

Health Education England report finds volunteering helps with career development

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A new report by Health Education England has found that volunteering helps NHS staff in their career development.

The report, drawn from interviews of 23 volunteers across England, found that staff who volunteered within the NHS and for external voluntary organisations benefited from acquiring new skills that they could transfer into their working lives.

Examples of volunteering work carried out by NHS staff includes helping to feed patients on busy wards, acting as conversation partners with stroke victims, acting as NHS ambassadors to encourage and inspire next generation NHS staff, and stewarding at vaccination centres.

Staff who took on volunteering roles said they did so in order to give something to the service 'over and above the paid role' as well as doing something in accordance with their values. Employees also said that volunteering offered therapeutic value when it came to dealing with stress and anxiety.

The opportunity to test out new ideas which they could implement in their substantive roles was another benefit of volunteering, while senior staff reported being able to connect with the frontline allowed them to make better strategic decisions for their organisation.

In the report Health Education England has made five recommendations to help improve volunteering for NHS employees. These recommendations are:

- Managers and frontline staff are made aware of how to make best use of employee volunteers in the service,
- There is a more consistent approach across NHS Trusts to helping employees find volunteer roles,
- Trusts should recognise and support the contribution made by employee volunteers,
- Managers should consider the value of including discussions about voluntary activity in PDRs and appraisal discussions,

- The creation of communities of practice to capture and share learning experiences.

Regional Director Lizzie Smith, who took part in the research, said: ?I think the volunteering helped with my paid role to the extent that it helps you get a couple of layers beneath what people are actually going to be delivering on the ground and once you?ve got a model up and running ? such as the vaccination model ? you can see how its working and how it might be made to work more smoothly.

?I think I brought some knowledge of the difficulties in planning to the role as well because I would talk to other volunteers.

?You realise that a lot of people in operational jobs never get the thinking behind things properly explained which can lead to some frustration, so I think I took in the ability to share some of the big picture stuff that helped people not feel quite so frustrated, because things that seem like simple problems on the ground can be logistically and strategically really difficult issues.?

Nichola Langdale, Head of Education, Learning and Development, at Harrogate District Foundation Trust, said: ?When I worked as a nurse we didn?t always have the time to sit and feed somebody and talk with them for very long, but with this role you can have the time.

?Everybody?s really clear that I?m there only to help people who can?t feed themselves but are safe to be fed.

?You develop those softer skills ? it?s a good opportunity for me to talk to staff as well. I?m developing skills that I didn?t think I?d ever get the time to be able to use again and investing that time with patients and in supporting colleagues. I just love it, I absolutely love it.?

The full report can be found here [8].

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Links

[1] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work>

[2] <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/>

[4] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events>

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[8] <https://healtheducationengland.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/Comms/Digital/EWqUtRn8iphEoYDKuQ5aV2IBz-sevPL12Wd7Bgn6wyezBA?e=oaGhto>