



**Somerset**

NHS Foundation Trust

# Volunteer to Career Project

## Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

Evaluation Findings - June 2023

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# Introduction

- The Volunteer to Career (VtC) programme is designed to support volunteers to pursue a career in health and care and Helpforce has worked alongside several NHS Trusts to set up and implement volunteering projects which incorporate career pathways for volunteers.

**The VtC programme has been designed to support organisation 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 & 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/ enable volunteers to use this as a route to a career in the NHS.
- The Somerset NHS Foundation Trust set up a Neighbourhood Responder volunteering role as part of the programme.

- 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



# Introduction

- Somerset NHS FT approach, with ICB backing, was to develop the VtC Programme at a System Level with a view to scale it across the ICS. This approach took far longer than anticipated due to the number of stakeholders and meetings involved. Below is a part list of those involved:
  - Neighbourhood & Community Health Team, Village Agents, PCN
  - GP Practices
  - NHS Trusts HR, OD, Education Team
  - Develop Health & Wellbeing Hub – Talent hub will provide Patrol and support and Career Coaching
  - Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) Spark Somerset
  - Identify new community-based referral partners
- Due to the number of stakeholders and meetings required to design the Community based VtC Programme, delays occurred in recruiting and inducting volunteers onto the programme. After discussion and joint agreement, it was agreed to continue because of the ICB's commitment to scale post funding envelope.
- They now have volunteers in situ and a Blueprint of Service to roll out across all neighbourhoods, with the backing of Somerset ICB to do so.

# Evaluation approach

## 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 then again near the end of their project. The tool measures the organisation against a series of identified categories and questions associated with their volunteering strategy. Also, as part of the SAT, volunteers and staff are invited to complete some additional feedback surveys to provide insight into their perceptions of organisational change.
- **Staff surveys** were completed at the start and near the end of the VtC project (referred to as pre and post surveys). In the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, **15 staff members** completed the pre survey and **12 staff** completed the post survey.
- Due to the delays in recruiting and inducting volunteers, capturing volunteer insight data throughout the delivery period proved to be unattainable.

15

staff pre-surveys  
completed

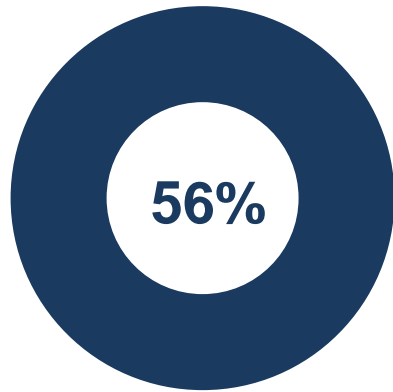
12

staff post- surveys  
completed

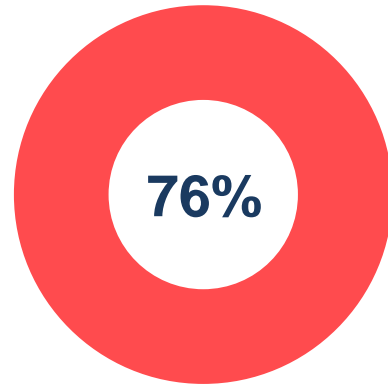
# Evaluation Findings - Organisation

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

First SAT Overall Score

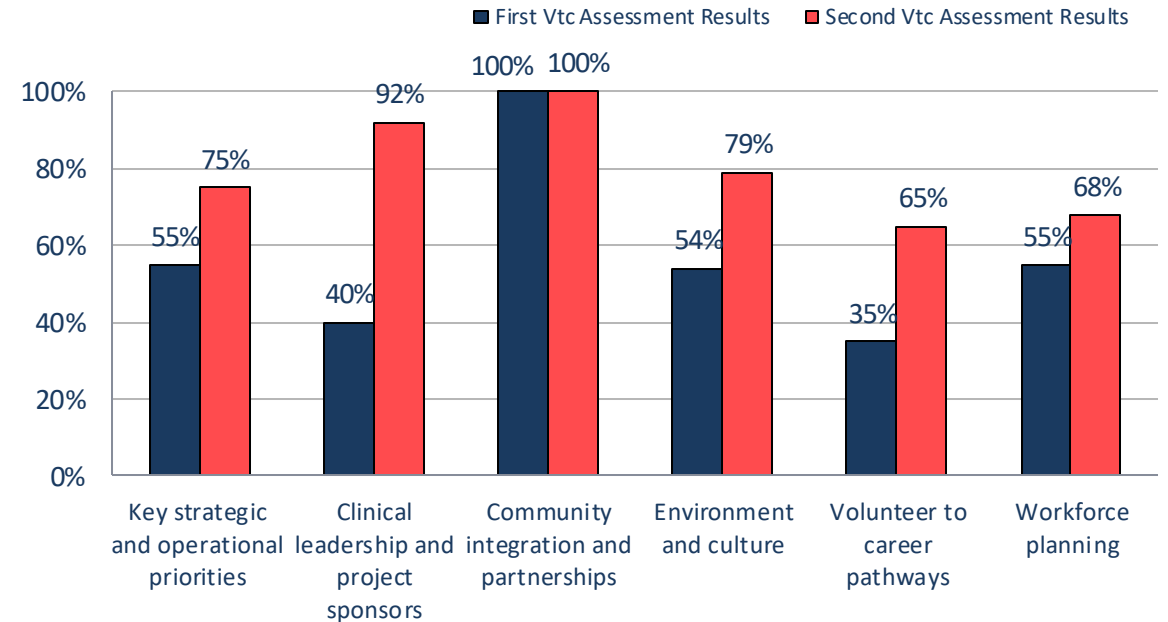


Second SAT Overall Score



- After completing the VtC programme, the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust has shown an **increase in the overall SAT score, improving from 56% to 76%**. Similar to the positive change in the overall SAT score result, **we have observed an improvement in the scores for the five elements of organisational improvement for volunteering.**

First and Second SAT Scores Overview



# Evaluation Findings - Staff Members

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



 "Volunteers have become an intrinsic part of some services, where they have been well integrated in teams, they have become a valued part of the workforce."

Staff member

 "I would like to see all services consider the volunteer role and how it could support colleagues. Particularly keen on volunteering providing a good route into employment within healthcare."

Staff member

 "It has been fantastic to support a new route into volunteering and I think the benefits to this approach will be fantastic."

Staff member

# Staff member feedback



"I have been delighted to be involved in supporting the establishment of the Volunteer to Career Programme in Somerset within my role as ICS Retention Lead. This programme feels particularly unique due to its ability to provide opportunities for people within our communities to be welcomed into volunteer roles local to them, as part of a broader pathway to support them to step into careers in Health and Social Care. This latter achievement is significant for Somerset and represents a tangible example of the Integrated Care system operating at a place-based level which sees both our patients and staff groups supported to engage with the health and care system close to their homes. The programme being geographically bound also enabled us to encourage those who may struggle with disadvantage to apply into the scheme, for example those with lived experience of mental health concerns and those who do not have access to transport, for whom employment looking only at busy, urban hospital sites would have excluded them from work.

In addition to these benefits for system and individual, this scheme supports the delivery of health and care services in the places that need additional support, using skills most appropriately. Whilst we are early into the journey of these volunteers' experience, we would expect for their involvement to decrease the requirement of skilled clinicians to undertake specific tasks which could be supported by our passionate volunteer workforce. This will enable improved efficiency alongside enabling our volunteers to gain valuable experience across our sector.

I will look forward to continuing to understand the journey of our initial cohort of volunteers and am hopeful that this model could be expanded to additional geographies in future."

Sophie Islington - ICS Retention Lead



# Staff member feedback



**“We’re very excited at the Older Person’s Mental Health service to be involved with the Volunteer to Career programme. The volunteers bring a wealth of experience and will be welcomed assets to support the neighbourhood teams, whilst also building their own skills. We serve a cohort of clients who do at times experience loneliness and having members of the team who have capacity to spend a little longer with them will be a huge boost.”**

Older Persons Mental Health Service Manager - North Sedgemoor



**“The Volunteer to Career Programme with the Volunteer Neighbourhood Responder role is a fantastic opportunity for Somerset Foundation Trust. With the recruitment of these volunteers in North Sedgemoor, it has enabled us to set a precedent for these types of volunteers. We are hoping to expand on this program within the acute settings at Somerset Foundation Trust. This would not have been possible without the ground-breaking work that Gillian and her team have carried out.”**

SFT Volunteering Lead



**“The Volunteer to Career scheme was very well received by participants of our Recovery College here in Somerset. People who are recovering from a mental health condition invariably experience a sense of low self-worth and a lack of confidence. The Volunteer to Career scheme has provided an ideal steppingstone for our participants to experience a safe and supportive ‘next step’ towards becoming a volunteer and the possibility of a career in the NHS.”**

Paul Milverton - People Participation and Co-production Lead (Mental Health)



**“I am really keen to see volunteers within the Neighbourhood teams as I have past experience of the valuable contribution they can bring to any team. I have said for a long time that if people experienced the teams in North Sedgemoor, they would want to join us and the volunteer to career programme offers this exact opportunity! My teams and services are actively growing the future and supporting personal development and for me this is another rung on the ladder for people accessing a career pathway in our Neighbourhood.”**

John Sutton - Neighbourhood Service Lead, North Sedgemoor Neighbourhood



**“This is an innovative programme which has brought new colleagues into the NHS and the benefits this brings to both the individuals in a new role and the neighbourhoods is personalised care for a local population.”**

Tracy Evans - Director Community Services,  
Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

# Volunteer feedback



**"The Volunteer to Career program is proving to be an excellent avenue for me to gain practical experience and skills in my chosen field of mental health. I am able to reflect on my experiences, seek guidance from professionals, and take advantage of the training and learning opportunities offered through the program. By volunteering, I have the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the lives of others while also working towards my career goals. I would recommend joining this program to anyone looking for a future career within the NHS."**

Mark Newton – VtC volunteer

# Next Steps

- VtC is part of people services future workforce team and VtC within that team is part of the people services resourcing strategy alongside volunteering.
- Within the ICS it will feature as a programme that Somerset offer through the ICS academy which is being scoped and feasibility tested currently as part of the entry pathways programme that the academy will support. This will keep Somerset focused with 3rd sector support on engaging hyperlocally. They will also route it through the 'great futures' workforce programme, working to overcome the levels of disengagement through education for young people in Somerset. VtC can provide the interim step to test re-engagement without feeling fully committed. It also links to 'work for better health' programme which it is hoped will be launched in the ICS.
- Somerset are looking at revising the way they offer jobs in line with NHSE recruitment practice to be more inclusive and recognise they will be working with increasing number of people who will not have minimum qualifications with skills based active descriptions of what they want the person to do rather than traditional job description language often used for grading and pay banding-Somerset is currently exploring this with an external company to test the feasibility, changing our job architecture.
- Through this programme, Somerset have been developing links in researching a hyperlocal piece with a Trust in Leeds as part of the next steps. They will continue this good practice with other trusts and ICS provider partnerships.
- They remain committed to expanding the neighbourhood role across all the other neighbourhood teams.

# helpforce

## Thank you

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