



Volunteer to Career

# Volunteer to Career Programme<sup>©</sup>

## Cohort 1, 2 & 3

January 2024

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# Summary of findings

15%

improvement in overall  
SAT score for  
volunteering services

25%

improvement in **volunteer**  
to **career pathways SAT**  
score

62%

of volunteers secured employment  
or further education / training  
(volunteers who completed the VtC  
pathway)

92%

of volunteers maintained or  
increased their interest in  
an NHS or social care career

88%

of staff believe that  
**volunteers help to**  
improve the quality of  
service

83%

of staff shared that  
**volunteers improve their**  
working lives

83%

of staff believe **volunteer**  
**support is helpful** allowing  
them to have enough time  
to deliver good care/support

# Introduction

- The Volunteer to Career (VtC) programme is designed to support volunteers to pursue a career in health and care. **Funded by Burdett Trust for Nursing and NHS England**, Helpforce has worked alongside **22 organisations** to set up and implement volunteering projects which incorporate career pathways for volunteers.
- These organisations were divided into **three cohorts**, including different types of organisations such as acute, community, ICB and hospice.
- The first cohort involved five organisations and ran from June 2021 to September 2022. The second cohort included 10 organisations and was delivered between April 2022 and March 2023. The third cohort, with seven organisations, ran from October 2022 to September 2023.
- 22 VtC projects have been completed and evaluated, of which **16 have since sustained**. We helped **12 of these organisations raise a total of £328k in the last 6 months** to continue their operations and scale up.

- The VtC programme has been designed to support organisation improvement across three key strategic components identified as essential to achieving systemic change, such as Clinical / Health and Care Leadership, Environment & Culture and Volunteer to Career Pathways.
- The outcomes included in this evaluation are presented below.



# Evaluation to assess outcomes and impact



Volunteer to Career

## Data Collection Mechanisms

- A 'VtC Self Assessment Tool' (referred to as SAT) was completed by the project's clinical/health and care lead at the start and near the end of their project. The tool measures the organisation against a series of identified categories and questions associated with their volunteering strategy. As part of the SAT, volunteers and staff are invited to complete additional feedback surveys to provide insight into their perceptions of organisational change.
- **Volunteer feedback** was obtained regarding their level of interest in a health and care career, their experience in their volunteer role, and their thoughts on the VtC programme. The feedback was collected at the beginning of their volunteering and at a later period.
  - In Cohort 1, **61 volunteers** completed the volunteer tracker at the start of their role and the final tracker;
  - In Cohort 2 and 3, **139 volunteers** completed the online volunteer survey at the start of their role and at a later date.
- **Staff surveys** were completed at the start and near the end of the VtC project (referred to as pre- and post- surveys). Across the 22 organisations, **331 staff members** completed the pre survey and **324 staff** completed the post survey.

334

volunteers recruited to the pathway

200

volunteer pre & post surveys completed

331

staff pre-surveys completed

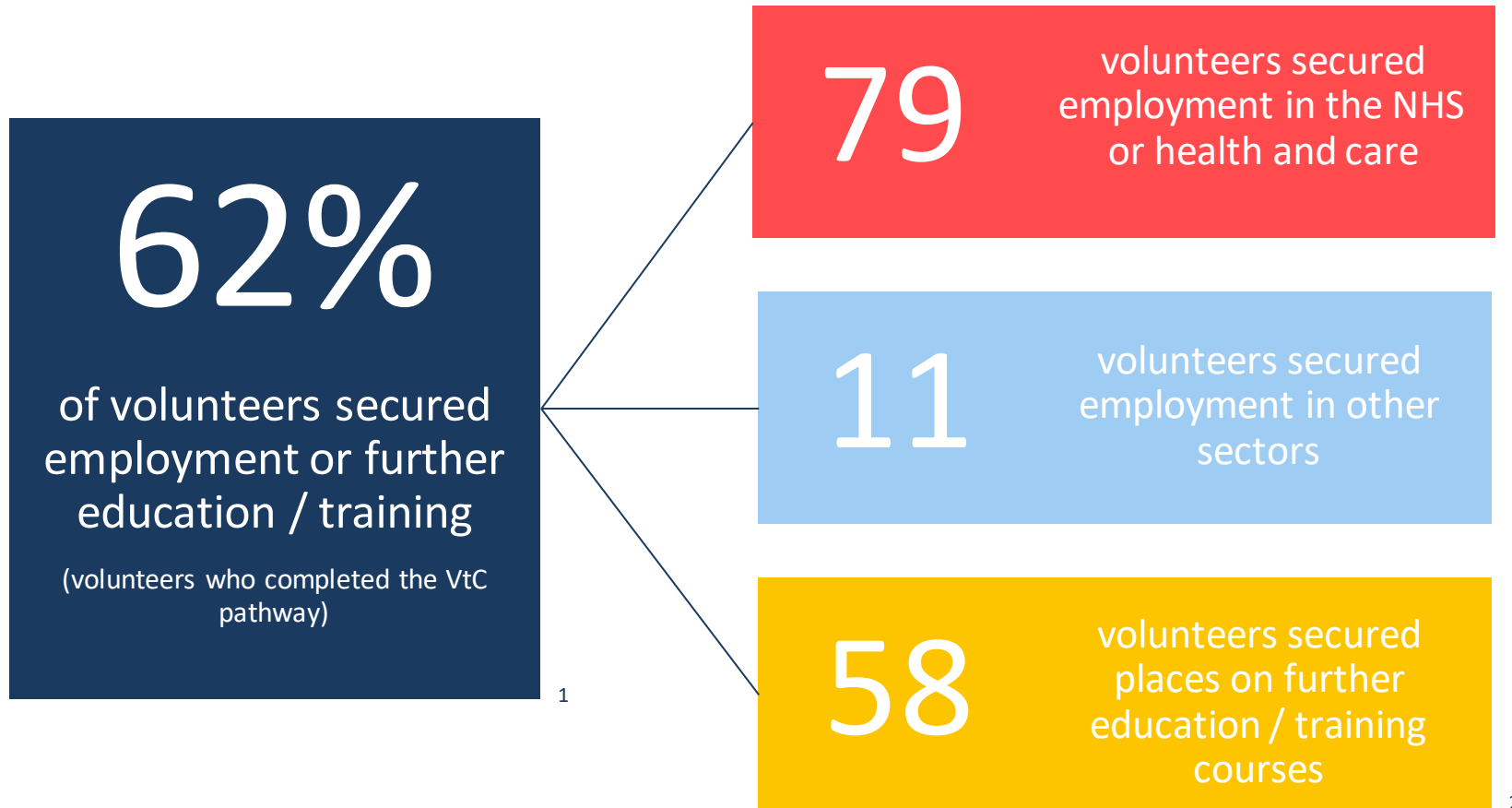
324

staff post-surveys completed

63,711

People supported by VtC volunteers

# Over the VtC programmes...



**Roles have included:**

- Wellbeing Assistant
- Mental Health Care Support Worker
- Assistant Psychologist
- Assistant Physiotherapist
- Therapeutic Activities Coordinator
- Healthcare Assistant Apprenticeship with training to Nursing Associate
- Healthcare Support Worker Apprenticeship
- Patient Access Administrator
- Patient Pathway Facilitator
- Digital Application Analyst
- Peer coach
- Lab technician

**Training / FE courses have included:**

- Psychotherapy Training
- Mental Health Nursing Degree
- BSc Biomedical Science
- Nursing Degree
- Paramedics Degree
- Dietetics Degree
- Cancer Medicine (MSc)
- Paediatric Nursing
- Orthoptics BMedSci
- Masters in Neuroscience

<sup>1</sup>N= 142 of 229 volunteers who have completed the VtC pathway.

<sup>2</sup>Individuals might have both secured employment and further education / training so the two are not mutually exclusive.

# Evaluation Findings - Organisation

*What is the impact of the Volunteer to Career programme on corporate behaviours towards volunteering?*



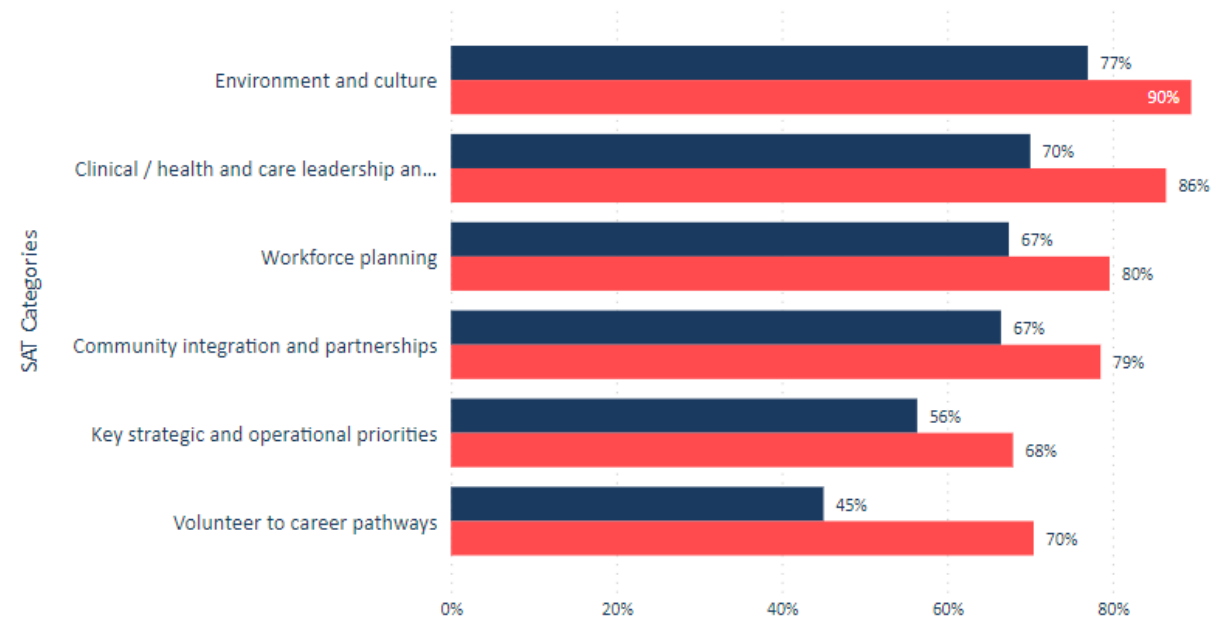
Volunteer to Career



After completing the VtC programme, the average overall self-assessment scores across the 22 organisations has **increased from 64% to 79%**. Similar to the positive change in the overall SAT score results, we have observed an **improvement** in the average scores for **all six elements of organisational improvement for volunteering**.

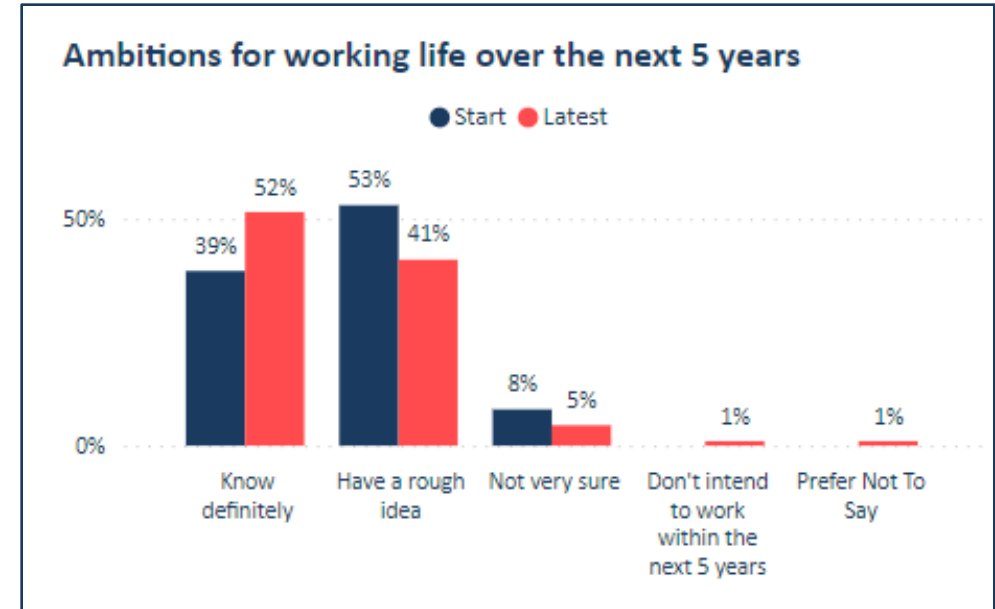
First and Second Average SAT Scores Overview

Submission ● First ● Last



# Evaluation Findings - Volunteers

- During their VtC journey, volunteers were asked to provide feedback on their career ambitions for working life over the next 5 years.
- After volunteering, a higher percentage of **volunteers** reported that they **know exactly what career they would like to pursue** (39% to 52%).<sup>3</sup>
- **88% of volunteers maintained or increased their ambitions** for their working life over the next 5 years.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> n = 200

<sup>4</sup> n = 195

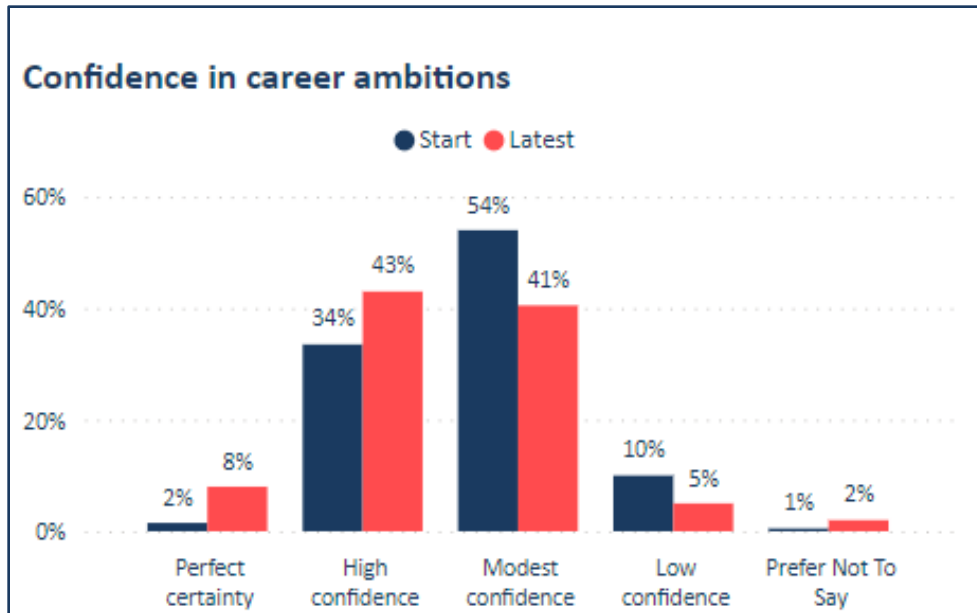


# Evaluation Findings - Volunteers



a Helpforce programme

Volunteer to Career



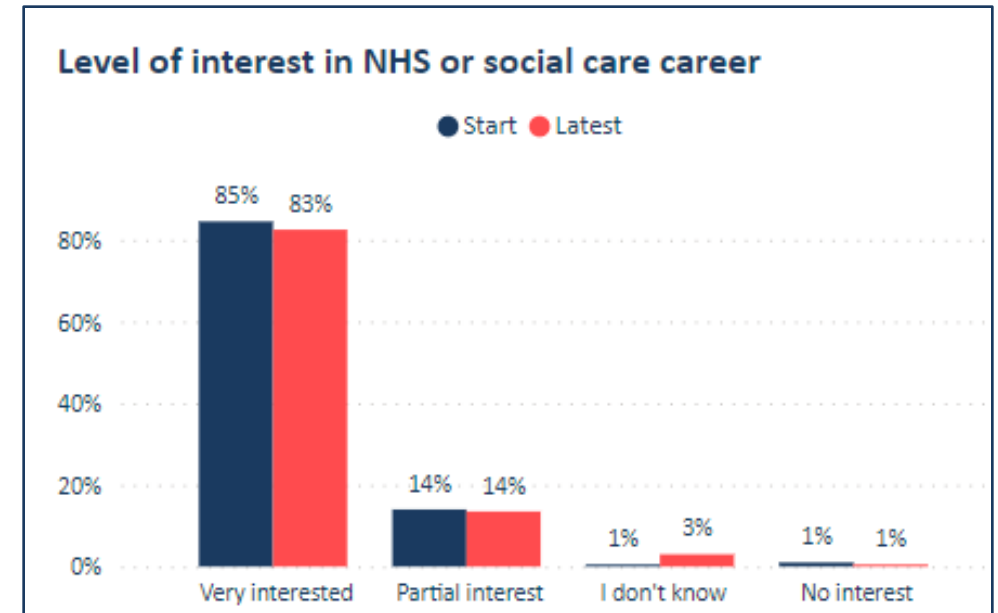
- Volunteers were also asked to rate their confidence in their career ambitions.
- After they had been in their volunteering role for some time, a larger percentage of **volunteers had a high degree of confidence (34% to 43%) and perfect certainty (2% to 8%) in their career ambitions.**<sup>5</sup>
- Through the VtC programme, **91% of volunteers maintained or increased their confidence** in their career ambitions.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>n = 200

<sup>6</sup>n = 192

# Evaluation Findings - Volunteers

- Additionally, volunteers were asked to report on their interest in a health and care career both as they started in role and after they had been in the role for some time.
- Volunteers maintained a strong interest in an NHS or social care career, with only a slight decrease in those very interested (85% to 83%), while the percentage of volunteers with partial interest remained constant at 14%.<sup>7</sup>
- **92% of volunteers maintained or increased their interest in an NHS or social care career.**<sup>8</sup>



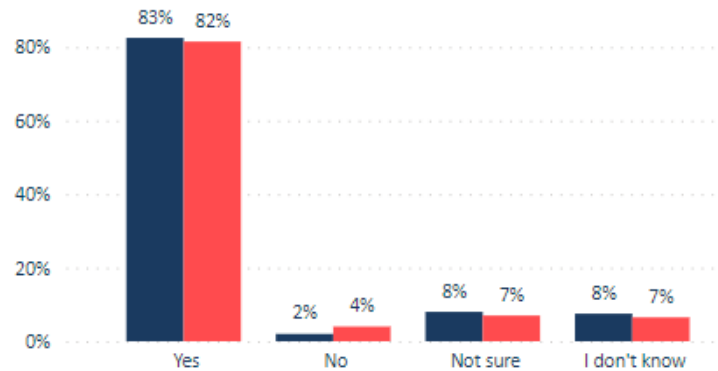
<sup>7</sup>n = 200  
<sup>8</sup>n = 192

# Evaluation Findings - Volunteers

- Volunteers were also asked if they hoped that their volunteering role would result in certain outcomes related to their careers and future education.
- Hopes for the volunteering role leading to employment or further education remained high throughout the programme.
- After being in the role, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of volunteers aiming for employment within the organisation they volunteer, hoping to work in a similar organisation and securing further education aligned with their career goals.

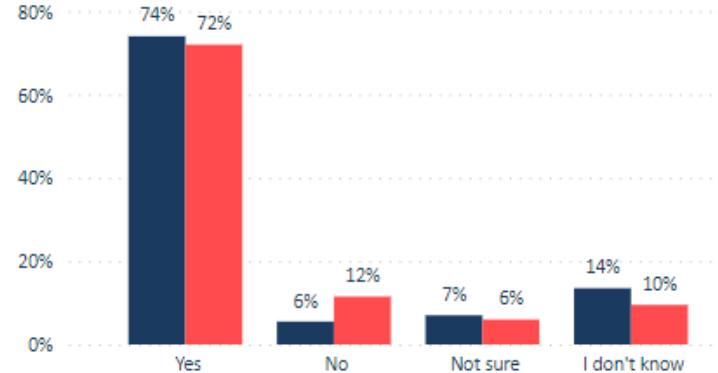
### Hopes to work in this organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



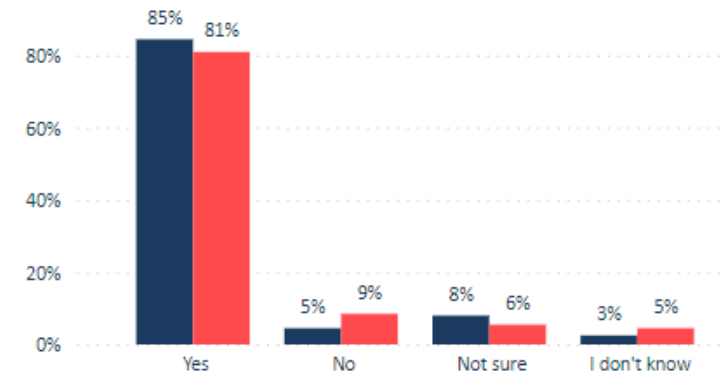
### Hopes to work in a similar organisation

Submission ● Start ● Latest



### Hopes to secure further education

Submission ● Start ● Latest



# Volunteer Feedback

*"When we moved into our new home, I was determined to become an active and valuable member of the local community. Since the memories of Covid and the NHS's feat were still fresh in my mind, I decided to start volunteering at the hospital. That's how I found the VtC program.*

*Ever since that moment, my life has been completely different. Back then I was uncertain about my future, but now I am confident in my chosen path. Perhaps I could express that I have discovered my way.*

*My journey as a volunteer at Welland Ward has been both rewarding and enlightening. It has allowed me to witness the incredible impact that compassionate and skilled healthcare workers can have on the lives of patients and their families. Throughout my experience as a volunteer, I have had the honor of supporting different aspects of patient care such as monitoring their health, maintaining records, assisting with ward activities, and advocating for patients. My time here has allowed me to develop clinical skills and technical knowledge. Additionally, I have vastly improved my communication skills (both written and verbal), problem-solving abilities, self-confidence, and much more.*

*I will try to find a job in the NHS and grow as a healthcare professional."*

Elena - VtC volunteer



*"Working with the patients and clinical staff has developed many of my personal and communication skills. I enjoy volunteering and being part of the Lymphoedema Team. This has confirmed my wish to pursue a future career in the NHS."*

Imogen - VtC volunteer



*"I have now been studying at University for the past month doing a degree in Midwifery Practice. I am loving it.*

*I would like to thank you for the opportunity I had on the Volunteer to Career programme as I think this strengthened my application for University. Not to mention the experience to work on the postnatal unit before deciding on this career path was a really good insight into this career.*

*I'm doing my midwifery placements with SaTH at the Princess Royal Hospital and have my first placement at the end of November."*

Charlotte - VtC volunteer

# Volunteer Case Study

## Michelle's Story

Michelle was a police officer for 20 years. Disillusioned with harmful politics within the service, she left in 2018, burnt out and close to taking her own life. Therapy and a support group for ex-police officers helped Michelle to recover. And then an advert for an End of Life companion volunteer set her life toward a whole new career.

*"I didn't expect to be treated so kindly, I didn't expect to be told I was fantastic..."*

*"I was with this lady at the Grange every day for a couple of hours for three weeks. Initially she didn't come through as end of life, she came to me through the Person Centred Team. She was born blind and only had a small amount of friends who came maybe once a week to visit her. It turned out she had cancer and it had gone everywhere in her body. She'd had therapy dogs throughout her life, so I arranged for some to come in and help keep her company. Within three weeks we became more than patient and companion; we became friends. It was a really humbling experience as I was her main support at the end."*

In November 2022, Michelle's line manager, Kathryn Thomas, told Michelle about the Volunteer to Career programme developed by Helpforce and funded by NHS England. Through her volunteer role, Michelle believes she saw what the NHS is all about and how completely it differed from her perception when she joined.

*"I thought it would be the same as the police. But it wasn't. I was treated with kindness, value, and care. And that was what made me think I could do this as a career."*

After Kathryn had told her about the programme, it only took three months before Michelle found a job with Aneurin Bevan University Board as a Mental Health Support Care Support Worker. Since starting the role in March 2023, Michelle has had nothing but positive things to say about the job and the people she works with. As she was already using skills she'd learnt in the End of Life Companion role, for Michelle, it was really just about transferring the same skills into the new job.

*"To be treated with value. That's what I felt as a volunteer, and that's what I continue to feel in my new role. We have domestic staff, healthcare support workers, junior nurses, doctors, consultants... nobody looks down on you or treats you differently to everyone else. There is no "them" and "us" culture. It's all just "us". Together."*

Michelle has found the experience so rewarding, that she keeps pinching herself every day she arrives for work, afraid that it might just be a dream. When we asked Michelle if she was going to continue volunteering as an End of Life Companion on top of her new job, she flashed that warm half smile again.

*"The thing is, we underestimate how much these patients help us all. How much they've really helped me. Having sat with the lady who was blind, I would walk out feeling blessed to have the gift of sight. This experience changed how I felt about the simple things in life. I love the End of Life Companion role. It is so rewarding!"*

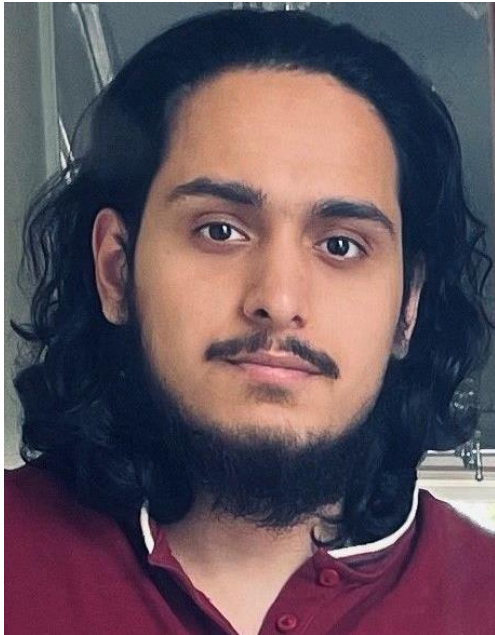
*"Volunteer to Career is such a valuable tool to progress into a new career path within the caring profession. There are so many different avenues and directions you can take, and I would encourage anyone interested, to volunteer with the NHS and see where it leads you."*



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<sup>9</sup>You can learn more about [Michelle's story here](#).





## Umair's Story

"I started volunteering at Moorfields in 2021 partly because I wanted to learn, but also because I can be shy and speaking to people can be difficult for me. At the start I was just guiding patients around the hospital and taking them to different departments, assisting people who couldn't see or had difficulty walking. It helped teach me how to approach and talk with people. It helped me learn how to start a conversation, which is good because I was struggling. My confidence to speak up has really improved.

I started accompanying doctors and nurses into surgeries and seeing theatre patients. My role was to hold the patient's hand and talk with them to help calm their nerves. It was a really great experience as I got to observe firsthand how the staff applied their skills. I watched how they communicated and made the patients comfortable, and how it all comes together. Eye surgery can be very frightening for a lot of people.

[Volunteer to Career] It made me humble. It showed me how important it is to respect everyone. To understand different people's health, their worries, and opinions. To understand their fears and try to make them feel comfortable. Almost like making someone feel like they're at home in the hospital. Patients could feel stressed and anxious, but the staff showed me to talk with them as well as watch how surgeons treated different eye conditions.

I hope people will remember me from my time volunteering so hopefully that will stand me in good stead! Right now, I want to be a surgeon because I saw first-hand how amazing it is to help people see again.

Volunteer to Career is a great way to expose people to different work environments in health and care. It lets you see different teams and departments and help you understand areas you would be interested in working in. And for me, it's helped me be more confident in my own decisions."

<sup>10</sup>You can learn more about [Umair's story here](#).

## Andy's Story

Andy Hay's mental health took a hit in 2019. Unable to enjoy his job, Andy decided to take a break and engage in talking therapy. This decision led to the Volunteer to Career programme. Andy's journey has been remarkable, and we recently caught up with him to learn more about his experience.

"I used to manage NHS laboratories and mortuaries looking after a lot of different personalities in pressurised environments. By August 2019 I wasn't enjoying work. It was really stressful, so I took early retirement and decided to focus on my mental health. Originally, I planned on travelling, but then Covid hit, and we all went into lockdown. I kept up with the therapy though and began thinking about what I could do next. So, I got very into learning about mental health and the ways it can affect us and got in touch with the Mental Health Foundation. That led me to Rania Adams, a volunteer manager with Central North West London NHS Trust and I started volunteering for the Check in and Chat service in February 2022."

"I joined Volunteer to Career around September - October 2022. At the beginning of October 2022, I applied for a job and two weeks later, I was talking to the service manager for the whole of palliative care in Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. He wanted me to join in a management role, but I said "No, I've done that, I want to do clinical!" Next week I had another phone call with a lady in the Palliative Care clinical team and started working as a care assistant as part of their bank staff in January 2023. I also convinced my new manager to let me carry on with the Check in and Chat with just one patient. It might not always work out, but we decided to give it a go and see.

The volunteer managers and clinical teams are amazing. I've had a lot of support and training from the clinical staff who were really welcoming and have helped me into my new role. Working with Check in and Chat made my whole experience so rewarding. They were so happy to have people helping out. They would send emails telling me how amazing I am and what a fantastic job I was doing. That meant a lot to me and helped rebuild my confidence.

"This whole experience from volunteering to joining the volunteer to career programme has taught me things I didn't know I could do. Active listening and trusting my own abilities have been the two major things I've learned.

"My experience has been great. It got me a job as a Care Assistant in the Palliative Care Team at Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, kept me moving forward and opened my eyes up to the possibilities in volunteering. I would like to say a big thank you to the volunteering service at CNWL London for giving me a chance and showing me what I'm capable of."



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<sup>11</sup>You can learn more about [Andy's story here](#).



## Rosie's Story

"My own lived experiences of mental health have led me to study Psychology with the aim of helping others in need. I later discovered volunteering opportunities at Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust. I ended up achieving so much more than I could've ever imagined thanks to Helpforce's Volunteer to Career programme. All throughout my time as a volunteer, career pathways have been an integral aspect of conversation, with catch-ups and monthly surveys volunteers can complete to indicate which pathways we are interested in.

I started my volunteering journey with the Shop Trolley role. Following this, I've also taken on Restraint Debrief and Befriending roles. All three roles have been fundamental in providing me with real-life hospital experience, in a team whereby I feel valued and respected. My roles have helped me learn some of the most important skills within mental health including compassion, empathy and active listening. All three roles have also enabled me in achieving my new paid role as a Peer Coach. This was one of the many roles my manager Joanne Scott had sent me over the past year and instantly, it felt like the perfect job for me. During the recruitment process, Joanne had given me 1-1 support as well as online interview preparation courses. This support, paired with all the skills I had already learned in my first year of volunteering truly gave me the confidence when applying for my new role. Applying for a role within mental health can be daunting. However, as I was applying within a Trust I already had so much volunteering experience in, I believed illustrated my dedication and passion for the roles I do.

Thanks to volunteering, I have worked with many amazing staff members, service-users and fellow volunteers. And thanks to the Volunteer to Career programme, I've been able to utilise all my transferable experience for the Peer Coach role, within a Trust I truly already felt a part of. Not only have I been able to begin my career with help from the Volunteer to Career programme, I've grown immensely as a person in my own recovery, applied my volunteering to my degree and I've met inspirational people with whom I always hope to remain in contact with.

To think, I started as a shop trolley volunteer and now I am a Peer Coach - thank you Helpforce and CANDI for this opportunity of a lifetime."



# Evaluation Findings - Staff Members



Volunteer to Career

*What is the impact of the Volunteer to Career programme on front line staff members' view of volunteer services?*

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

## Staff perceptions on the VtC volunteers

Submission ● Pre ● Post



13

<sup>13</sup>n=324 pre, n=331 post

# Staff member feedback



Volunteer to Career

“

*"Having volunteers working alongside staff has been a really positive and rewarding initiative for us as a team and a service. It feels like a real enhancement of our service and the staff have embraced it, and even though initially we do need to do additional work at inducting and supporting our volunteers into the roles they choose to help us with, the pay back is immense.*

*We have learnt a lot, most importantly that we needed to share and discuss with staff members so that they feel comfortable and confident with this new approach. We have met some great people who are so generous with their time and have a real commitment to helping both the NHS and our patient group and have great skills that we can utilize. They not only help and are an extra pair of hands but they also give us an extra pair of eyes and can see things that we can often overlook so their input into our service provision is really valuable.*

*We are still learning and adapting how we make this work but now we have started this venture I feel we would miss it greatly if volunteers weren't now a part of our service provision. I am now really excited to be part of working on the Volunteer to employment pathway the trust has embraced as we can see how enriching volunteers can be and how we can use this to support our vacancy shortage and staffing challenges."*

**Clinical Team Manager at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust**

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# helpforce

## Thank you

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