



Volunteer to Career

Volunteer to Career Program

Findings report

County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust

May 2024



County Durham
and Darlington
NHS Foundation Trust

funded by NHS England

in partnership with
helpforce

Contents

Our VtC Career Pathway	3
Program overview	4-5
Our VtC objectives	6
Helpforce's evaluation approach	7-18
Conclusions and recommendations	19
Acknowledgements	20



Our VtC Career Pathway

1. Volunteer induction and resource pack: All volunteer, whether volunteer to career or standard volunteer will receive an information pack containing helpful information and an application pack. This will allow the application process to start and an initial discussion will take place.

2. Initial career goals discussion/interview: Once an application is received an initial discussion will take place to understand the applicants aspirations. This may or may not include a desire to secure employment as part of the program. If this includes hopes of seeking employment from the experience, their career goals and aspirations will be agreed and a suitable location identified.

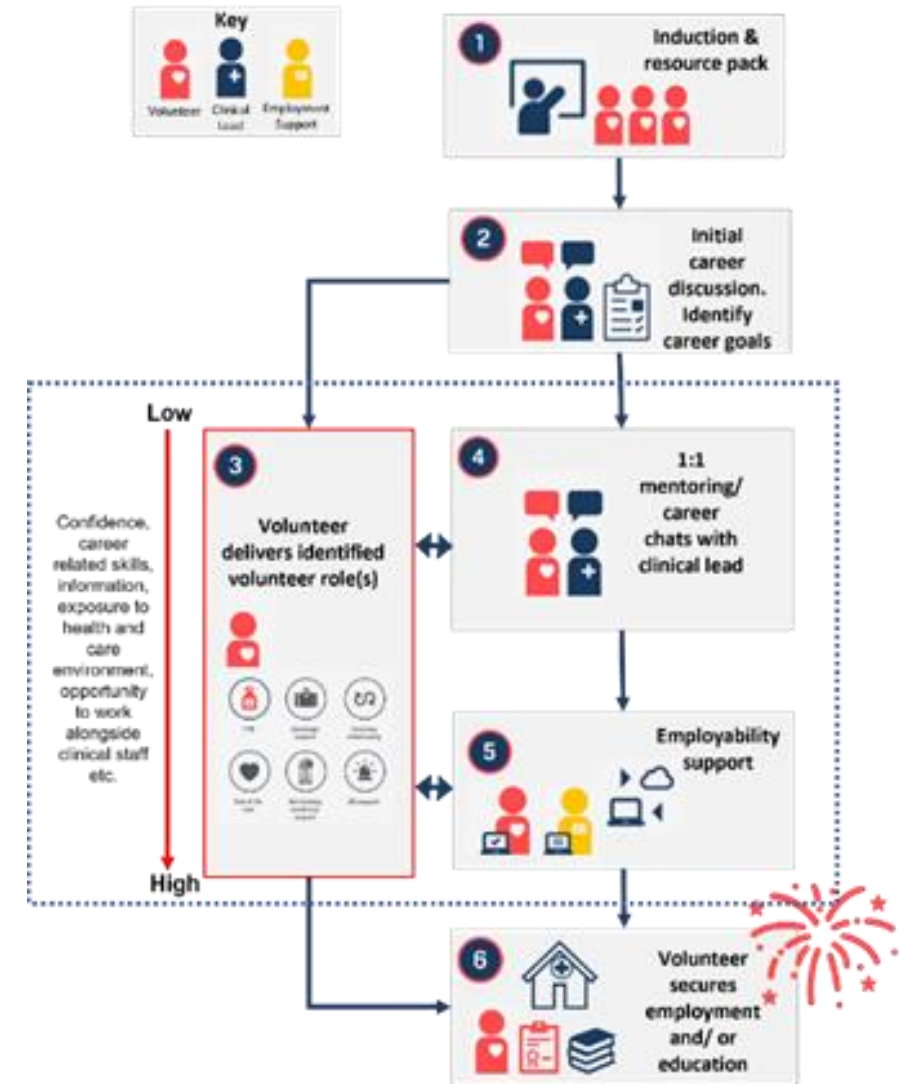
3. Impactful volunteer roles: The program identified 1 role type only which was ward helpers, a role description was agreed and shared with potential candidates. Whilst aimed at gaining experience to become an Healthcare Assistant this has led to administrative experience and opportunities.

4. Mentoring and ongoing career support: Once a volunteer to career candidate is allocated a placement, a buddy from ward or department will be allocated to offer mentoring and training to them. There will be oversight and additional mentoring offered by Senior Matrons.

5. Work experiences through volunteering: Candidates will agree suitable times to attend the ward, once initial induction is carried out, relevant training will be identified and opportunities to shadow clinical staff in practice. Once both parties are confident the candidate will have roles and responsibilities identified to gain experience.

6. Employability support: When the candidate gains relevant confident and experience and wish to apply for employment there is a range of support available. This support covers, application forms, interviews skills and support and guidance through the process. If unsuccessful feedback will be provide will be provided by the interviewing to support further applications.

7. Securing employment or education: Volunteers will be supported to undertake applications to identified relevant employment opportunities or further education. These conversations will start right from the onset of their volunteering journey.



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.

County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust program overview and objectives:

Project Description: The volunteer service/role we are using for our project here at CDDFT is the ward helper role. We have opted for this role as it gives a variety of opportunities to the volunteer and flexibility when progressing through the volunteer to career pathway. We have considered that a volunteer may take up a position on the ward with a very clear ambition of seeking a career as a healthcare assistant however once active on the ward this could change and they may want to be a ward clerk, domestic or progress an academic route to Nursing or Allied Health Professionals. Our initial aspirations for the project to do identify a diverse group of people who are very interested in gaining employment in the NHS, however may not necessarily have the skills to achieve this. This project offers opportunities for people to not only try before they consider application but to gain necessary experience to be able to successfully apply for jobs here at CDDFT. However as the project matures we aspire to embed the volunteer to career pathway into our workforce strategy and conversation and work has begun to help achieve this.

We have started conversations regarding the recruitment processes we currently have in place and how we can look to improve these which may increase the opportunities offered to our volunteer to career candidates. We are considering modern apprentice routes and how these may be able to be flipped into permanent roles once the candidate has the experience and qualities to carry out the role. This would not only improve the experience of the volunteer but reduce the time spent on wards and departments sifting vast numbers of applicants through the recruitment process. We have also considered access to the nursing apprenticeship project for some of the refugee candidate we have here at CDDFT, who have been nurses in other countries but do not meet the standard of the UK nursing standards. This are just in the early stages of consideration and will be finalised as the project continues.

Programme overview

Project Objectives:

Project objectives are specific, lower-level statements. They describe results: specific, tangible deliverables that the project will produce. Objectives guide you through every aspect of the project and over all its phases and validate its success. They provide measurable targets and help teams to understand what is expected of them. Progress towards an objective can usually be tracked as they tend to be associated with metrics.

Stakeholders:

Executive Director of Nursing, Associate Director of Nursing, Matrons, Ward staff, Human Resource Business Partners, Recruitment and Human Resources

Measurement and tracking:

We will measure and track on a monthly basis during the Volunteer to Career Steering Group.

The KPI's we will monitor are:

- Have we recruited the number of volunteers we aspire to?
- Have we completed an adequate number of successful inductions?
- Have we completed the number of hours needed for our supply and demand scope?
- Have we carried out appropriate career conversations?
- Are we gathering appropriate data at the relevant intervals?
- Have you secured roles for volunteers?
- Have we supported volunteers to take an academic route?

Our VtC program objectives

The VtC programme began in September 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

CDDFT pathway was agreed through our steering group meetings and support guidance from neighbouring colleagues at South Tees Hospital who had an establishment program in place, both the support from them and the Helpforce Team allowed our project to be a success and embed the foundation for it to be sustained.

2. Produce and distribute an advert for the volunteer role.

CDDFT produced and advert and the role was advertised on NHS jobs and we held 2 face to face recruitment events which were very successful. We continue to attend job fairs and educational events when we promote the volunteer to career opportunity.

3. Steering group in place.

CDDFT have a steering group in place which was very active in the initial stages to ensure the embedding and smooth running of the project. These will continue bi-annually as a standard however ad hoc meetings will be held where necessary and at the time of recruitment surges. As we look to increase the number of roles we offer there will be a need for more frequent meetings.

4. Identify and establish key relationships/partnerships.

CDDFT have establish key relationships both with internal and external partnerships, these will be maintained after the project ceases and no doubt new relationships will form over time.

5. Organisational agreement to sustain.

CDDFT have started initial conversation regarding embedding the volunteer to career program within our workforce strategy however these are in the infancy. A business will also be written to make the project lead role substantive after the fixed term period. Regardless of the outcome the program will be maintained an option for future volunteers.

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 County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust 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:



Volunteering activity

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



VtC volunteers supported almost 190 patients and 48 staff within the 4-month initial delivery period. This support was delivered by 12 volunteers undertaking their Ward Helper volunteer role , delivering a minimum of 768 hours of volunteering support.

Staff and patient support tasks included:

- Engage with patients on the ward, especially those who may not get any visitors.
- Ensure patients water jugs are full and top up if necessary
- Stock up basic supplies (light items only) ensure supply cupboard is tidy and organised
- Changing beds (only with the help/support of nursing staff and if capable)
- Basic errands for staff (Pharmacy etc)
- Helping patients to brush their hair, applying makeup (only if you feel comfortable doing so)
- Help at mealtimes. Distribute meals to patients. Help those patients who struggle to cut up their food. Sit with those patients who need a little encouragement to eat. Ensure patients can reach their food and utensils. Refill fluids.
- Cleaning – very basic duties and keeping areas of the ward tidy.
- Support patients (who are able) that may need to move off the ward to other areas of the hospital.
- Sitting with patients and asking them to complete the Friends & Family Questionnaire.

Evaluation findings: volunteers

12 volunteers completed the pathway out of 12 volunteers recruited.

Through the VtC programme and the career support provided, volunteers applied for jobs and attended interviews. These applications resulted in **5 volunteers securing employment**, into roles such as health care assistants and administration roles.

5

volunteers have taken up
employment in the NHS

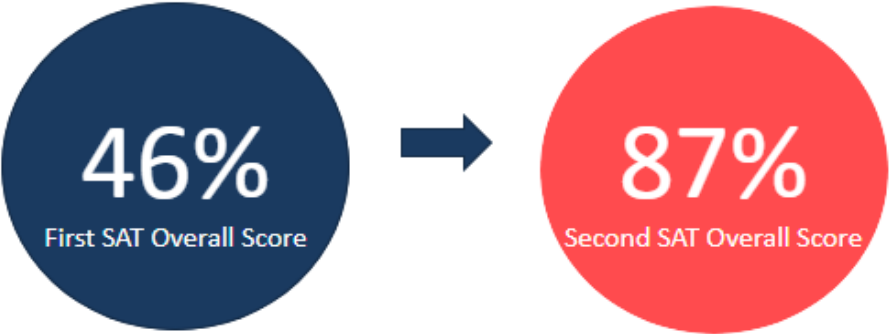
42%

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

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

"I really do get a lot out of it. I have struggled with confidence in the past, but this really does help. The staff and patients are all so nice."

Evaluation findings: organisation

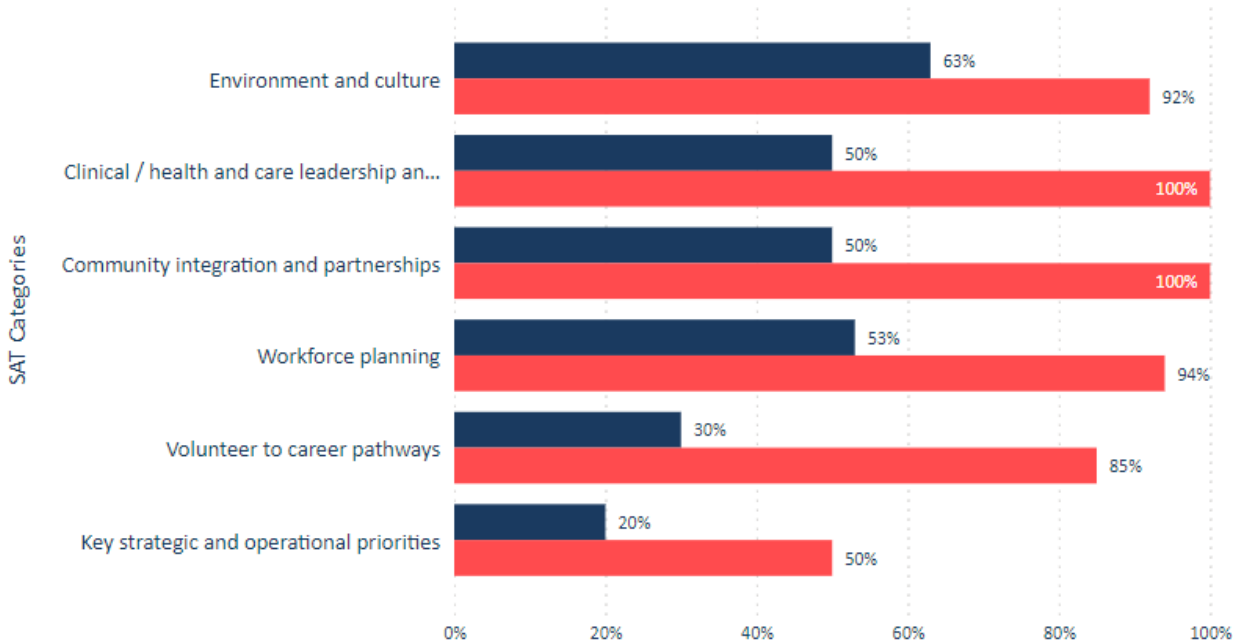


After completing the VtC programme, there was an **increase in the overall SAT score, which improved from 46% to 87%.**

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

First and Second Average SAT Scores Overview

Submission ● First ● Last



Following discussions at our Volunteer to Career Steering Group we found there was a positive change to how staff reacted to the programme. Clinicians are now championing the role and can see the benefits of how this can help them as well as the volunteer. Clinical teams now work routinely with volunteers.

The volunteer agenda is well integrated within our workforce strategies and these are being partly delivered through business and operational plans.

We have developed close working relationships with educational providers and employment support providers as well as other voluntary services which has helped to develop sustainable volunteer career pathways.

Evaluation findings – Volunteers

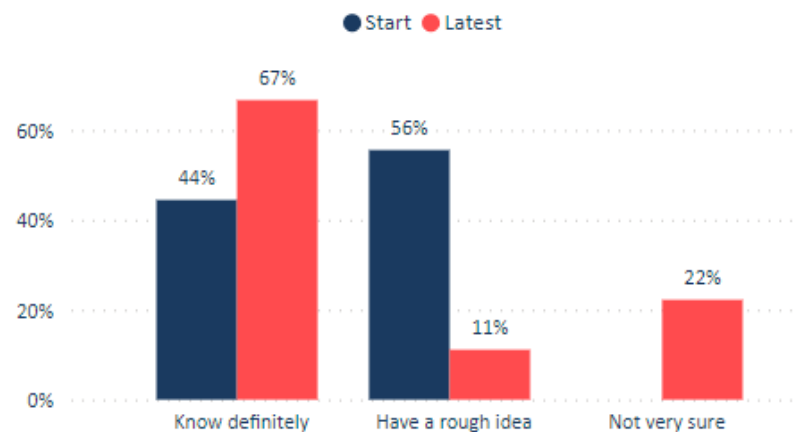
After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who **knew definitely what they wanted to do with their working lives increased from 44% to 56%**. Additionally, **78% of volunteers maintained or increased their certainty** in their ambitions through the VtC programme.

The proportion of volunteers who had **perfect certainty in their career ambitions decreased by 11%** by the end of the programme (11% to 0%). However, 78% of volunteers maintained or increased their confidence in achieving these ambitions through the VtC programme.

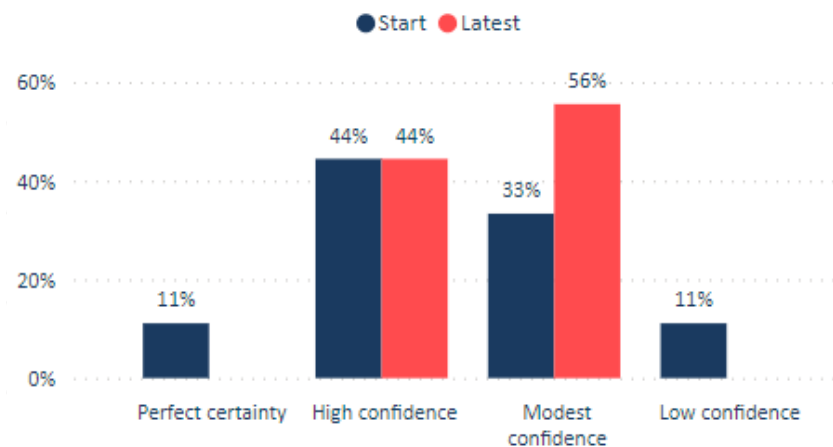
After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who were **very interested in an NHS or social care career decreased from 100% to 89%**. **89% of volunteers maintained their interest** in this career pathway as a result of participating in the VtC programme.

N= 9 pre- and post-surveys

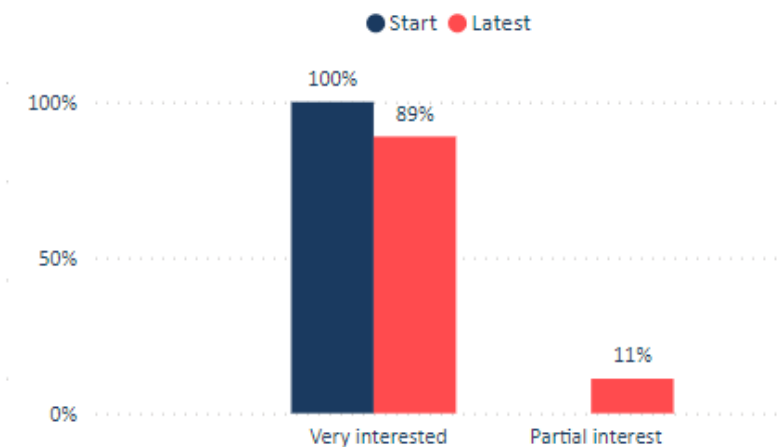
Ambitions for working life over the next 5 years



Confidence in career ambitions



Level of interest in NHS or social care career



Evaluation findings – Volunteers

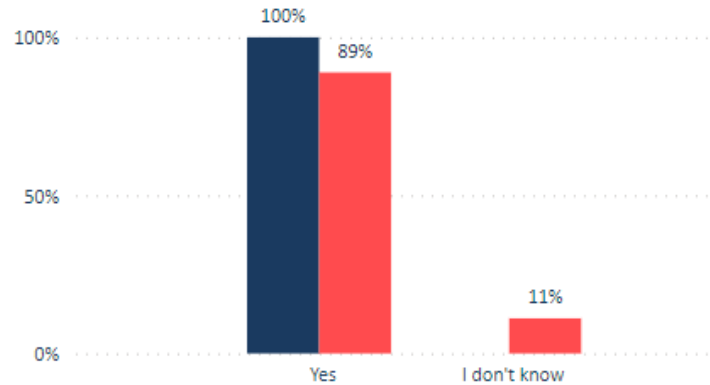
Volunteers were also asked about their hopes and if they wished their volunteering role would result in certain outcomes related to their careers, future education, and training. At the end of the programme:

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

N= 9 pre- and post-surveys

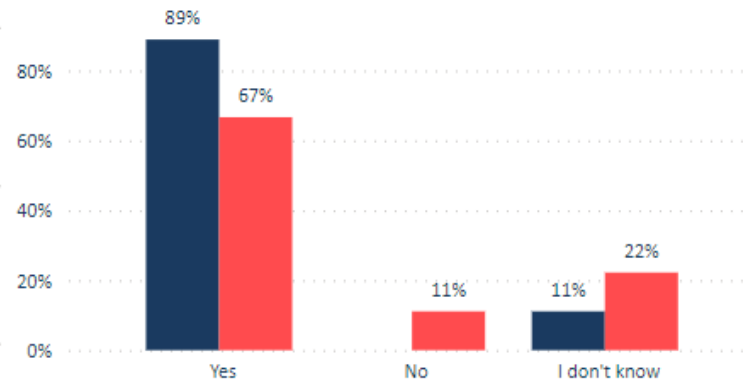
Hopes to work in this organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



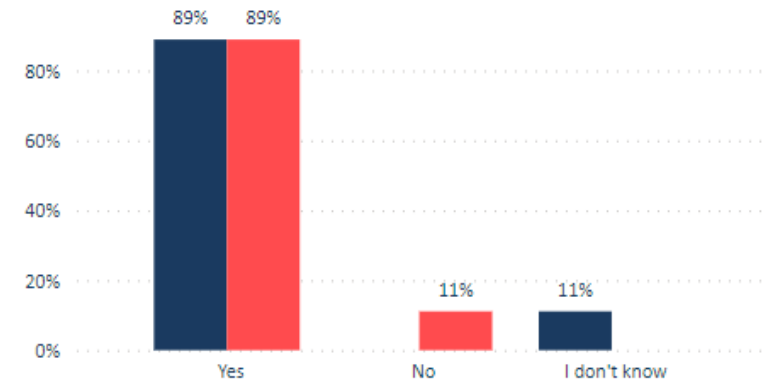
Hopes to work in a similar organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Hopes to secure further education

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study



“

Since I was in secondary school, I had always wanted to be a part of the NHS but didn't think I would have the skills. After sitting my GCSEs twice, I finally passed and went onto college to do A Level 2 Health & Social Care and then progressed onto Level 3.

Following my A Levels I applied to do a degree at University and because of this I decided to apply to be a volunteer at County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust to run alongside my studies. This is when I was made aware of the Volunteer to Career Programme. Volunteering gave me so much confidence to apply for jobs and the Volunteer to Career Team gave me the support I needed throughout the application and recruitment process. They were so helpful and so flexible if anything needed doing, they would always help me and for them I'm very grateful and so thankful.

As I already had knowledge and understanding of care since doing a work placement in a care home with dementia patients and also working in a youth community centre with those with disabilities, I was able to adapt quickly to working in a ward. The ward where I volunteered had a vast range of patients and it gave me a great insight to what it was like to work there and what life in the NHS was like.

I knew I wanted to work there as I felt part of a team and respected. It has made me feel very confident in asking for help if I need it and to be aware of safeguarding and if I see it say it. In November 2023 I applied for a job within the Emergency Department and was successful. I am currently on leave to complete my Masters studies but will be returning in May.

The Volunteer to Career programme is very rewarding and I would totally recommend it. I didn't know where to start in the NHS and this was where I got my foot in the door, and I have never looked back. The team are amazing people. I'll feel very proud to say I work for the NHS full time once I finish my degree.

Nicky Keogh – VtC volunteer

”

Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study

“

Hello, I am Helen.

I am a Ward Helper Volunteer on Ward 34, Acute Medical Ward, Darlington Memorial Hospital. While working for the Private Healthcare Sector I decided to volunteer to gain experience and knowledge of what it was like working within the NHS.

I applied to be a volunteer within the Trust, and I was added to the Volunteer to Career Programme, and then joined Ward 34. My duties include providing drinks for patients, helping at mealtimes, changing beds, and assisting with any little jobs as required.

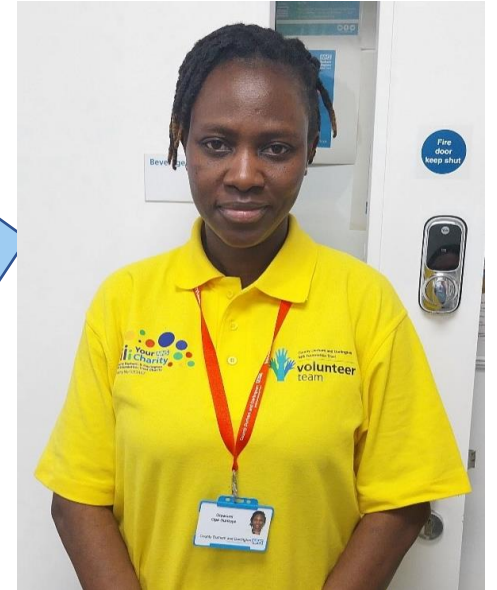
After some time, I was able to apply for a full-time position within the NHS, and I was successful at gaining an HCA role.

This is a very good and rewarding programme!

I would recommend this programme to anyone willing to grow their career in the health care sector.

Helen Ope Duntoye – VtC volunteer

”



Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study



What was it like to be part of the Volunteer to Career programme? What did you enjoy most about it?

"I enjoyed meeting various people, learning new skills and being part of a wider team."

How has volunteering benefitted you?

"It has enabled me to obtain the experience required to gain confidence and ultimately be offered a role within the Trust."

Did you find a job as a result of volunteering?

"Yes, I have been offered a temporary position in the area where I volunteered to gain experience."

Did you find the volunteer experience rewarding?

"Yes, because it has given me new skills and has led to me getting a temporary job."

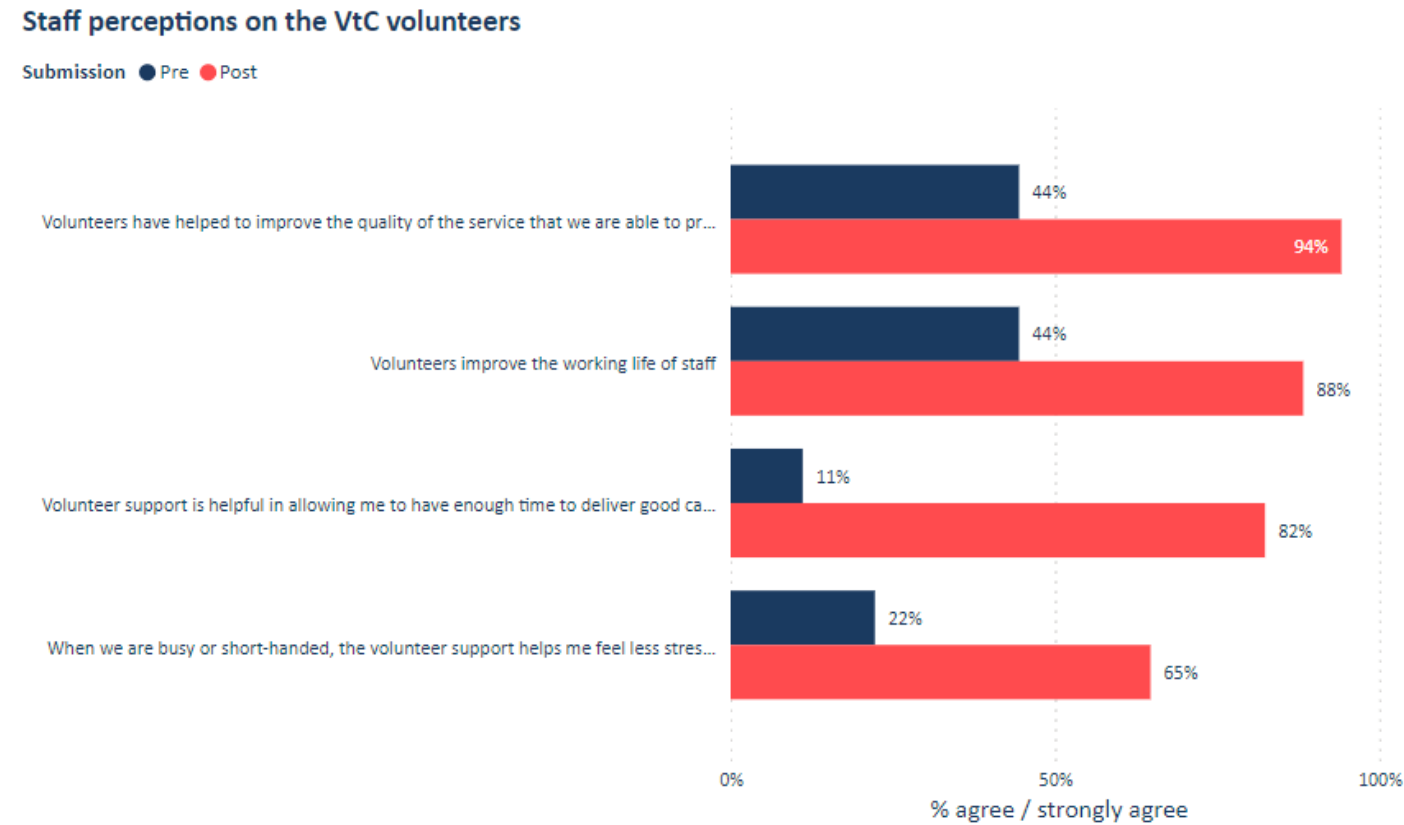
Would you recommend Volunteer to Career programme to other people thinking about volunteering?

"Without a doubt."

Kirsty Bainbridge – VtC volunteer

Evaluation findings: staff

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



N= 9 pre- and 17 post-surveys

As you can see from the data to the left of this text, the impact of the program has been phenomenal and we are proud of the CDDFT team who have achieved this impact.

A staff member reflected upon the difference VtC volunteers had made to patients and staff...

“Volunteers have made a huge impact within some of our departments and at times I think we would have struggled without them. They are definitely an asset to the Trust.”

Evaluation findings: staff case study

I've always acknowledged and recognised the value of having the volunteer service and what that can bring to the Emergency Department and having wanted a volunteer since I came to this Trust some time ago you have provided the department with a fantastic person. She is incredible and such a valued member of our team now. Coming every Monday she supports our HCA particularly in the waiting room providing reassurance and assistance to patients waiting to be seen. She talks and listens to patients and staff and can raise concerns and queries to myself that I can then address at the time which I believe is assisting with the reduction of what could potentially escalate to a complaint and therefore enabling local resolution. She assist and supports the completion of our Friends and Family surveys which we then submit with many positive outcomes.

Kym Kavanagh, Ward Manager, Emergency Department, Darlington Memorial Hospital.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions:

- The implementation of the VtC programme in County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust has been successful in organisational improvement related to volunteering and improving staff perceptions of the impact that volunteers can have.
- 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.
- Some decreases were seen in volunteers' confidence in their career ambitions and their hopes to work in this or a similar organisation. However, by the end of the programme a greater proportion of volunteers knew what they definitely want to do with their working lives in the next 5 years and a continued high proportion hoped to secure further education.
- We successfully recruit 12 volunteer to career candidates of which 6 have secured employment and 3 are following an academic route whilst continuing to volunteer.

Recommendations:

- Secure the volunteer to career project lead as a permanent role.
- Increase the number of roles CDDFT offer.
- Sustaining and identifying further funding of budget for the program.
- Embed in CDDFT workforce strategy as business as usual.

Acknowledgements:

Our Volunteer to Career (VtC) program 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 program and has also supported us in analysing the data, setting out the impact evidence of this program.

- Helpforce Team for funding and invaluable support to get the project off the ground and achieve success.
- Members of your VtC steering group for their clinical expertise.
- Invaluable support from our colleagues at South Tees Hospital.
- Support of Associate Director of Nursing, Aileen Rooney who planted the seed for this project.
- And finally Claire Mills, Project Lead who without we would have not have achieved this huge success.

Thank you to each and everyone of you!

All findings, conclusions and recommendations are from the Paula Brennan at County Durham and Darlington 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.



Volunteer to Career

Thank you



County Durham
and Darlington
NHS Foundation Trust

in partnership with
helpforce



Analysis completed by Helpforce, 2023.