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# Accelerating the growth and impact of volunteering

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*Summary report from the Volunteering Innovators Programme*

November 2020



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# Volunteers are needed - now more than ever - to support our health and care services

With strong leadership volunteers can  
provide much-needed help as the NHS  
faces unprecedented challenges

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*Foreword by  
Sir James Mackey, CEO  
Northumbria Healthcare  
NHS Foundation Trust*



The value volunteers bring to our health services is undisputed. I welcome this extremely useful data and evidence gathered by Helpforce in partnership with NHS England & NHS Improvement, The Royal Voluntary Service, and selected NHS trusts. It gives us a deeper understanding of the ways in which volunteers make an impact. It also demonstrates that when senior leaders invest and strengthen volunteer services to scale high impact volunteer roles, our health services will become more person-centred and potentially more efficient. It is particularly heartening to see that many volunteers go on to a career in healthcare, providing a potential solution to some of our workforce challenges.

Covid-19 has brought a huge strain on our hospitals and yet we have witnessed thousands of people willing to help the most vulnerable during the crisis. At Northumbria, we have a well-established volunteer service which has pivoted to the challenges facing us. It was heartening to see new volunteers from different walks of life joining our ranks during Covid. The vital roles they performed included befrienders, pharmacy runners, helping with donations, helping on the wards, delivering PPE, and much more. With high satisfaction rates amongst the volunteers, and positive feedback from staff, we all benefit from the spirit of volunteerism in this country.

I urge all NHS staff to use this new evidence from Helpforce to re-imagine how they might integrate volunteering into their services for the benefit of patients, staff, and the volunteers themselves.

*Sir James Mackey, CEO Northumbria  
Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust*



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*“As a nurse I know first-hand the benefit volunteers can bring both in freeing up staff time to focus on clinical activity and improving the patient experience. This report from Helpforce increases our understanding of the significant contribution volunteers continue to make to our NHS and I would like to thank NHS Trusts who shared their knowledge and experience of volunteering and contributed to these results, which will benefit us all.”*

RUTH MAY, CHIEF NURSING OFFICER, ENGLAND

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# Improving health and care with well trained volunteers in high impact roles

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*Introduction by  
Mark Lever, CEO, Helpforce*



The NHS Long Term Plan recognises that **“staff, patients and volunteers benefit from well-designed volunteering initiatives”** and every year NHS hospital trusts deploy over 78,000 volunteers in a wide variety of roles to assist their staff and patients, which is why the Helpforce Volunteering Innovators Programme was established: to address the lack of robust and compelling data and evidence in health volunteering. The data we have seen strengthens the case for increasing the investment in volunteer services.

Over 18-months, with funding and support from NHS England, NHS Improvement, the National Lottery Community Fund and the Royal Voluntary Service, Helpforce worked in partnership with NHS trusts to develop, implement, and evaluate volunteer innovations. We’re delighted to share the evidence from these projects. Evidence that shows the true value volunteers can bring to help the NHS overcome some of the challenges that Covid-19 has laid bare. The evidence demonstrates how volunteers can be part of the solution to helping our NHS **address the challenges it faces through Covid-19 and beyond.**

The support to staff and patients is invaluable, which is why we are on a mission to support NHS trusts to strengthen their volunteer services, and bring volunteers back on board during Covid-19.

*Mark Lever, Helpforce CEO*

**Volunteers help  
the wellbeing of  
NHS staff, and  
create more time  
for care**

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*With many NHS staff working to capacity, boosting your volunteer services is an effective way of providing complementary additional support.*

Our evidence shows that volunteers help to **reduce staff stress**, and **relieve pressure when wards are busy**. Volunteers also help **free up staff time**, which enables them to focus more on clinical care related activities.

A less stressed workforce can boost morale and motivation.

In addition, volunteers may influence how staff feel about their organisation and its ability to deliver high quality care. As public health challenges add strain to a busy health service, it is vital to embrace the ways in which volunteers can help support the NHS at a time when healthcare services are facing increased demand.

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*“Since the start of the Dining Companion project our ward has benefited immensely. The morale on the ward has increased, staff are happier and less stressed. The volunteers are treated as part of the team and have become respected team members.”*

WARD MANAGER, SALFORD ROYAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST.

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““”

*“Response volunteers are a big help for nurses. We always need a hand. Volunteers do a great job to hasten the tasks.”*

NURSE, BARTS HEALTH NHS TRUST

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## Volunteers help to free up nurse time

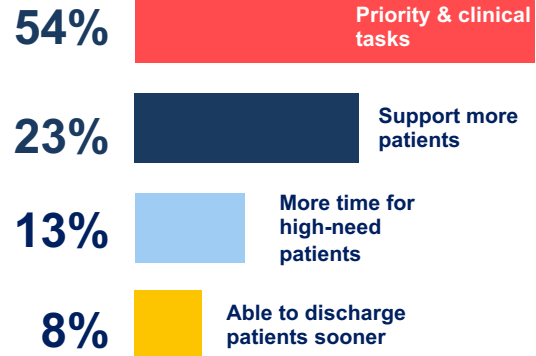
Nurses estimate that volunteers free up an average of

**26 mins**

per nurse per day

based on nurses surveyed across the programme (n=81). Time saved varied from no time saved to one hour or more saved. Standard deviation = 18 minutes

**What did nurses do with the time saved (n=52)?**

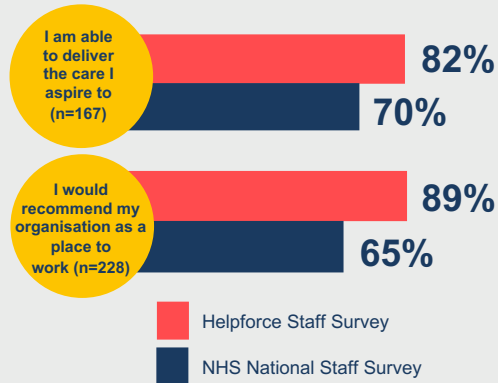


## Volunteers help the wellbeing of NHS staff

**71%** of nurses agreed that receiving support from volunteers **helped them feel less stressed**



Based on nurses surveyed in all participating NHS trusts. 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed (n=92)



Based on staff responses (across all participating NHS trusts) to an identical question asked in the context of the volunteering programme.

**Volunteers  
improve patient  
experience and  
help patients feel  
more supported  
at a difficult time**

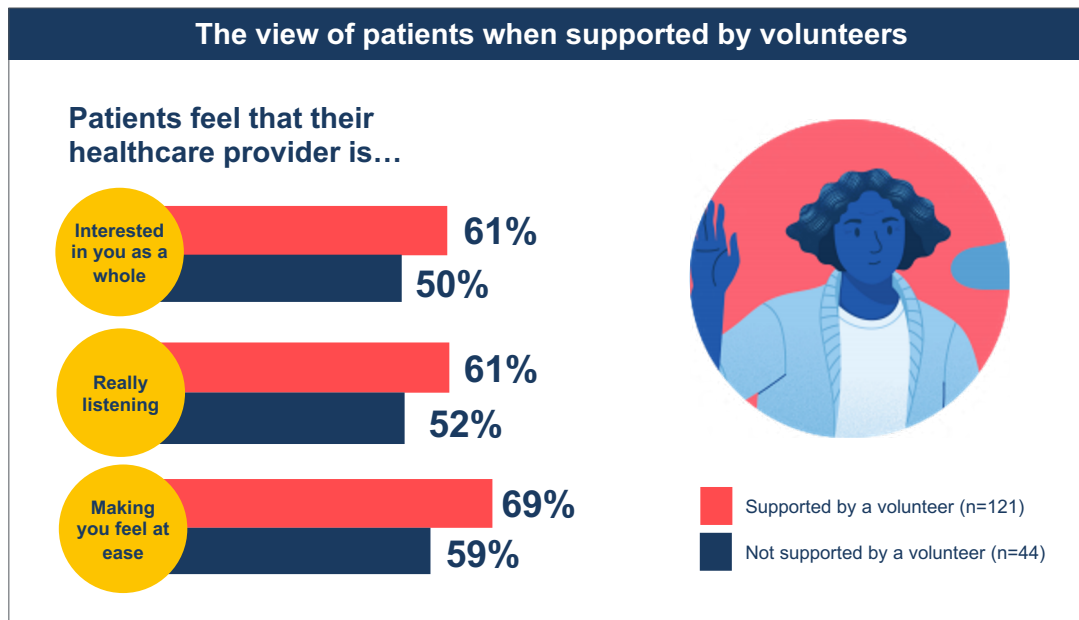
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*Volunteers help patients feel less anxious, more supported, and less alone at a difficult time.*

The feedback from patients consistently shows that volunteers improve their experience of care and contribute to making care more person-centred. It also shows the important role volunteers can play in helping to reduce deconditioning in patients during their hospital stay, by keeping them active and supporting their nutrition and hydration at mealtimes. In addition, volunteers can help to personalise specialist care such as mental health care and End of Life Care.





When **volunteers support patient mobility**, patients are less likely to be re-referred to physiotherapy

Based on trend analysis in discharge ward  
(Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals  
NHS Trust)

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*“I wish I had been there when he died, but knowing he was not alone helps me now....Thank you this is an incredible service.”*

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

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*“Patients benefit from talking to, and being listened to by someone who is independent to staff and often can talk more openly and honestly in this forum. Having volunteers provide this service to patients shows them that people who aren't paid to be there care enough to come and speak with them to help improve things for them.”*

STAFF MEMBER, VOLUNTEERING SERVICES, CAMDEN AND ISLINGTON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

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**Volunteers  
contribute to the  
efficiency of a  
hospital**

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*Volunteers can help with patient flow by speeding up patient discharge, for example by being on hand to help collect 'To Take Out' medicines (TTOs) before patients leave the hospital.*

They can also potentially contribute to reducing length of stay by supporting patients with eating and drinking at mealtimes. Volunteers can also help patients with their anxiety whilst in hospital and during surgery, which may support their speedier recovery.



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*“The Active Response role that supports the collection of take away medications from the pharmacy and taking them to the ward has **saved staff time and helped efficiency**. Response volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic have been instrumental in supporting business continuity particularly around **staff wellbeing and patient-visitor contact.**”*

BARTS HEALTH NHS TRUST

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*“The Engage volunteers are crucial in helping patients with their mental health. This helps prevent depression which can significantly delay discharges and patients are less able to rehabilitate.”*

DOCTOR, SALISBURY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

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*“We certainly felt that the hand-holding volunteers’ presence reduced the need for additional sedation in many otherwise anxious patients and in doing so, sped their recovery and also the theatre efficiency by reducing turnaround time.*

CONSULTANT OPHTHALMIC SURGEON, MOORFIELDS EYE HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

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**Volunteers may  
pursue a career  
in the NHS as  
a result of their  
volunteering**

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*Over half of the volunteers surveyed said they were interested in pursuing a career in the NHS as a result of their volunteering.*

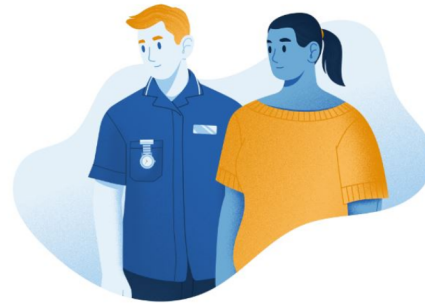
*This is, potentially, a fantastic resource for senior leaders to consider in addressing future workforce shortages.*

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Volunteers may pursue a career in the NHS as a result of their volunteering

**58%** of volunteers strongly agree or agree that volunteering has increased their interest in working for the NHS

based on survey of volunteers across all participating NHS trusts.  
34% disagree/strongly disagree with the statement.  
(n=618. 245 responses were 'N/A' and were not included in the analysis).



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*“One of our volunteers has secured a permanent job in the trust.  
Another volunteer secured a permanent job in the health social sector  
and still volunteers in our trust.”*

CAMDEN AND ISLINGTON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

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# Partner with Helpforce to bring the benefits of more well-trained volunteers to your NHS trust

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This evidence shows that when we harness the power of dedicated and caring volunteers – to support dedicated and caring NHS staff – we create a better healthcare system for everyone. We urge you to work with us to:

- Co-design volunteer services with you, your local communities and services
- Ensure the volunteers are offered career pathways in health, boosting your workforce
- Evidence the impact of your volunteer services through a structured impact measurement process
- Find digital solutions to connect volunteering communities with new initiatives





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*By accelerating the impact and growth of your volunteer services with Helpforce's tools and expertise, you will realise the benefits other trusts are seeing.*

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*To find out more, please email us to set up a call with a senior member of our team. We are on hand to support you in your journey to innovative volunteering. Start your journey, email us now at:*  
***help@helpforce.community***

*To read the full evaluation report **click here***

*To read detailed guides on setting up individual volunteer services **click here***



**Gilles & Cecile and Malika Favre**  
**My Universe: The Mercury Family 2012**  
**Acrylic with Digital Print**

During the renovation of Chelsea Children's Hospital, CW+ led a creative design project to enhance the ward for our youngest patients. Working with graphic design agency Thomas Heatherly, Malika Favre, Cecile and Gilles Favre, and Malika Favre, they created a colorful and playful environment for the ward. They created a central table, the 'Universe' and designed different families of alien characters for each ward. Each of these Aliens is a response to individual child patients in the ward. Each family also has matching artwork with a narrative, reflected through the family's artwork.

A list of references to what characterizes the Mercury Family. The list was compiled with input from the staff to the ward. They gather every evening for a discussion of the day's observations and a night's sleep. They are not afraid to make their own art. The Mercury Family members often take the shape of a creature together making a new story.

Gilles & Cecile Studio is a small design studio in London that was founded in 2006. They specialize in graphic design, branding and illustration. Malika Favre is a French designer and illustrator who lives in London.

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*“The global health crisis has thrown volunteering into the spotlight. The thousands of people willing to give their time to help has demonstrated how much more can be achieved when volunteering is at the heart of our communities. The emerging evidence from this programme demonstrates that volunteers are an important enabler and can help us address the challenges in front of us.”*

SIR THOMAS HUGHES-HALLET, FOUNDER AND CHAIR, HELPFORCE

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# Acknowledgement

**We would like  
to thank our  
innovative partners  
for their hard work  
accelerating the  
growth and impact  
of volunteering**

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### **Barts Health NHS Trust**

Active Response Volunteers who help staff with a wide variety of tasks including the collection of patient medication, to help save staff time and potentially speed up discharges.

### **Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust**

Volunteers providing peer-to-peer emotional support after an incident in a mental health setting, to help make care more personalised.

### **Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

Volunteers providing support to patients before, during and after operations, to help reduce anxiety and improve the patient experience.

### **Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

Settle in Service with volunteer transport, to improve the patient experience at discharge, help them settle back at home, and potentially reduce the risk of readmissions.

### **North Tees and Hartlepool Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

Volunteer support with patient discharge, as well as 'Hospital to Home' and transport services, to improve the patient experience at discharge and potentially improve patient flow and reduce the risk of readmissions.

### **Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

Volunteer support with end of life care in hospital, to help staff deliver person-centred care.

### **Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust**

Volunteer assistance for patients at mealtimes, to reduce the risk of malnutrition and dehydration.

### **Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust**

Volunteers providing patient engagement and support using a specially developed model for companionship, to reduce anxiety and improve mood.

### **Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust**

Volunteers providing motivation, encouragement and support, in moving and getting dressed into day clothes, for patients waiting to return home, to reduce the risk of deconditioning whilst in hospital.

### **St James's University Hospital in Leeds and University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust - funded by the Royal Voluntary Service**

Mobility, nutrition and hydration volunteers, to reduce the risk of deconditioning, malnutrition and dehydration whilst in hospital.

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Thank you to NHS England and NHS Improvement, the National Lottery Community Fund, and Royal Voluntary Service for funding this programme of work.

Our final thanks goes to Deloitte for their work on the infographics.



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