

## **“Volunteering helped me to find where I really want to be” - Rosie’s Story**

**After having lived experience of mental health herself, Rosie wanted to give something back and make a positive impact on others. So the property management student quit her study and became a volunteer for a mental health trust in London.**

Rosie Sullivan, who has just completed her second year studying psychology at university, began volunteering around a year ago with Camden and Islington Foundation NHS Trust. The 24-year-old student said: “I manage a shop trolley at St Pancras and Highgate and I work as a befriender on Montague Ward. I also do restraint debrief, which is when someone is restrained and we try to make that person’s time with us as positive as possible. My role involves socialising and interacting with people who use our mental health services - it’s so rewarding to have human-to-human contact and see their progression.”

In addition to this, her voluntary role complements her studies. Rosie says her role is the perfect way to gain a first-hand insight into the subject and explore different paths for her long-term career, which she believes gives her an advantage over her fellow students at university.

Rosie is one of many volunteers across the UK who are a part of Helpforce’s ‘Volunteer to Career’ programme, which supports a number of NHS organisations to fast track volunteers into healthcare careers, thereby helping to create a skilled workforce and offering a solution to the ongoing staffing challenges. The programme also ensures that clinical leads are closely involved, so that volunteers can have hands-on experience and guidance within clinical environments.

Rosie describes what it’s like to support people who use the mental health services, the challenges she has faced and how it has developed her professional skills:

“When you walk onto the ward, you never know what you’re going to see and that can be challenging. I have learned to be mindful of what I say to people to ensure I do not say anything triggering or sensitive, which is a very important skill. I work within the most amazing team and my volunteering has given me the opportunity to network with other leaders within the trust, which I hope will open doors for me in the future. Although I consider my volunteer role a small part in the trust, it’s rewarding to see the impact of my help and experience on others and I believe that volunteering can lead you to new opportunities in the future.”

As a direct result of her voluntary work, Rosie has acquired a new paid role as a Peer Coaching worker. The role involves seeing people who use the service in a variety of venues, from participating GP practices to home visits, to identify what is most important to them and improve their health and wellbeing. Speaking about her new role, Rosie told us how her voluntary work gave her the knowledge and the confidence to apply: “For me personally, my volunteering helped me find where I really want to be.”

Joanne Scott, Voluntary Services Manager at the trust, shared her thoughts of working on the Volunteer to Career programme and the opportunities it creates for both the trust and volunteers:

“It’s been fantastic to be a part of the Volunteer to Career programme with Helpforce and the other trusts involved. Working with our clinical lead and our steering group for the project has really enabled the value of volunteers to be further recognised within both clinical and corporate teams, moving Volunteer to Career up the agenda. The programme has ensured that volunteers are now considered a key part of our workforce and as potential future employees with the trust. We now have career pathways and support for volunteers who are interested in paid work with us that we didn’t have before.

“Volunteers can apply for job vacancies that are advertised internally, as well as roles advertised externally; they can access a career conversation with the Voluntary Services team, Interview Excellence training, and coaching support from our Organisational Development team. It has been really rewarding to see and support volunteers, such as Rosie, to grow and develop in their volunteer roles with us and then go on to achieve their aspirations to secure a permanent paid role with us, especially when you know they are such an asset to the organisation.”

**For more information about Helpforce’s Volunteer to Career programme and see how you can get involved, contact them at [help@helpforce.community](mailto:help@helpforce.community)**