

NHS Volunteer Responder Scheme

FAQs for NHS volunteer managers

26 March 2020

1. What is NHS Volunteer Responders?

NHS Volunteer Responders has been set up to provide volunteer support to the 1.5 million most at risk from coronavirus who have been asked to isolate themselves for 12 weeks, and to provide patient transport. This initiative is being delivered by the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) and enabled by the GoodSam Responders app.

GPs, doctors, pharmacists, nurses, midwives, NHS 111 advisers and social care staff will all be able to request help for their at-risk patients through an RVS-run call centre. This will match people who need help with volunteers who live near to them. Some charities will also be able to refer people to the service.

2. What volunteer roles are being recruited to?

The four volunteer roles available are:

- **community response volunteer:** volunteers to collect and deliver shopping, medication or other essential supplies
- **patient transport volunteer:** volunteers to transport patients who are being discharged back home and to settle them safely back in
- **NHS transport volunteer:** volunteers to transport equipment, supplies and/or medication between NHS services and sites, and possibly also help pharmacies with medication delivery
- **check in and chat volunteer:** volunteers to provide telephone support to individuals who are at risk of loneliness.

3. How does this scheme impact on NHS trust volunteering services?

This is an additional offer. The NHS Volunteer Responders scheme is not designed to replace NHS hospital volunteering but instead focuses on supporting: (1) a very specific group who are deemed as clinically high risk and have been told to self-isolate and (2) patient transport where extra volunteers will be needed. Volunteering activity will happen within communities and will be managed centrally through the RVS and GoodSam.

Volunteering in NHS trusts should continue wherever possible. There is no desire to divert existing NHS volunteers who we recognise are still very much needed by trusts in their current volunteer roles.

If people want to volunteer to support their local trust they are still encouraged to do so; if trusts are able to take them on at this time. Trusts that cannot recruit or onboard volunteers quickly at this time could divert prospective volunteers temporarily to this new scheme.

The NHS Volunteer Responder scheme could also be an option for any existing NHS volunteers who have been temporarily stood down from their roles (within the guidelines of being well, etc) but still want to support the NHS. The check in and chat role can be done from home while volunteers are themselves self-isolating.

4. Does this scheme replace other local volunteering services?

A substantial amount of community activity is already happening at a local level through VCSE sector organisations and others. This provides valuable support and should continue. This new scheme is not designed to replace or divert resources from those services, but instead is an offer of local provision where this not in place, particularly for those deemed clinically most at risk.

5. Can my trust post things that they need volunteers to do for vulnerable patients?

Health professionals will be able to make referrals into the scheme via a separate platform. Guidance on this and the link to the platform will be disseminated through the healthcare system.

Currently the following groups will be able to make referrals using a valid NHS.net or local government email address:

- GPs/social prescribing link workers/practice nurses concerned about an at-risk or vulnerable individual they have asked to self-isolate
- hospital discharge teams
- community pharmacists
- NHS 111 and ambulance trusts

- community health trusts that need volunteer support for patients leaving hospital
- local authorities.

6. I want to advertise this scheme to current or prospective volunteers. What do they need to do?

The process for volunteers is:

- register on the NHS Volunteer Responders page: <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>
- complete your details and identify which volunteer role(s) you are interested in
- once your registration and checks are complete you will be emailed a verification code and log-in details (ID checks will be carried out for all volunteers, and an enhanced DBS check for those volunteering as patient transport drivers; the latter will receive additional guidance)
- download the GoodSam Responders app and log in
- switch on the app when you are available for volunteering tasks.