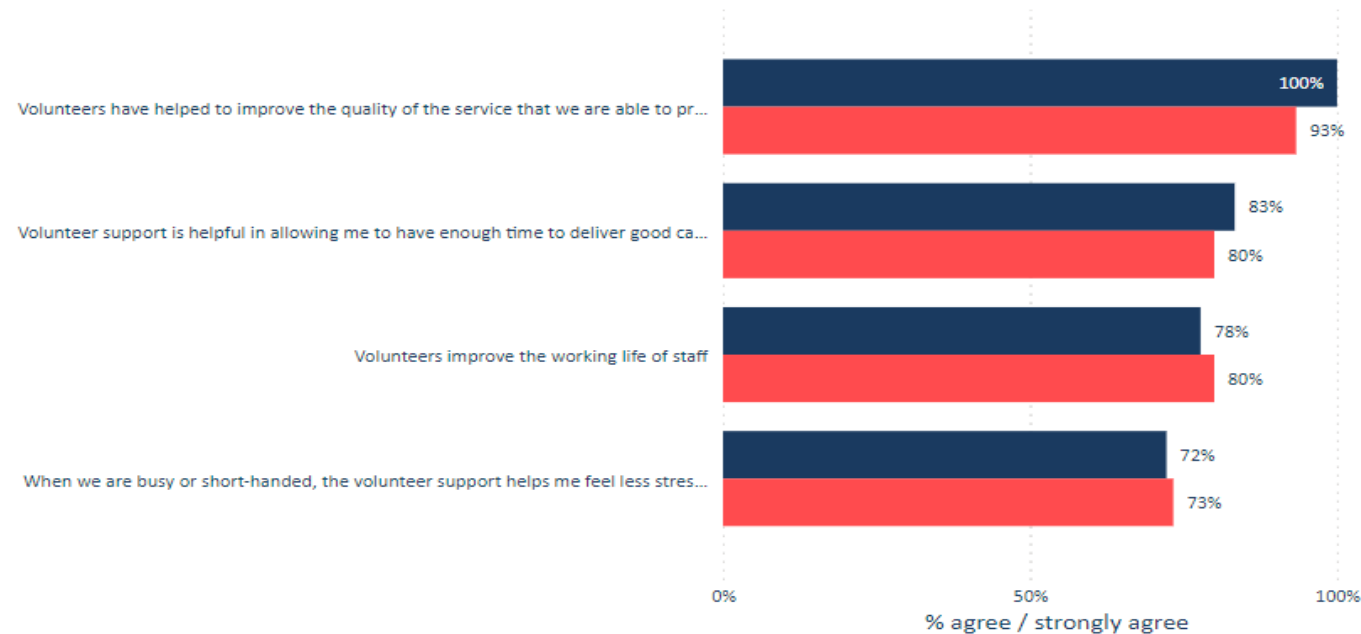


Evaluation findings: staff

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

Staff perceptions on the VtC volunteers

Submission ● Pre ● Post



N= 18 pre- and 15 post-surveys

"Our volunteers are an integral part of our Team and our Staff enjoy working with them. Our volunteers always make themselves useful, assisting with drinks, meals, chatting to patients and supporting the HCAs to assist with personal care, always fetching and carrying and always tries to keep themselves busy. Numerous HCAs have said how well our volunteers fit in with the team and feel they received great support from them. The programme enables the volunteers to grow in confidence especially when speaking to patients and staff as well as helping them build their skills and knowledge."

Rachel Westmorland - Senior Staff Nurse at Penrith Hospital

Interpreting the data on staff perceptions of volunteer support, there are changes in the percentage of staff who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' before and after the programme. A decrease has indicated areas that require further development or could be improved. An increase in individuals who agree after the programme on the other hand, suggests a generally positive impact on staff perceptions about volunteers and volunteering as a result of the programme.

A staff member reflected upon the difference VtC Volunteers has made to patients and staff.

Evaluation findings: staff case study

“

As the manager of the Health Records Department, I have had an extremely positive experience of the Volunteer to Career programme.

Not only was the calibre of the volunteers extremely high, they have all added great value to the work done within our service. The three individuals who volunteered with us have all gone on to obtain paid contracts within NCIC, two within the Health Records department.

I would highly recommend this as a viable solution to some of our recruitment challenges and would have no hesitation in using the programme again.

Rosie Jones – Manager of Health Records Department at North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust

”

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions:

- The implementation of the VtC programme in North Cumbria Integrated Care Foundation Trust has been successful in organisational improvement related to volunteering and volunteers hoping to secure employment in this organisation and volunteers taking up employment with the NHS.
- Staff perceptions of the impact that volunteers can have remained largely consistent, however it is important to note that staff already had very positive perceptions before the programme.
- 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.

Recommendations:

- Sharing any learning and development opportunities with Volunteers on the VtC pathway, such as interview skills, training opportunities and recruitment drives that the Trust are offering.
- Exploring new roles that would benefit volunteers on the pathway, tailoring their volunteering to their individual career goals.
- Continuing to engage with senior service leads to maintain support and recognition for the pathway.
- Continuing to support, monitor and record activity from last VtC Cohort as they on with their career.

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.

- Members of your VtC steering group
- Clinical personnel who supported the delivery of the programme

All findings, conclusions and recommendations are from Clare Graham at North Cumbria Integrated Care 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.

Thank you



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Analysis completed by Helpforce, 2023.