



[Volunteering for Health](#) is a national programme being delivered in partnership between NHS Charities Together, NHS England, and CW+ (the official charity of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust) to test and build volunteering infrastructure in health and care. The programme is funding 15 local partnerships to deliver volunteering infrastructure projects in their geographies over three years. Local partnerships include organisations across: Integrated Care Boards (ICBs); NHS trusts; NHS charities; and the voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, including local infrastructure organisations (LIOs) which support local VCSE organisations to foster partnerships, build capacity and develop volunteering opportunities.

This snapshot shares learning from local partnerships on developing the health and care workforce through volunteering. It provides a summary of a more detailed [learning into action guide](#) on this topic. This is one of five snapshots sharing learning from the [Volunteering for Health programme](#).



What is the role of volunteering in developing the health and care workforce?

The [NHS Volunteering Taskforce Report](#) highlights the importance of volunteers and their support for the wider NHS workforce.

Volunteering is also increasingly being recognised as a route into NHS employment as volunteers gain useful skills and experience in the health and care sector, making them good candidates for NHS roles.

What are local partnerships doing to develop the health and care workforce through volunteering?



Defining what volunteers can bring to the health and care workforce

North Central London partnership is supporting system partners to explore and define the role of volunteers in the health and care workforce and embed volunteering within workforce strategies.



Supporting health and care staff through volunteering roles

Hampshire and Isle of Wight partnership embedded volunteers in a hospital ward to support ward staff to offer more personalised care to patients and improve their experience.



Developing pathways to employment for volunteers

South East London partnership is developing volunteering pathways focused on targeted support for volunteers who want to develop skills relevant to future health and care careers.

Actions for health and care system leaders to sustain good practices identified in the Volunteering for Health programme



Action 1: ICBs should ensure a volunteering strategy is included within their workforce portfolio

Volunteers help systems to meet workforce challenges and enhance services for patients, but this potential is not being consistently realised. ICBs need to **understand how volunteer roles and the development of volunteering infrastructure** can enhance the system's health and care workforce and **link volunteering with other system priorities**, such as neighbourhood health.



Action 2: ICBs should work with system partners to widely promote health and care volunteering opportunities

ICBs should view the health and care **workforce as system-wide and cross-sector**. People interested in volunteering in health and care should have **easy access to the range of roles available** to them. Roles can be promoted on a range of media, including the [national NHS volunteering platform](#), local brokerage platforms and through LIOs.



Action 3: ICBs should support system partners to develop pathways to employment for people who volunteer in health and care roles

Some volunteers give their time to develop skills and experience for a future health and care career. System leads should **include pathways to employment in volunteering and workforce strategies** to support the development of the future health and care workforce. ICBs should work with system partners to **design roles that support health and care volunteers to gain relevant skills and experience for future careers**.

"Volunteers should be part of workforce planning, but there should be clear boundaries between volunteer and paid roles – volunteers enhance the work of staff, they don't replace them."

NHS Volunteering Taskforce Report



For more information about Volunteering for Health, visit <https://www.cwplus.org.uk/volunteering-for-health/>, contact volunteering@anhsc.org.uk, or connect with the [Volunteering for Health Programme group](#)