



Volunteer to Career

# Volunteer to Career Programme

## Findings report

### North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

May 2024

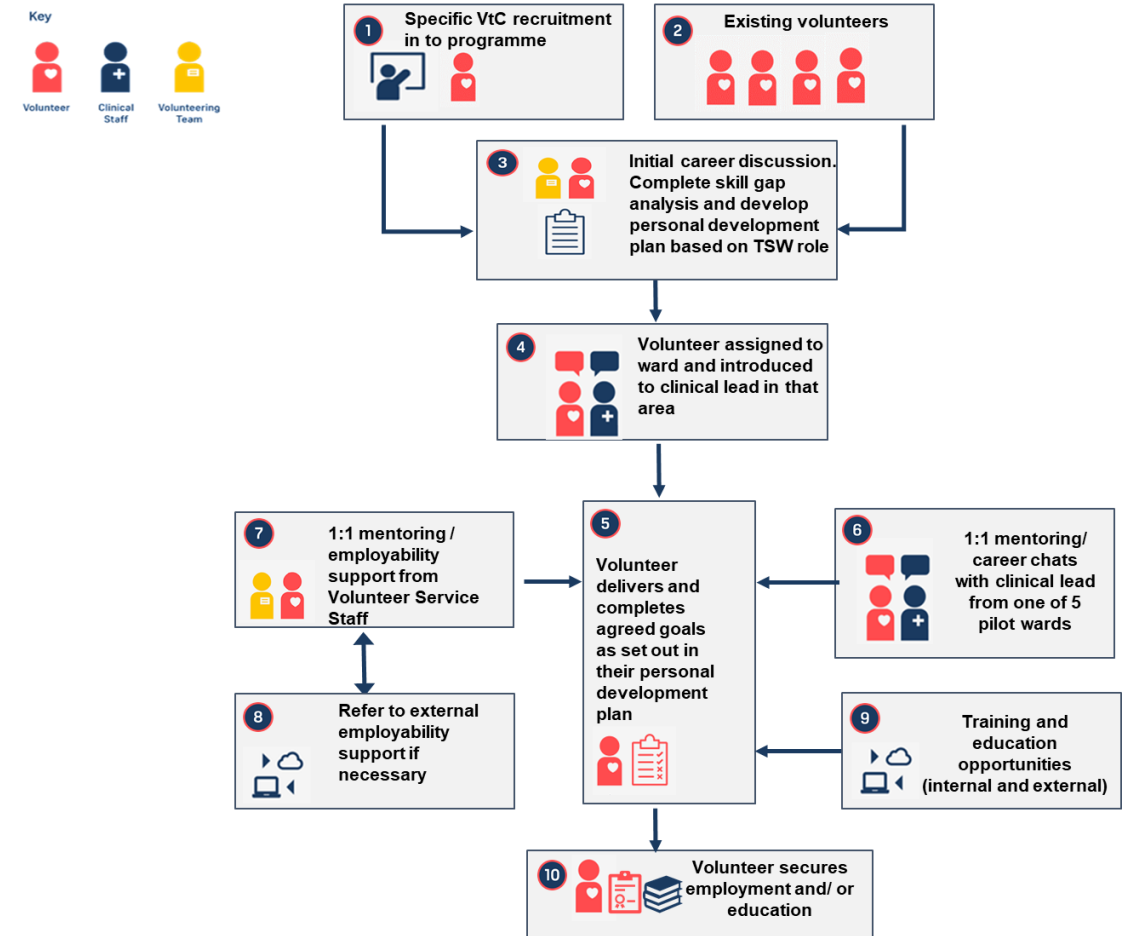
# Contents

VtC Career Pathway	3
Programme overview	4
Programme Objectives	5
Helpforce's evaluation approach	6
Impact	8
Insights	10
Conclusion and recommendations	17
Acknowledgements	18



# Our VtC Career Pathway

- 1. Specific VtC recruitment in to programme:** Volunteer service opens up VtC specific recruitment process. Offering specific awareness sessions to outside agencies including DWP/Jobcentres/Charities and other volunteering organisations.
- 2. Existing Volunteers:** Promote this opportunity to new entrants at interview and inductions.
- 3. Initial career discussion.** Complete skill gap analysis and develop personal development plan based on TSW role: With those identified candidates, discussion to be held about their career ambitions.
- 4. Volunteer assigned to ward and introduced to clinical lead in that area:** Volunteer is placed in one of the 5 pilot wards, introduced to clinical lead in that area who will provide support to the volunteer.
- 5. Volunteer delivers and completes agreed goals as set out in their personal development plan:** Volunteer will agree goals as set out in the personal development plan. Whilst supporting the local ward area opportunities will be identified to develop skills in line with those gaps identified in the PDP.
- 6. 1:1 mentoring/ career chats with clinical lead from one of 5 pilot wards:** The clinical lead will support the volunteer to achieve their individual goals as set out in their personal development plan.
- 7. 1:1 mentoring / employability support from Volunteer Service Staff:** Volunteer services team will review PDP in collaboration with clinical lead. They will provide support with employment skills.
- 8. Refer to external employability support if necessary:** Referrals to external agencies for employability support will be made if additional support is required.
- 9. Training and education opportunities (internal and external):** Volunteer staff will recommend and offer training to volunteers that will support them to achieve their goals as set out in their personal development plan.
- 10. Volunteer secures employment and/ or education:** Volunteer is equipped and ready to apply for employment, prepare for interview and secure employment or commence 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. 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.

## **North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust programme overview and objectives :**

Our Volunteer Service recruited specifically into the existing role of Clinical Volunteer. The aim for our clinical volunteers is to support patients in ward areas – details of specific activities listed below. Their role is varied and is responsive to the needs of the patients and ward area. Those volunteers identified as within the VtC Pathway, through the development of an individual Personal Development Plan, (PDP), received specific guidance in how their skills and qualities aligned to the Trust's role of Team Support Worker. During a period of volunteering, the volunteer (with the support of a clinical lead) developed skills within the gaps identified by the PDP. They will also undertake employability skills training, (with support from the Volunteer Services team) – this supported the movement of volunteers into an employment opportunity as they arose.

During the pilot period there were two recruitment windows July and Jan, our VtC pathway aligned to these recruitment opportunities. Recruitment onto the VtC was Nov and June. This allowed time for new recruits to develop into their role as a volunteer whilst developing their personal development plans.

**Activities included:** To read quietly to patients if requested, to escort/walk with patients who are wandersome, to help to therapeutically distract patients, talking and listening to patients, part of the role is to encourage patients to be aware of their nutritional and hydration needs, support in the completion of menus, preparing patients for their meals and assisting with serving meals, offering drinks to patients (checking first if they are allowed), ensuring patients' wellbeing and comfort whilst they are waiting for their food and whilst they are eating.

# Our VtC programme objectives

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

- Recruit 20 volunteers onto the VtC pathway
- Complete 20 personal development plans
- 8 volunteers to be successful in gaining employment as a TSW
- 4 volunteers will either gain other employment or commence further education
- Volunteer confidence levels will increase over the duration of the pathway
- VtC will become embedded into the TSW recruitment process
- Attendance at the Trust's Professional Workforce Assurance Committee and the Strategic Workforce Action Group
- Discussions to expand this pathway into other services to have taken place

# 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 North Tees and Hartlepool 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:



# 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 3,066 patients and 630 staff within the 8-month initial delivery period. This support was delivered by 25 volunteers delivering 1,113 hours of volunteering support.

Staff and patient support tasks included:

**Activities included:** To read quietly to patients if requested, to escort/walk with patients who are wondrousome, to help to therapeutically distract patients, talking and listening to patients, part of the role is to encourage patients to be aware of their nutritional and hydration needs, support in the completion of menus, preparing patients for their meals and assisting with serving meals, offering drinks to patients, (checking first if they are allowed), ensuring patients' wellbeing and comfort whilst they are waiting for their food and whilst they are eating



# Evaluation findings: volunteers

19 volunteers completed the pathway out of 25 volunteers recruited.

Through the VtC programme and the career support provided, volunteers applied for jobs and attended interviews. These applications resulted in **14 volunteers securing employment in the NHS**, into roles such as Pharmacy Assistant, Healthcare Assistant, Team Support Worker and Admin. In addition, **1 volunteer has taken up employment in the care sector as a Care Assistant.**

The **remaining volunteer secured a place on a further education course** related to health and care – a Midwifery Degree.

14

volunteers have taken up employment in the NHS

1

volunteer has taken up employment in different sectors

1

volunteer secured further education or training related to health and care

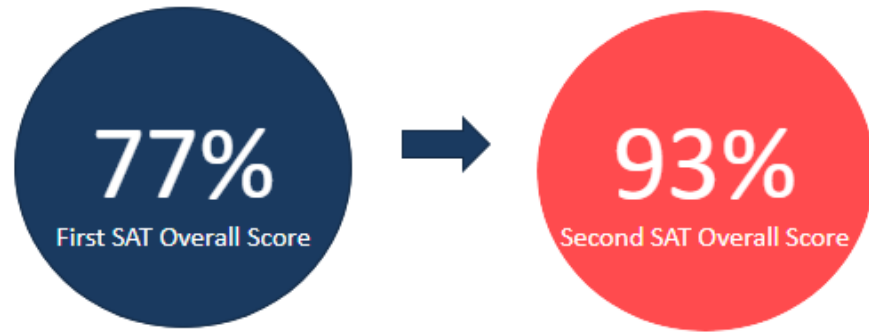
84%

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...**

*“Previously lacking in confidence due to a prolonged period of illness, this invaluable experience has been restorative in getting me confidently back into the workplace. Training and tasks undertaken have been offered at just the right pace, giving me a basic grounding, understanding and appreciation of working in a healthcare setting.”*

# Evaluation findings: organisation

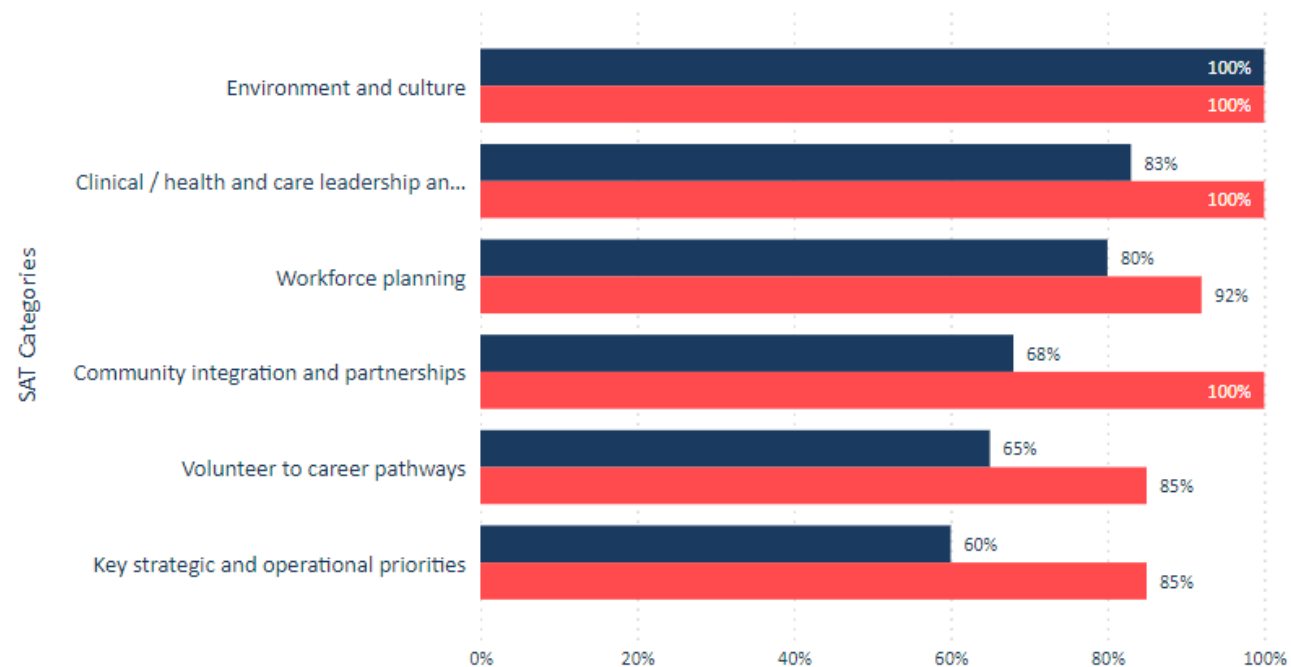


After completing the VtC programme, there was an **increase in the overall SAT score, which improved from 77% to 93%.**

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.**

First and Second Average SAT Scores Overview

Submission ● First ● Last



Involvement in this programme offered the team the opportunity to develop their working relationships with a greater number of key partners both internally and externally. These included a greater number of clinical leads/ward managers and workforce partners. It also included external partners e.g local VCSE and local authorities.

Involvement in the process of planning and developing the programme has enabled the team to have a greater understanding of key priorities and the need to have a flexible approach to the implementation of any programme.

# Evaluation findings – Volunteers

After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who **knew definitely what they wanted to do with their working lives decreased from 65% to 57%**. However, **86% 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 increased by 4%** by the end of the programme (9% to 13%). **91% of volunteers maintained or increased their confidence** in achieving these ambitions through the VtC programme.

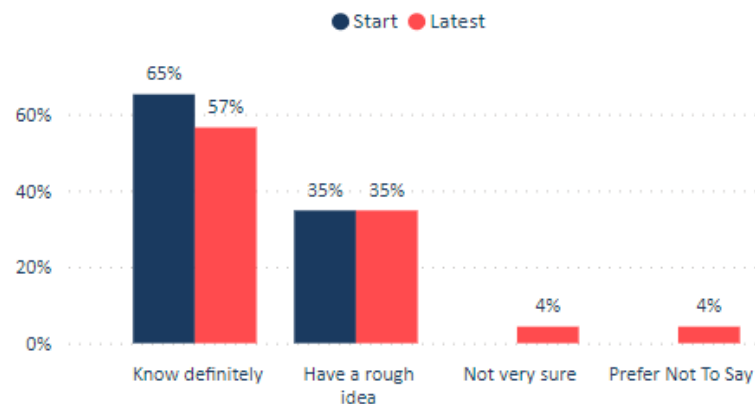
After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who were **very interested in an NHS or social care career decreased from 100% to 91%**. **91% of volunteers maintained their interest** in this career pathway as a result of participating in the VtC programme.

During the delivery, the trust changed its approach to recruiting Team Support Workers, with greater emphasis on the recruitment of HCA's. As a result it became more difficult for volunteers to apply for and achieve job outcomes. This may have impacted upon the ambitions for some.

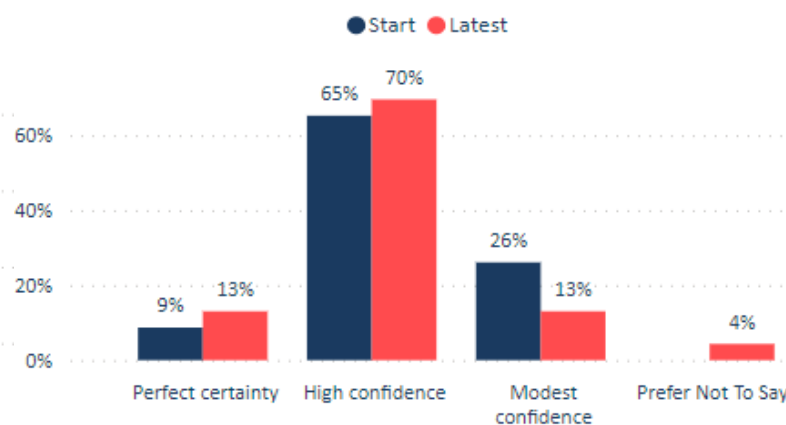
This change in approach did necessitate the need for flexibility in the programme to ensure achievement of targets were met.

During the programme, a few volunteers disengaged from the programme. This may have impacted upon the level of interest longer term. *N=23 pre- and post-surveys*

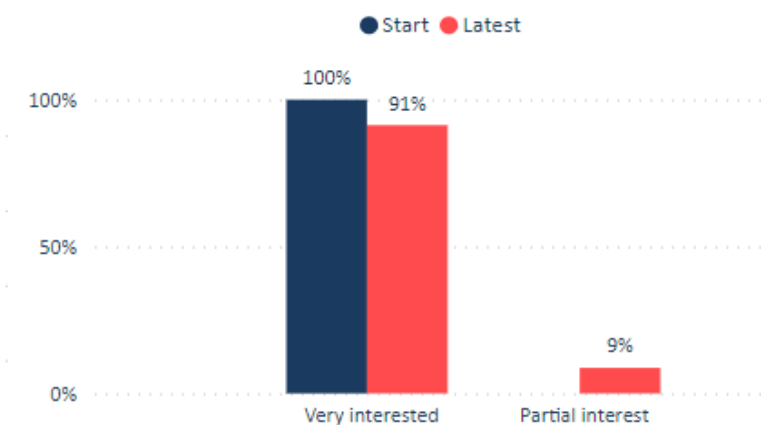
Ambitions for working life over the next 5 years



Confidence in career ambitions



Level of interest in NHS or social care career



# Evaluation findings – Volunteers

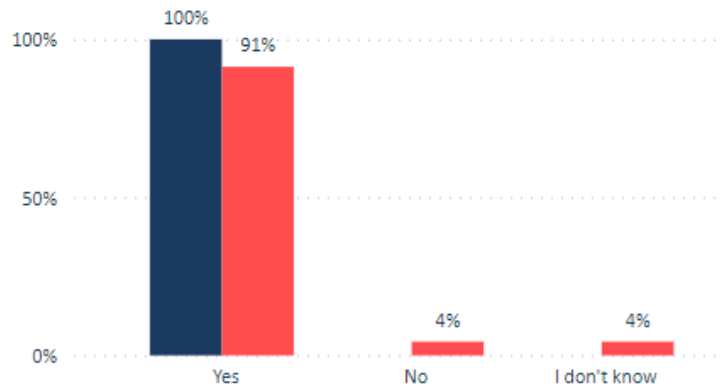
Volunteers were also asked about their hopes and if they wished their volunteering role would result in certain outcomes related to their careers, future education, and training. At the end of the programme:

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

*N= 23 pre- and post-surveys*

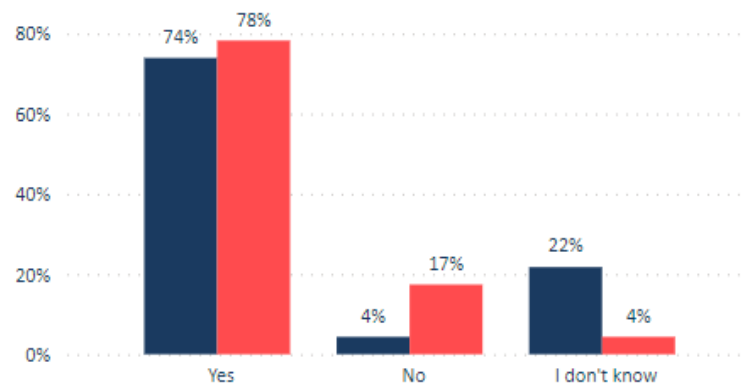
### Hopes to work in this organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



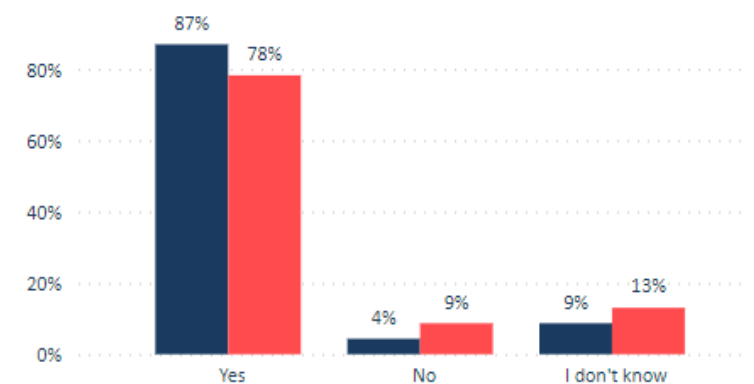
### Hopes to work in a similar organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



### Hopes to secure further education

Submission ● Start ● Latest



These figures may reflect that as volunteers develop their skill set, a small number perhaps realise that a career within this setting may not be for them. A valuable lesson to learn when developing careers. When considering this, however, the figures remain high in terms of engagement and hopes to work within the broader industry or move into further education.

# Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study



## Did you have any hesitation about joining the VtC programme?

*"I opted to take part in the scheme as I wanted to become a midwife. I thought volunteering would be a good way to get experience in a healthcare setting. I realised that I was interested in a career in healthcare pretty early on in life, it was really cemented when I was able to volunteer on the postnatal ward."*

## How has the VtC programme helped you?

*"It's given me the experience of how a ward is run and helped me to gain new skills. The volunteer office has helped me excel by helping with university interviews."*

## What skills have you learned through volunteering?

*"I've definitely gained a lot more confidence while volunteering and interpersonal skills by speaking to many different people, which will help massively in a career in midwifery."*

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

*"Next for me is going to Northumbria University in September to study midwifery. My aspirations are to become a qualified midwife."*

## Would you recommend VtC to other people thinking about volunteering?

*"My advice would be to go for it. If you are wanting a career in healthcare it will help you gain the skills needed and will also help to see if it's what you really want."*

**Emily Addison – VtC volunteer**

# Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study

## Did you have any hesitation about joining the VtC programme?

*"No, I wanted to gain experience and skill development in my career field and enhance my resume, and potentially increase my chances of securing future employment in my desired field. Growing up, I always had this passion for helping others and making a difference in their lives and I know that the healthcare sector provides numerous opportunities to do so making it an attractive career option for me. My previous experience in employment has been good because it has been in the health sector. I always find joy helping and taking care of people."*

## How has the VtC programme helped you?

*"The scheme played a crucial role in my employment journey by providing guidance, information and imparting valuable lessons that I will carry forward in my career. The scheme helped me secure a job in my desired field. With the guidance and support I received, I felt more confident during the interview process. Along the way, I learned the importance of guidance and mentorship. The scheme highlighted the impact of having a support system and it has improved my skills and also tailoring my approach to each job opportunity."*

## Have you found a job, as a result of volunteering?

*"Yes, I started working as a Team Support Worker in October 2023. I am now enrolled on the pathway to study my NVQ L3 to become a Healthcare Assistant."*

## What skills have you learned through volunteering?

*"Building relationships with patients, their families, and other healthcare professionals, fostering trust and creating a supportive environment."*

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

*"I would like to pursue further education in healthcare to become a patient advocate or a registered nurse."*

**Margaret Chigozie – VtC volunteer**



# Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study



## Did you have any hesitation about joining the VtC programme?

*"I participated in the Volunteer to career scheme because it is a strategic approach for me to understand the system, have my foot in the door and also thrive in my desired profession which centres around providing quality patient-care. It has given me the opportunity to explore this career pathway, gain massive experience, network with other healthcare professionals, develop my skills, familiarise with the Trust and its environment, provide personal fulfilment to me as I contribute positively to make a difference in the life of the vulnerable on the ward. I have been working as a Biomedical Scientist for the 11 years after school before coming to the UK. Here, I have also been working as a healthcare Assistant with different organisations which has motivated me to go into this career fully to build my skills in patient care."*

## How has the VtC programme helped you?

*"The scheme has enhanced my employment prospects, equipped me with valuable life and professional lessons that will remain beneficial throughout my career. It has been instrumental in my career journey because it has provided me with hands-on experience, beyond job-specific skills, this scheme has helped with my soft skill development such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, empathy, compassion, and commitment."*

## Have you found a job, as a result of volunteering?

*"I started as a Team Support Worker in October 2023. I am now enrolled on the pathway to study my NVQ L3 to become a Healthcare Assistant."*

## What skills have you learned through volunteering?

*"There are several of those skills as mentioned earlier but I want to highlight 2 major ones that stand out for me: (1) Initiative skill: Being able to spot tasks that need doing without always being directed. (2) Patient-Care Skill: Volunteering has helped to provide a foundational understanding of patient needs and comfort measures and has developed in me the ability to assist with basic care tasks such as feeding, assisting with mobility, or providing companionship which has really made a difference in the life of people every single time."*

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

*"As a Biomedical Scientist, I have numerous career aspirations which includes: Becoming a Specialised Biomedical Scientist, Research Scientist, Laboratory Manager, Quality Assurance/Control Specialist, Senior/lead Biomedical scientist and finally Consultant Biomedical Scientist."*

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

*"I am aware that moving from a volunteer position to a paid one as a Team Support Worker in the NHS comes with new responsibilities and higher standards, but I am confident that I can manage these challenges by drawing on the knowledge and experience I obtained as a volunteer. Eager to accept the heavy load of obligations and expectations that comes with your promotion."*

Rhema Ogechi Godwin – 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.

## Staff perceptions on the VtC volunteers

Submission ● Pre ● Post



N= 22 pre- and 16 post-surveys

The VtC programme has been key in enabling the Volunteer Services to develop closer working relations with more areas/wards.

We have demonstrated the value that volunteers offer to staff through the support of their patients. A greater number of staff understand and appreciate that having volunteers within their area allows them to have more time to deliver good care. Our staff scores reflect this across the board.

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

*“Volunteers are an integral part of our team in clinic. They assist in making the patient experience coming to the clinic much more efficient.”*

**Staff member at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT**



# Conclusions and recommendations

## Conclusions:

- The implementation of the VtC programme in North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust has been successful in organisational improvement related to volunteering - in volunteers securing employment and further education, and improving staff perceptions of the impact volunteers can have (despite already positive perceptions at the outset).
- While some small decreases were seen in the proportion of volunteers knowing what they definitely want to do in their working life over the next five years and being very interested in a health and care career, 91% had hopes to work in this organisation at the end of 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.
- The programme has demonstrated the value of working with clinical leads at a strategic level to enable alternative pathways to be planned and delivered when necessary.

## Recommendations:

- Resource to be secured to ensure further development and scaling of the programme to support workforce development through volunteering.
- Discussions to take place with other areas of the workforce to explore the expansion of volunteering and this programme.
- Discussions to take place with the Workforce Department to promote and develop new volunteering opportunities leading to expansion of the programme and the service delivered by the Volunteer Services. To include administrative functions, estates teams.

# 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.

Others to thank include:

- Ruth Dalton, Group Director of Communications
- Emma Roberts, Associate Director of Professional Nursing and Workforce
- Marie Lawson, Lizzie Meldrum, Julie Savage, Jess Trewren, Emma Lambert – Ward Managers in the pilot areas
- Donna Martin, Nichola Brown, Beth Melling, Victoria Heatley, Julie Banthorpe – Clinical Leads in pilot areas

All findings, conclusions and recommendations are from the Volunteer Services Team at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT.

## 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](http://www.helpforce.community).

# Thank you



in partnership with  
**helpforce**

