

Allied Health Professions

Quick guide to volunteering



Developing people
for health and
healthcare

www.hee.nhs.uk

About this quick guide

This quick guide aims to support local health and social care systems in improving the health of people by involving volunteers; with practical examples of how the Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) can support implementation and roll-out of this part of the workforce. Although COVID-19 has meant a change in many of our practices and opportunities to have additional visitors in teams, there is still a need and plenty of opportunities to support volunteering in our services. It also serves to illustrate how AHPs can support further development of their skills and expertise. This is one of a series of online resources providing practical advice and case studies to support 'AHPs into Action'.

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Foreword

The coronavirus pandemic has focused our health and social care system towards a common purpose; coming together to overcome coronavirus, ensuring capacity to help those who have been affected and minimising the impact on the health and well-being of the overall population.

Never have we been required to change our working patterns so radically in such a short period of time. This has been a challenge and as Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) we should be proud of our response. There have been some excellent examples of teamwork, innovation, excellence in practice and leadership.

In the [NHS Long Term Plan](#) there was a clear endorsement of the use of volunteers in our services. There is evidence that volunteering or “giving”, as one of the 5 steps to health and wellbeing, supports our commitment to each and every individual AHP.

The NHS is seeking to significantly increase its volunteer workforce by 2022. I know AHP's will have a part to play in supporting this initiative. This guide has been written to support you in developing your volunteer workforce.

‘AHP's can lead change’ is one of the 4 priorities in [AHP into Action](#). The case studies in this guide show evidence of involving volunteers to add value to the patients’ pathway. Another priority from the strategy: ‘AHP's skills can be further developed’ is highlighted in the mid-career vignettes. This resonates with me, as I have personal experience of volunteering as a trustee from the early stages of my career onwards.

Together we can ensure that any volunteering includes the eight key features that the research highlights in the ‘Time Well Spent’ report. They ensure a quality experience which is inclusive, flexible, impactful, connected, balanced, enjoyable, voluntary and meaningful.

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Introduction

The long term plan states: “Staff, patients and volunteers benefit from well-designed volunteering initiatives. Volunteers contribute across a range of NHS roles, from First Responders and Care Companions to Trust Governors and Transport Volunteers. They enable staff to deliver high-quality care that goes above and beyond core services. Well-designed and well-managed volunteering programs improve satisfaction and wellbeing ratings for staff.”

What are the benefits of volunteering?

Volunteers offer their skills, talents and experience on a completely unpaid basis, in their own time and of their own volition providing a complementary service to that of salaried staff. There is no contractual relationship between volunteers and the Organisation. Instead the relationship is based on mutually agreed expectations about the role. Volunteers have different roles from staff and should not replace staff. As such volunteers will not be used for job substitution or form part of the essential staffing structures.

Evidence shows that volunteering has a positive impact on wellbeing. Giving is identified as one of the five ways to mental wellbeing and so, as an activity in itself, volunteering is of great value to the individual.

People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons. For some it offers the chance to give something back to the community or make a difference to the people around them. For others it provides an opportunity to develop new skills or build on existing experience and knowledge.

How to do it?

1. **Consider where volunteers could add value** to the service, benefit patients or support staff and identify the specific tasks that a volunteer could complete. Contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator in your Organisation as they may be able to help you to understand your workforce needs and can co-produce the role description with you.
2. **Define the skills and training needs** that will be required for both volunteers and the staff hosting them. Developing a competency document that aligns to their training is essential.
3. **Engage with all stakeholders** and ensure they are included in the design of the training and competencies.
4. Work alongside the Volunteer Co-ordinator to **align the recruitment and governance processes**. Use the; "Recruiting and managing volunteers in NHS providers a practical guide". September 2017. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/recruiting-managing-volunteers-nhs-providers-practical-guide.pdf>
5. **Support induction and training of new volunteers**. Induction must include mandatory training and be specific to the environment. Signpost volunteers to this learning opportunity developed by Helpforce and HEE. <https://volunteerlearning.community/>
6. **Buddy the Volunteer** so they feel valued and useful; ensure they are appropriately supervised. Ensure a clear process for the Volunteer to pick up their tasks.
7. **Organise a feedback loop** so that you can learn from all involved and feed into measuring impact of the volunteering initiative

Access the Helpforce Learning Zone with all the resources you need and to become a member of the Helpforce Community; <https://learningzone.helpforce.community/>

For volunteers in care homes: access the 'how to' toolkit; <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/your-team/volunteers-and-your-organisation/volunteering-in-care-homes-1/volunteering-in-care-homes-toolkit>

Use Quality Improvement tools to design and implement the change:

- Define outcomes.
- Identify and select measures.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework.

If you want to assess the quality of your volunteer management and involvement, prove and improve the effectiveness of your work with volunteers, and enhance your organisation's reputation, 'Investing in Volunteers' provides the ideal framework. Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. To read the nine indicators see link; <https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/about/the-nine-indicators>

'Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit' and the 'Volunteer Investment and Value Audit' have been developed especially for volunteering programmes. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering-management/1-publications/P78-volunteering-impact-assessment-toolkit>

AHP's role in supporting people to volunteer

AHP System leaders

- Define the system-wide need for volunteers: working with the AHP Council in the system to develop placed based plans for:
 - » Early-careers: volunteering as part of the workforce solution.
 - » Mid-careers: highlighting opportunities for skill development.
 - » Late-careers: ensuring knowledge is retained and passed on to others.
- Develop a network of third sector and voluntary organisations who add value to the patient pathways to understand how the system works together.
- Develop cross system volunteer roles enhancing patient-centred personalised care and social prescribing.

AHP Leaders and AHP's

- Support organisational wide volunteering initiatives for early-careers.
- Understand your skills gaps and seek out personal development volunteering opportunities to support your future career aspirations.
- Develop unique volunteers in AHP services who add value to the patient experience; these may include expert patients.
- Champion volunteering and the benefits to colleagues and networks.

Summary of learning from the case studies

- The service was already committed to person-centred care; it accepted and valued the volunteering initiative. This was designed to improve patient wellbeing. The service that did not demonstrably value person-centred care did not value the volunteering initiative.
- The idea of tailored education that is directed to health-care staff is aimed at helping them to value the service provided by volunteers.
- Over and above having clearly defined roles and procedures for volunteers the need for integrated models of care was mentioned. This would involve the development of integrated models of care combining different workforces (i.e. professionals and volunteers).
- A way of clarifying roles involved applying the following criteria to the design of job roles:
 - » Action that, depending on the level of patient need, may require skilled therapy/nursing input at one end of the continuum; to assistance provided by volunteers with appropriate competencies, at the other end. (for example, mobilisation, feeding).
 - » Action that offers scope for volunteers to enhance care practices while stimulating practice change toward providing holistic care to patients (engaging in social and stimulating activities for which volunteers can offer a unique contribution).
- It was also important to clarify issues like 'patient information sharing' between staff and arrangements for selecting patients to be seen by volunteers.
- AHP's who volunteer need to have clear expectations of their role and outputs, an understanding of the time commitments and their perceived benefits which included; closing skills gaps, training opportunities and gaining feedback.
- Implementing and using the Better Impact Volunteer Management System streamlined recruitment and coordination of Volunteers.

Further information

HEE has a role in supporting the development and profile raising of volunteers and volunteering opportunities within health and social care. We have a role in encouraging excellent and committed individuals in seeking careers in the many health-related professions the NHS employs. We can do this by promoting volunteering as a way of gaining vital professional experience. Quote taken from the HEE Volunteering Strategy consultation document <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/13707%20HEE%20Volunteering%20Strategy%20Document%20June%202017%20web.pdf>

Putting this guide into action questions to answer

- How can involving volunteers enhance the services we provide and benefit our patients, staff and Organisation?
 - » What does my Organisation want to achieve with volunteering?
- Who do we need to involve?
 - » Who are the Patient Experience or Volunteer Coordinators in your area? Who has the background governance knowledge?
- What do we need to put in place to enable high quality volunteering to happen?

Key themes for improving AHP services by involving volunteers

CQC Standard Evidence

Safe: volunteers can act as enablers, supporting patients with positive risk taking as well as providing additional eyes and ears; meaning that people are protected from abuse and avoidable harm.

Effective: volunteers help patients to live their lives as they wish; this means that people's care, treatment and support achieves good outcomes and promotes a good quality of life. The benefits of engaging volunteers in befriending and activity support roles in care homes are evidence based.

Caring: volunteers make a distinctive contribution based on their equality and closeness to residents, as well as the altruistic dynamic of their engagement; people are treated with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect.

Responsive: volunteers can adapt their approach to supporting residents as their needs change; services can be organised to meet people's needs.

Well led: engaging volunteers from the local community is evidence of an inclusive approach to delivering care; this satisfies the criterion that the leadership, management and governance of the organisation assures the delivery of high-quality, person-centred care; supports learning and innovation, and promotes an open and fair culture.

References

Recruiting and managing Volunteers in NHS providers a practical guide September 2017
www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/recruiting-managing-volunteers-nhs-providers-practical-guide.pdf

Strategy development guidance How to Create a Volunteer Strategy
<https://learningzone.helpforce.community/network-news/>

Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. To read the nine indicators see link
<https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/about/the-nine-indicators>

HEE Volunteering Strategy consultation document
www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/13707%20HEE%20Volunteering%20Strategy%20Document_June%202017%20web.pdf

HEE International volunteering
www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/global-engagement

HEE guidance for trainees volunteering overseas
www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/HEE%20Guidance%20for%20Trainees%20planning%20to%20volunteer%20or%20work%20overseas%20v2%20%28Low%20resolution%29.pdf

Leading improvement overview
<https://improvement.nhs.uk/documents/2124/leading-improvement-overview.pdf>

Embedding a culture of quality improvement
www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-11/Embedding-culture-QI-Kings-Fund-November-2017.pdf

Developing people improving care
https://improvement.nhs.uk/documents/542/Developing_People-Improving_Care-010216.pdf

The Habits of an Improver
www.health.org.uk/publications/the-habits-of-an-improver

NHS England long term plan
www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/online-version/chapter-4-nhs-staff-will-get-the-backing-they-need/8-volunteers/