

Volunteer to Career Programme

Findings report

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

June – 2024

funded by NHS England



in partnership with
helpforce

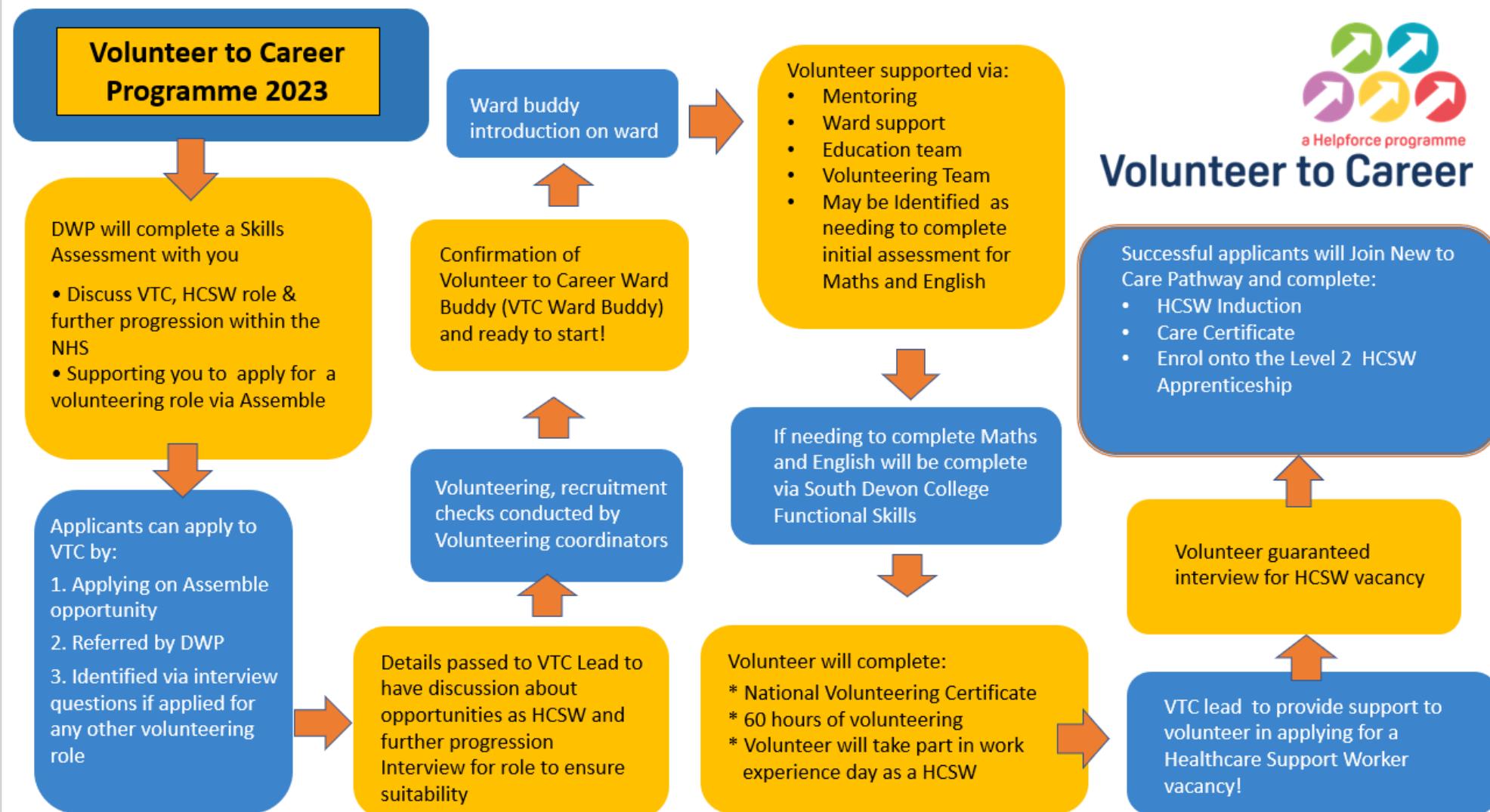
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Our VtC career pathway

Volunteer induction and resource pack	Provides an initial welcome to the organisation and an introduction to career pathways available to them and an overview of the VtC programme and expectations of being part of a VtC pathway. It's an opportunity for the volunteers to meet their peers, hear from clinicians and ask questions.
Initial career discussion, identify career goals	The career conversation is important for the clinical lead to have a conversation early on with the volunteer about their career ambitions etc. Working with the clinical lead, the volunteer will identify their career goals and agree the steps needed within the programme to achieve them. This meeting will help ensure the clinical lead knows how best to support the individual and can consider how the programme will best support them.
Volunteer Impactful Roles	The volunteer role is mapped to the local recruitment needs (specific skills, experience and exposure), HR and clinicians are collaborated with throughout the role design process to ensure that the role is delivered well and will provide the skills needed to enable the volunteer to progress through the pathway.
1:1 Mentoring, career chats with clinical lead	This is an opportunity for volunteers to have a mix of informal and more structured career-based conversations with relevant identified mentors and the VtC Clinical Lead.
Employability Support	Provision of employment skills such as interview techniques, CV writing, will be provided to all volunteers through HR and/ or local community providers.
Securing Employment / Education	As an organisation we will align volunteer roles to: - identified employment opportunities - to education/ vocational courses eligibility criteria Senior leaders within the organisation will recruit and champion the relevant pathway(s).



- **Steering group members**
- Clinical Lead
- Volunteering Lead
- Interim Head of Nursing Workforce
- Essential Training Support Lead
- Education Facilitator (Clinical)
- Community Wealth Building Manager
- Apprenticeship Lead
- Nursing Lead
- Administration Assistant
- Job Centre
- Eat that Frog (local NEET organisation)

A steering group was formed with internal and external stakeholders to help identify the workforce gap in HCSW jobs and to raise the profile of the VtC programme with staff and potential candidates.

Programme overview and objectives



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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.

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust's programme overview and objectives :

- The trust encountered difficulties in filling Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) positions, aggravated by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and competition from neighbouring organizations. As a result, they recognized the need to diversify their recruitment strategies beyond relying solely on NHS Jobs.
- Additionally, the ongoing recruitment process placed a substantial administrative burden on the organization due to constant interviewing and onboarding. To address this, the trust opted for a more streamlined approach by simultaneously recruiting larger cohorts of HCSWs, thus easing the workload on staff.
- Retention posed an additional issue, with new hires departing the organization within a brief time, often after only a few weeks or months in their roles. This trend stemmed mainly from some applicants feeling inadequately informed about the responsibilities of an HCSW role and grappling with certain challenges within the position.
- The VTC role- In agreement with stakeholder and the steering group decided to focus on the workforce gap for HCSW within the fragility wards.
- Our VTC pathway is designed as a comprehensive 6-week program that primarily supports individuals in their progression towards the Healthcare Support Worker role within the Trust. During this period, participants will actively engage in ward support, assisting clinical staff, and gaining hands-on experience in healthcare settings.
- Volunteer recruitment focused on existing volunteers and to target those specifically in the local population classed as 'NEET' (not in employment, education or training)

Programme overview and objectives



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- The Volunteer to Career (VTC) pathway is expected to have several positive impacts on the current situation within the Trust:
- Addressing Workforce Demand: The healthcare industry often faces shortages in various roles, leading to increased workloads and stress on existing staff. By engaging volunteers through the VTC pathway, the program can help address immediate workforce demands and alleviate the burden on clinical staff.
- Improved Patient Care: With volunteers providing valuable assistance on the wards, there will be an enhancement in the quality of care delivered to patients. The additional support will enable clinical staff to focus more on specialized tasks, resulting in better patient outcomes and a more positive experience for those seeking healthcare services.
- Enhanced Patient Experience: Patients will benefit from the increased attention and care provided by volunteers, leading to a more personalized and compassionate healthcare experience. This can contribute to higher patient satisfaction and a better overall perception of the healthcare system.
- Staff Retention and Satisfaction: The VTC pathway offers an opportunity for individuals to explore various roles within the clinical environment. By allowing potential candidates to observe and experience different positions, they can make informed decisions about their future careers. This informed choice is likely to improve staff retention rates as employees are more likely to pursue roles that align with their interests and abilities.
- Fostering Career Development: The program supports individuals aspiring to build a career within the Trust by exposing them to different aspects of the healthcare system. This exposure can lead to skill development, increased confidence, and a sense of purpose in their career paths.
- Positive Impact on Healthcare System: As the VTC pathway contributes to an improved work environment, enhanced patient care, and better staff retention, the overall healthcare system is likely to benefit. A more satisfied and motivated workforce can lead to increased productivity and efficiency in healthcare delivery.

It is evident that the demand for healthcare services continues to be high. To ensure we can maintain the quality of care and improve patient experience, a volunteer will enable:

- Clinical Staff Release: Volunteers in the Ward buddy roles can provide valuable support to clinical staff, allowing them some relief and flexibility in their daily tasks. This will enable our dedicated healthcare professionals to focus on specialized care, enhancing overall efficiency.
- Enhanced Patient Care: With the assistance of volunteers, we can ensure that patients receive the attention and care they need. Volunteers can provide companionship, assist with non-medical tasks, and contribute to an overall improved patient experience.

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 outcomes the evaluation aimed to measure included...

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?



Note: The analysis in this report is provided by the Helpforce Insight and Impact team, and the contextual information has been provided by Torbay and South Devon 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:

4

volunteer pre-surveys
were submitted

4

volunteer post-surveys
were submitted

18

staff pre-surveys were
submitted

18

staff post-surveys were
submitted

Volunteering activity



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

7

volunteers were recruited

1,500

patients were supported by
VtC volunteers

500

staff were supported
by VtC volunteers

VtC volunteers supported approximately 1,500 patients and 500 staff within the 12-month initial delivery period. This support was delivered by 7 volunteers undertaking their Ward Buddy role, delivering 497 hours of volunteering support.

Volunteer tasks:

Encouraging good hydration and nutrition

Care must be taken not to give food and drink to patients without direction from a nurse to ensure patients who are on restricted intakes or have individual requirements, are not compromised

- Helping patients to choose meals and fill out order cards
- Offering support to serve meals, refreshments and snacks under guidance by trained staff following an appropriate training
- Prompting patients to eat and drink, helping to ensure food is cut up, opened and accessible as required
- Keep patient and staff water jugs filled and provide tea and coffee

Befriending / patient support

- Offering support to patients – talking to, and interacting with patients to promote their wellbeing, recovery, and comfort on the ward
- Supporting virtual visiting and helping patients to remain in contact with their family and friends using technology or relaying messages where appropriate
- Reading to patients or supporting them with individual activities, where appropriate
- Facilitate and support patient engagement with activities including music, arts and crafts, bingo etc.
- Ensuring patients have the essential items they need e.g. personal hygiene products, extra bedding

Cleaning and restocking of bed areas

- Clearing patient area after a patient leaves, wiping down trollies, tables, chairs in accordance with local policies and procedures
- Checking stocks of linen, calling linen room to replenish as necessary
- Helping restock PPE, equipment

Supporting patient discharge from ward

- Assist patients / visitors with completing the Friends and Family Test (FFT) questionnaires prior to discharge

Other tasks may include:

- Errands to pharmacy and Pathology, Further tasks and activities as identified by Ward Matron and staff team

Evaluation findings: volunteers

At the time of evaluation, 3 volunteers had completed the VtC career pathway. Through the pathway and career support provided, volunteers applied for jobs and attended interviews. These applications resulted in 2 of the 3 **volunteers securing employment** in a healthcare support worker role.

2

volunteer has taken up
employment in the NHS

67%

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

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

"I enjoy my role and the courses I have taken."

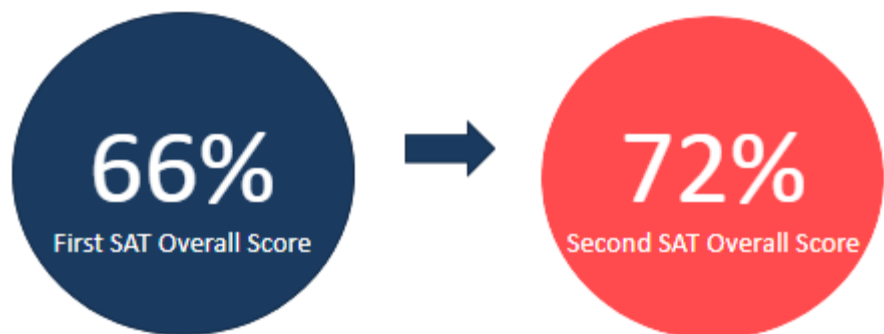
"The amount of support I've been given over the past 2 years has been fantastic."

Volunteers also provided some **additional feedback** around potential improvements to the programme. These focused around concerns that the programme is now ended, and expectations around achieving paid work...

"Took far too long to get started and have just been told that the VTC scheme has ended."

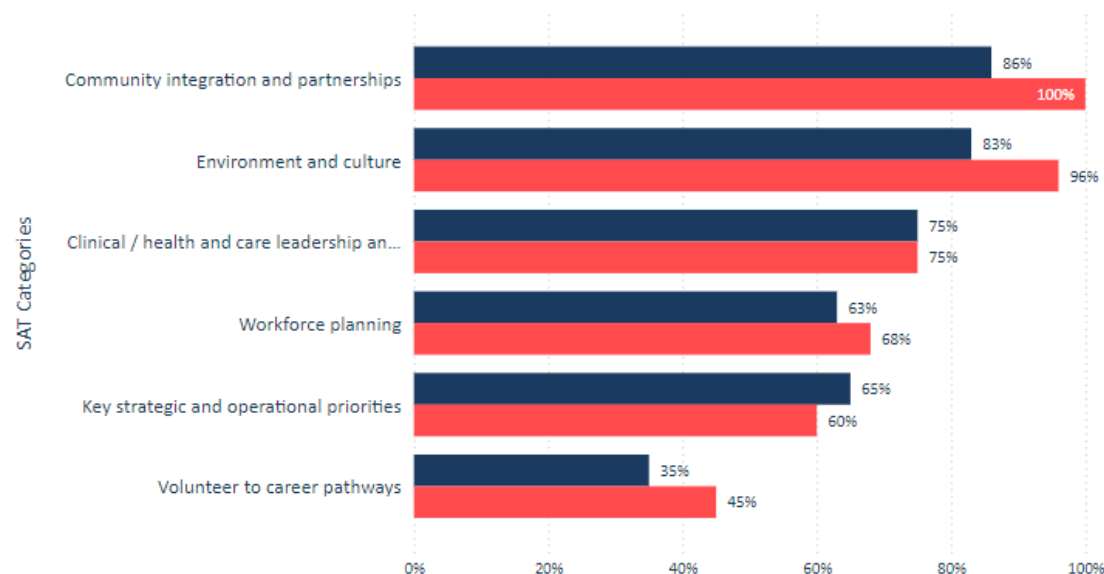
"I have volunteered in some capacity since 2018 with the promise of paid work at the end and nothing has been offered."

Evaluation findings: organisation



First and Second Average SAT Scores Overview

Submission ● First ● Last



After completing the VtC programme, there was an **increase in the overall SAT score, which improved from 66% to 72%.**

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

Overall, a positive increase in the SAT score. There was an opportunity to work more collaboratively with our community and voluntary partners. Increasing our reach and engaging in meetings and their planned events.

Generally, the Trust is very supportive of volunteering and the VtC programme underpinned the value and impact volunteers are having in the workplace.

Volunteering is included/integrated within our workforce and business plan. Currently we provide minimal KPI's so there is an opportunity to reach out to more departments to showcase the value of the VtC programme via our internal communications.

Evaluation findings – Volunteers

After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who **knew definitely what they wanted to do with their working lives remained the same at 50%**. Additionally, **50% of volunteers maintained or increased their certainty** in their ambitions through the VtC programme.

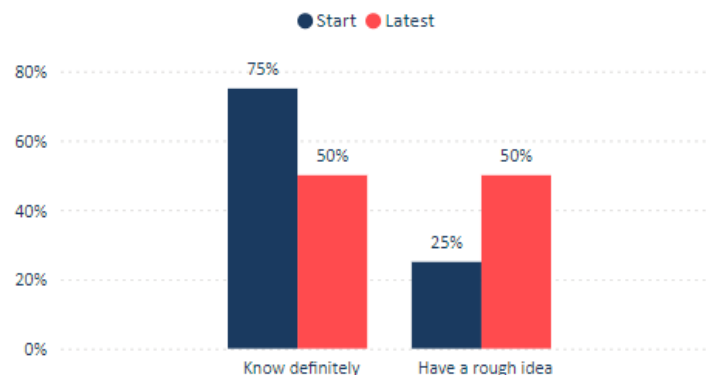
The proportion of volunteers who had **perfect certainty in their career ambitions decreased by 25%** by the end of the programme (25% to 0%). In addition, 25% of volunteers increased their confidence in achieving these ambitions through the VtC programme.

After the VtC programme, the proportion of volunteers who were **very interested in an NHS or social care career decreased from 100% to 75%**. **75% of volunteers maintained their interest** in this career pathway as a result of participating in the VtC programme.

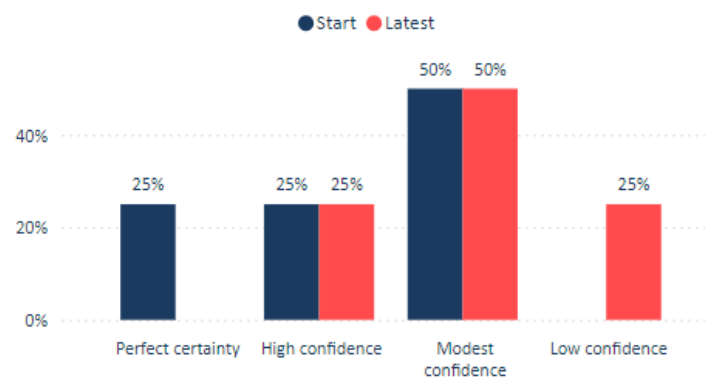
This cohort of volunteers were exposed to a higher level of tasks and observations which could result in a change in ambitions. The overview and objectives highlighted on slide 5 raises the low retention levels for HCSW.

N= 4 pre- and post-surveys

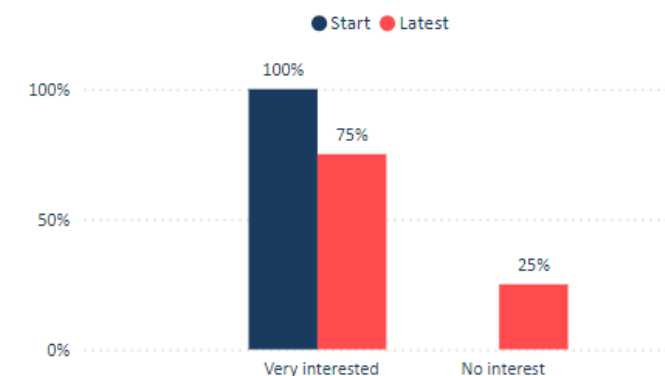
Ambitions for working life over the next 5 years



Confidence in career ambitions



Level of interest in NHS or social care career



Evaluation findings – Volunteers

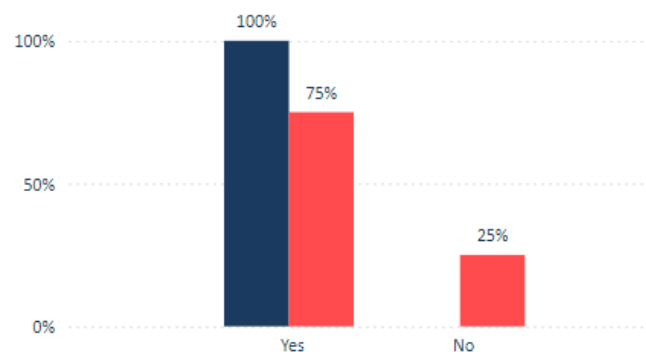
Volunteers were also asked about their hopes and if they wished their volunteering role would result in certain outcomes related to their careers, future education, and training:

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

N= 4 pre- and post-surveys

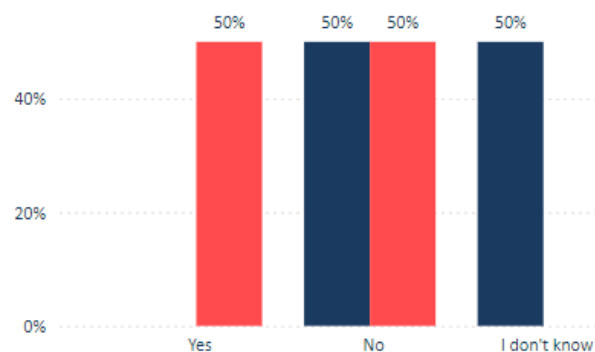
Hopes to work in this organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



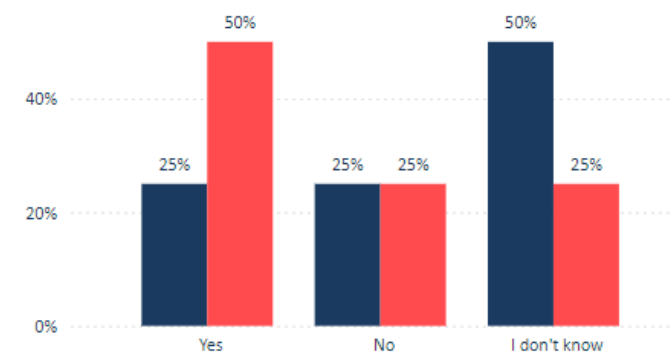
Hopes to work in a similar organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Hopes to secure further education

Submission ● Start ● Latest



Here there are a number of factors to consider when reviewing the evaluations the ward environment, supervision, support and expectation of the volunteers. Would a care home or private care service support these ideas and would the shifts be less intrusive and come with a higher salary?

Evaluation findings – Volunteer case study

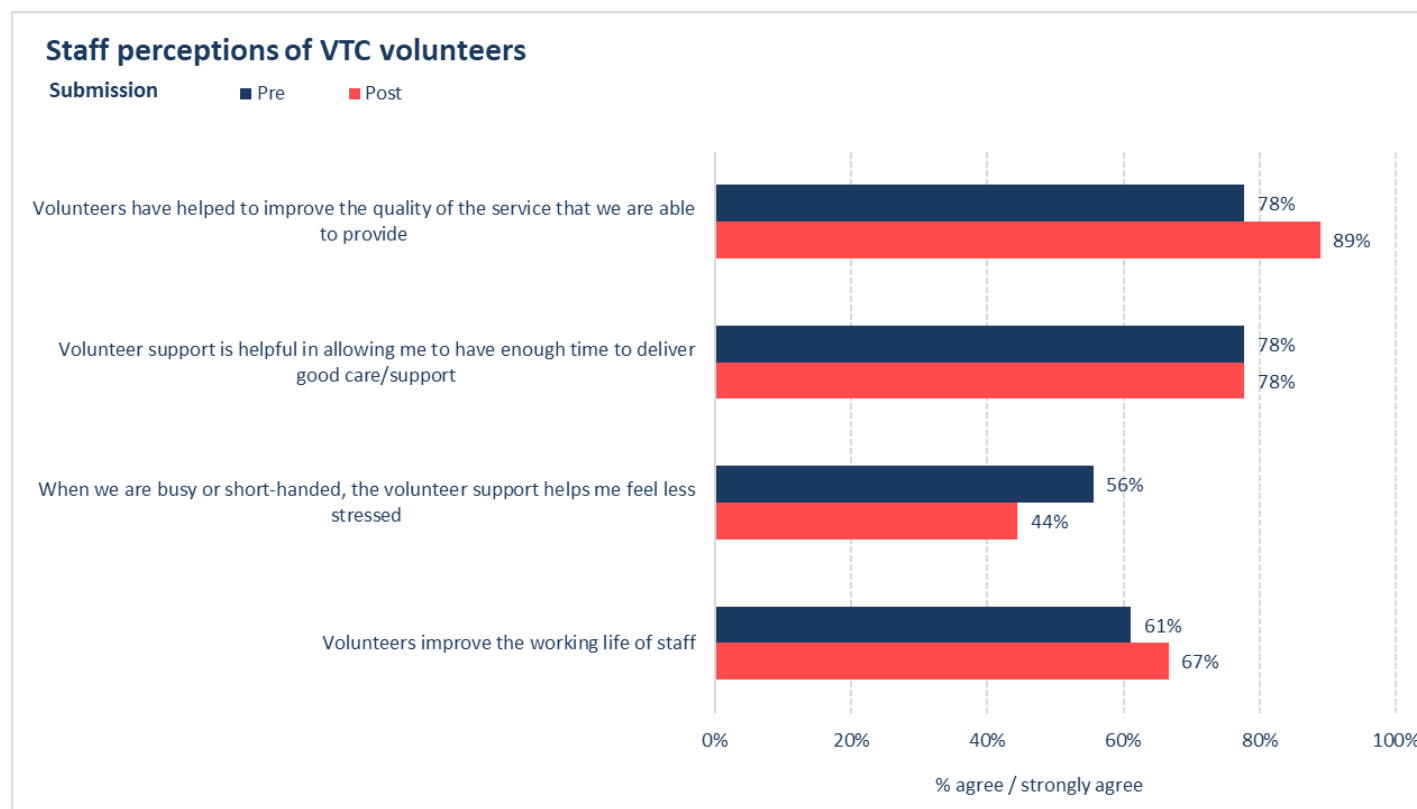


“The programme went really well, and I’ve been offered a role of a Health Care Worker! I’m thrilled!”

Successful volunteer
Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

Evaluation findings: staff

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



n= 18 pre-surveys, 18 post-surveys

The volunteers that really engaged with the programme have clearly changed staff perceptions demonstrating a willingness to learn, engaging with patients and staff and showing work commitment.

A staff member reflected upon the difference VtC

volunteers had made to patients and staff... We have had several volunteers on my ward over the years. One in particular stands out for dedicating over 2 years volunteering, spending quality time chatting with our patients. His time was an invaluable service, that sadly our own staff would like to do, but don't have the time due to ward pressures. He played games, helped them with colouring in pictures. Played card games and generally it was lovely to see how much time and effort he put in. He now stands proudly as part of our team working alongside us all. After suffering a brain injury preventing him from continuing with his aircraft engineering role. His mum had worked on our ward as a staff nurse many years ago and now he is continuing in her footsteps. He now works with us as a HCA after successfully getting a job with us.

Evaluation findings: staff case study

When reflecting on their experience of working alongside a VtC volunteer, and subsequently recruiting them, a Ward Manager at the Trust explained...

"His hard work and dedication to the volunteering role absolutely needs celebrating. He did amazingly well. Interviewed brilliantly and we were very excited to be able to offer him the job!! We are looking forward to having him in the ward in a new capacity".

Ward Manager – Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust



Conclusions:

- The implementation of the VtC programme in Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust has been successful in organisational improvement related to volunteering and improving staff perceptions of the impact that volunteers can have.
- Some decreases observed in volunteers' hopes and interest in a health and care career, however, it is important to recognise that these findings were based on a very small sample size.
- 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 two volunteers securing relevant paid employment in the NHS.
- The surveys have provided us with an opportunity to improve the offer and build on the successes.

Recommendations:

The VtC programme has provided us with an opportunity to explore new career pathways and to grow our future workforce.

Pausing this now:

- Gives us time to put together a business case to secure future funding
- Helps us to identify other workforce shortfall areas
- Enables us to put the foundations in place before the programme commences
- Means we can recruit, induct and train a dedicated full-time member of staff assigned to VtC
- Will help us to target the disadvantaged, unemployed and ethnic minorities

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.

- **Sponsors:** Deborah Kelly (Chief Nurse) Alice Power (Head of Resourcing) , Laura Fuller (Clinical Education Lead)
- **Steering group members:** Tracy Beck (Interim Head of Nursing Workforce), Paul Norrish (Community Wealth Building Manager), Suzanne Hubbard (Apprenticeship Lead), Deborah Alford (Nursing Lead), Rachel Nolan (Education Facilitator Clinical),
- **Clinical personnel:** Naomi Willicott (Ward Manager), Natalie Herring (Systems Director), Michelle Townsend (Ward Manager), Ashleigh Bartlett (Ward Manager)
- All findings, conclusions and recommendations are from the Volunteering team at Torbay and South Devon 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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a Helpforce programme

Volunteer to Career

Analysis completed by Helpforce, 2023.