



Volunteer to Career

Volunteer to Career Programme (VtC)

Findings report

East Kent Health and Care Partnership (HCP)

June 2024

Bet+er **Lives** **Together**

East Kent
Health and Care Partnership

funded by NHS England

in partnership with
helpforce

East Kent Health and Care Partnership Volunteer to Career Programme (VtC)



Programme overview

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.

Programme overview -

The VTC programme was rolled out at four sites within the HCP (NHS, Social Care, Primary Care, Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise) - Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, Kent County Council – Enablement Team and Manor Care Homes Ltd.

Aim

Expand volunteering opportunities by aiding volunteers with – career support and interventions, specifically focusing on recruiting volunteers in Thanet and Ashford district.

Overview

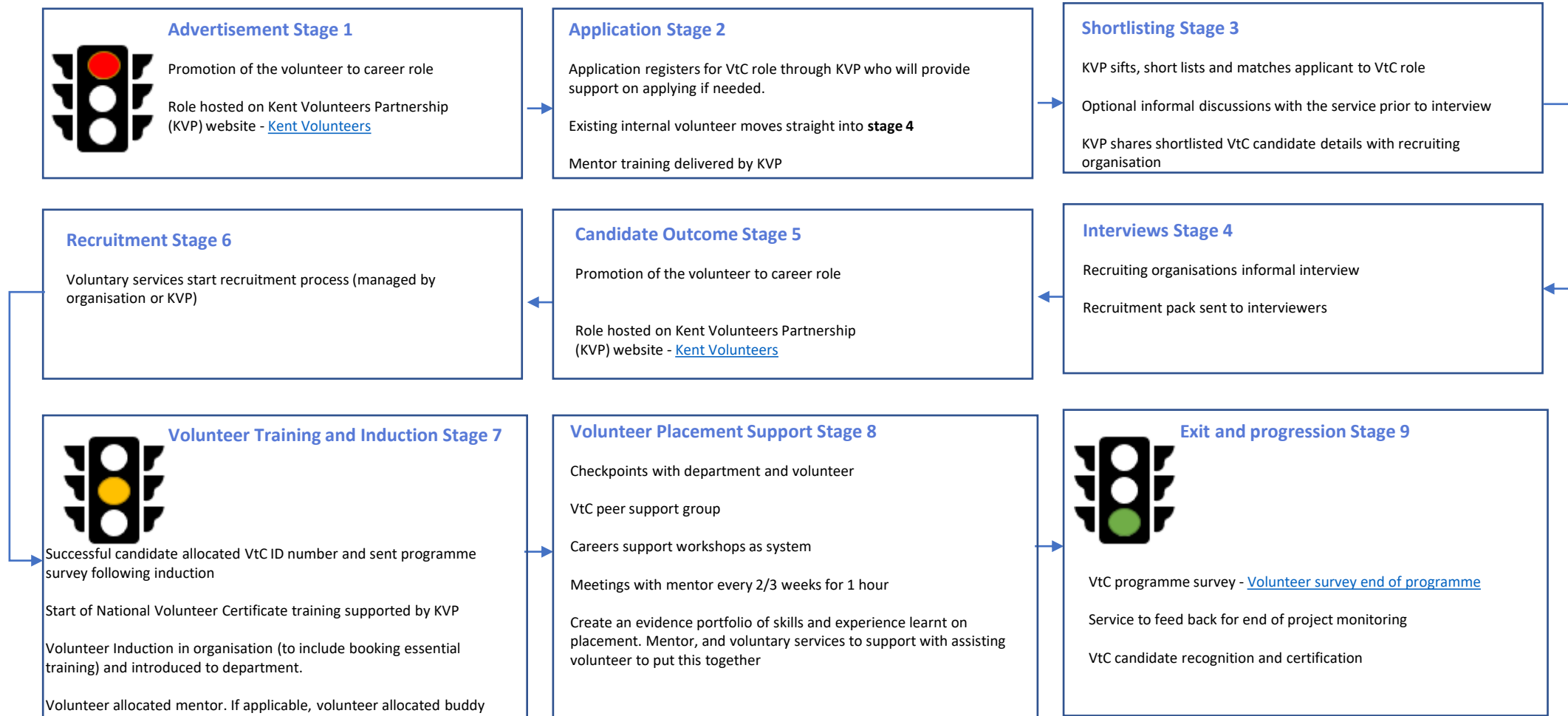
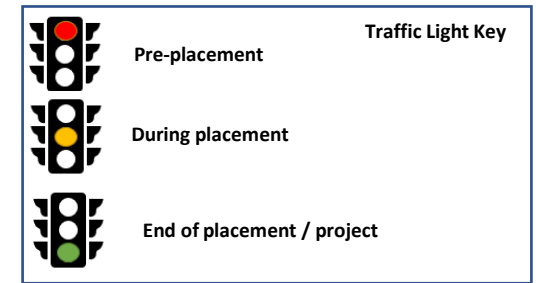
A systems approach to volunteering taken across East Kent HCP through design, development promotion of education, training and employment opportunities.

Benefits

- Expanding untapped potential resources
- Providing opportunities to develop skills and careers in uncharted areas
- Providing in work mentors to support the volunteers

Volunteering within East Kent Health and Care Partnership

Our VtC Career Pathway



Our VtC programme objectives

East Kent 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 the VtC Pathway

- Development and design of new volunteer roles in the NHS, social and primary care organisations
- An increased awareness of volunteering culture within the HCP
- An increase in pathways for people to get into health and care roles via volunteering

2. Targeted marketing and communications

- Development and delivery of co ordinated publicity campaigns, volunteer recruitment, volunteer training and mentor training
- Engagement with at least up to **20 VtC** participants in the following groups:
 - ❖ Care leavers
 - ❖ School leavers
 - ❖ Over 50s

3. Governance and infrastructure

- Setting up a Steering Group in support of delivery of the project
- Local inductions for volunteers at each organisation

4. Stakeholder/ Partnership relationship and management

- Promoting the value of volunteers
- Mentorship training and matching to volunteers

5. Sustainability

- Memorandum of understanding in place with partners to scale up the programme post pilot
- Volunteer training plans in place
- Retention data of former volunteers who move into the workforce is captured

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?

Please note: Due to the volumes of volunteers recruited to the pathway, volunteer survey data could not be included in the analysis.

Therefore, not all anticipated outcomes have been evidenced in this report.

Additionally, volunteers were only recruited at Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, therefore staff feedback is based on this Trust only.

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 East Kent HCP'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.
- **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:

8

staff pre-surveys were
submitted

11

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:

1

Volunteer was recruited

136

patients were supported by
VtC volunteers

VtC volunteers supported 136 patients within the 14-month initial delivery period. This support was delivered by one volunteer undertaking their NHS Health checks outreach volunteer role delivering over 40 hours of volunteering support.

Staff and patient support tasks included:

- Attending events and outreach sessions
- brief intervention conversations to support engagement with HI services
- Interacting and encouraging members of the public to engage with the free NHS checks available on the day
- Check eligibility criteria prior to the health check advisor undertaking the checks
- Be an advocate of the health improvement team
- Undertake checks appropriate for volunteers
- Sign posting members of the public to other provisions either at our trust or with other providers
- Helping with setting up and closing down stalls/ areas on the event day

Evaluation findings: volunteers

Through the VtC programme and the career support provided, volunteers applied for jobs and attended interviews. These applications resulted in the VTC **volunteer securing employment** within the Health Checks Team.

1

Volunteer has taken up
employment in the NHS

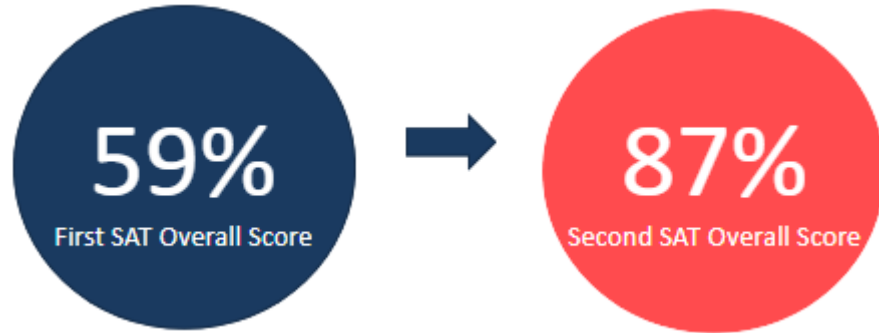
100%

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

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

"[I] was warmly welcomed into the team and have felt supported every step of the way. I knew I would enjoy it, but it has proven to be even more than I thought. I have been exceptionally lucky to have the placement I received and to be treated as a member of their team from day one."

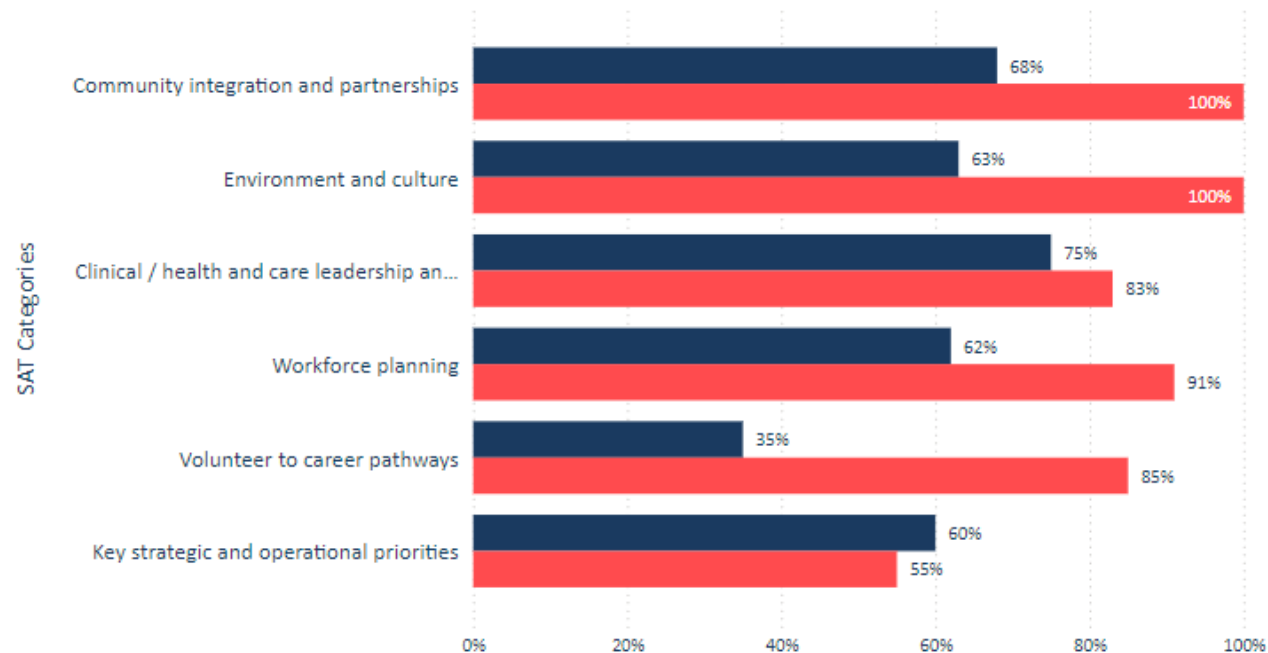
Evaluation findings: organisation



Post programme an **increased** overall SAT score, improved from **59%** to **87%**

First and Second Average SAT Scores Overview

Submission ● First ● Last



Improvement in **five** of the individual elements of individual organisational **improvement for volunteering**

Better **integration and collaboration** within the wider partnership around the VtC pathways

An appreciation of the **value** of volunteers within the partnership as part of the **workforce**

Evaluation findings: Volunteer case study - Joanna



“Joanna signed up to become an NHS health checks outreach volunteer in February 2024, as a way of easing herself back to work after a life-saving operation. Now, three months on, 50-year-old Joanna says the opportunity has not only opened up a new career, but it has been a way for her to give something back to the NHS. “I owe my life to the NHS,” says Joanna, “I feel incredibly lucky to be here after a long illness and life-saving surgery. As part of my recovery, I wanted to give something back”.

Joanna signed up to a central volunteering network with the aim of making a slow return to work. “I was searching for volunteering roles when I saw the NHS health checks outreach worker role advertised through KCHFT as part of the Volunteer to Career scheme. The role involved travelling to outreach events in east Kent, providing intervention conversations, signposting to other services and engaging the public in free NHS health checks.”

As a former community warden, the idea of bringing her experience to a role in community healthcare felt like the perfect opportunity to explore a new direction. “One day a week, I supported the Health Checks Team at outreach events. These can be really busy, so I started by helping check people in as they arrived. I took on more responsibilities, supported by the team, like taking blood pressure and talking to people about local health interventions such as the 'One You' weight loss and stop smoking services. During my time volunteering, I've referred five people to their GPs based on their health check results. These are people who could have been at risk of developing serious health conditions. It just shows how vital this outreach work is, particularly in pockets of high deprivation and poor health which is something I feel passionate about helping to tackle.”

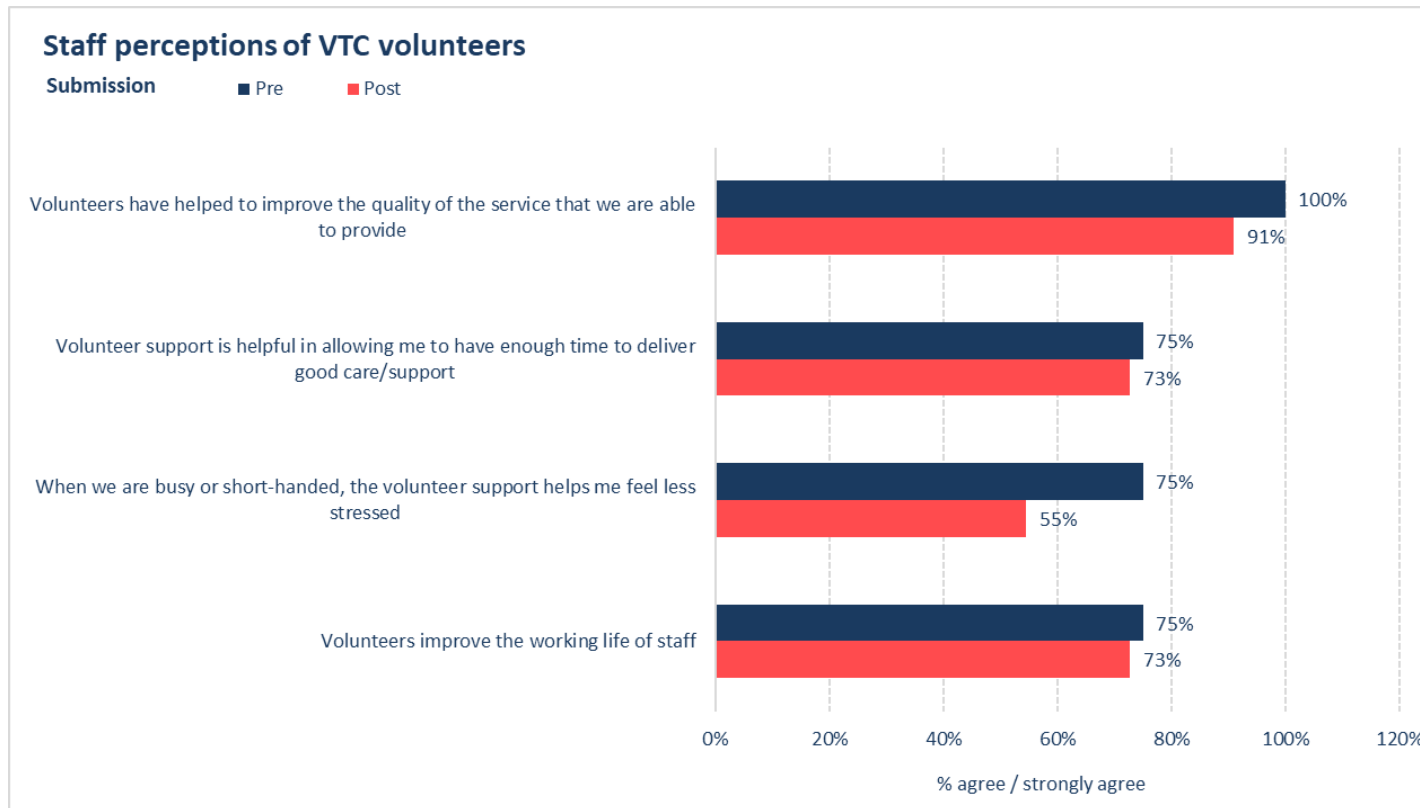
After three months of volunteering, a permanent outreach role came up in the NHS Health Checks Team and Joanna was encouraged to apply. “Having the volunteering experience gave me the confidence to apply for the role when it came up and I was so delighted to be offered the job. At 50-years-old, it can seem really daunting to re-train or go back to university. The Volunteer to Career scheme is such a brilliant way to gain new skills and get first-hand experience before applying for a permanent position.”

Samantha Scott, KCHFT's Health Checks Project Manager, said: “Joanna is the first volunteer we've had through the Volunteer to Career scheme and is a real success story. We've benefitted so much by having Joanna support our busy outreach events. Now, we will benefit even further by having Joanna join the team on a permanent basis, bringing her new skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to the role.”

Joanna – VtC Volunteer - Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

Evaluation findings: staff

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



n= 8 pre-surveys, 11 post-surveys.

Data is for Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust only. Data was also gathered from Kent county council, Manor Care Homes LTD, and East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, however, no volunteers were recruited and therefore no follow up data was gathered from staff, so these responses have not been included in analysis.

The **impact** we have seen in scores is from **one** member of staff recruited to role over **three months** and has shown improvement across **all scores**

If there was **more than one volunteer** recruited this would **increase** the impact of the overall scores as they would have **longer to impact** in their role.

Evaluation findings: staff case study

" Our Health Checks Outreach volunteer has settled well in the team; joining in a team meeting, attending training, getting to know everyone as well as completing her first volunteer shifts within our Outreach team. Not only has she quickly become a valuable support to our team, the structure of the 'Volunteer to Career' pathway has helped to make the transition into the service very seamless for both Joanna and us. We are looking forward to the year ahead! Our outreach work is key to engaging with our under-represented communities and having a volunteer who is passionate, willing to learn and support the service in this way means we are able to reach even more people. since reporting on Joanna's early days with the team, I can confirm that Joanna has been successful in securing employment with us. A wonderful example of exactly what the project was set up to achieve"



Lessons learned

Themes that were highlighted over the course of the VtC programme

1. Engagement

- Develop a robust publicity plan for VtC vacancies
- Some services were more engaged than others
- Explore a wide range of social media platforms geared at target cohort
-

2. Roles and responsibilities

- Gauge the genuine interest of a career in health and care
- Flowchart with clear outline of roles and responsibilities
- Structured reporting from participants with opportunities to trouble shoot issues collectively

3. Finance

- Where timescales are amended implications on finances to be re-calibrated and agreed
- Timing of release of funding better aligned to project and if not agreement for an extension to extend beyond the financial year

4. Delivery

- Regular contractor meetings to discuss delivery model and agree plan of action
- Widening the cohort of potential volunteers, such as internal staff ready for a career change
- Better planning by sharing original project scope with the wider group at inception of programme
- Issues with the portal resolved promptly

5. Contractual

- Nomination of contract leads to agree process for contract review and reporting
- More emphasis on Thanet, care leavers over 50s and school leavers

6. Training

- The training was good although organisations work differently and policies differ
- Mentorship was slightly confusing due to volunteer roles and paid roles

Other developments –

- All volunteers are asked routinely in recruitment if they are interested in Health and Social Care
- Strategically volunteering is included in opportunities for staff objectives
- Volunteering is part of workforce planning

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The implementation of the VtC programme in EKHCP has been **successful** in organisational improvement related to volunteering.

It has **aided** organisational integration of volunteering into **workforce strategies** and aided the development of **effective career pathways** for volunteers, resulting in one volunteer securing relevant paid employment in the NHS.

Some decreases observed in staff perceptions of the impact of volunteering. Further investigation into reasons would be **beneficial**.

Recommendations and learning

Staff are **interested in volunteering** in order to **change careers** or **upskill**, such as non-clinical staff wanting to move into patient facing careers.

KCHFT worked with services that were very engaged with the programme and going forward it will be great to learn more why this was to get future buy in when expanding roles.

The Ashford volunteer centre delivered **mentorship training** albeit not bespoke to the NHS, demonstrating learning from creating **NHS mentorship training** to empower services to support volunteers.

Creating **effective Role descriptions (RDs)** - these were not shared with third sector organisations previously and after **developing** these the charities we worked with on the project were pleased with them.

Improved learning of working with third sector and other organisations to work more **collaboratively** in the community in the future.

All new volunteers asked to assess if they wish to **develop** a career in health and social care through **volunteering**, in addition to those who are in **existing roles**. This has allowed us to sign one more current volunteer up to the pathway and support a new mentor in a new service.

Acknowledgements:

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.

- Sponsors: NHSE | Victora Robinson-Collins | Sue Banfield | Karen Sharp | Cathy Bellman
- Members of the VtC Steering Group: Sue Banfield | Cathy Bellman | Claire Baldock | Nikki Townsend | Charlotte Aldous | Verity Barton | Penny Lawlor | Beth Peal | Sheen Healey | Mandy Carliell | Jo Treharne | Ryan Harris | Sarah Boardman | Ana Rogers | Munya Badze | Adebisi Abraham | Dee Lawrence
- Kent and Medway NHS supported the delivery of the pilot at the East Kent Health and Care Partnership | One U Shop | Kent County Council Enablement | Manor Care Home

All findings, conclusions and recommendations are from the Volunteer to Career team at East Kent Health and Care Partnership

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.