

# Volunteers Strategy 2020-2023



Working  
**Together**

**Everyone**  
Matters

Making a  
**Difference**



Our volunteers play a vital role in supporting our patients, carers, visitors and staff. We are incredibly grateful to them for the time they give up, the care and support they offer and the contribution they play as part of our team. Over 400 volunteers – some for more than 20 years – give up their time to support our work, volunteering for more than 40,000 hours every year. In return, we offer volunteers a way to give back to their community, skills and experience, and the opportunity to be part of our friendly, caring team.

The needs of our patients and the volunteer workforce are changing. Our patients are living longer, often with multiple health conditions, and many face social isolation and loneliness. For our patients, the time spent in hospital can be particularly difficult. Our older volunteer workforce are facing increasing demands on their time, with many working later in to life, and our younger volunteers are seeking roles which fit in to their lifestyle and support their future career. Volunteers are an essential part of our workforce.

During the autumn of 2019, we spoke to volunteers and staff about their experience of volunteering at the RUH, how we could improve the support we offer volunteers, and how we could work together to further develop the roles volunteers take on. We have also spoken to the volunteer provider organisations who play a vital role in recruiting and supporting volunteers for the RUH, looked at best practice in other organisations, including some outside of the NHS, and considered national guidance on how to develop volunteering.

This Volunteers Strategy is the result of this work. It sets out our vision for volunteers, our priorities, and what we plan to do to achieve them.

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# What do you enjoy most about volunteering at the RUH?

Question to RUH volunteers, September 2019

*Putting something back into the community*

*Knowing you've made a difference to a patient*

*Helping patients who are sometimes very scared and vulnerable (a cup of tea sometimes helps!) Taking some of the load off Doctors and nurses*

*Staff are very appreciative and say thank you*

*Helps others whilst building my confidence*

*Gives a structure to my life*

*Knowledge that you have endeavoured to help those less able than yourself*

*Knowing that you are helping someone recover and have relieved some pressure from the nurses*

# What difference do volunteers make to you and your team?

Question to RUH staff, September 2019

*Vitally important! The guides, the shop and café assistants provide a vital service and are a friendly and welcoming face. The pet therapy people are amazing as are the pets! They all give the hospital a friendly atmosphere and are down to earth and understanding.*

*They know the organisation well as many have been here a long time.*

*It makes a huge difference to have someone around to help, especially to make refreshments as this is something we struggle to find opportunity to do.*

*They are our angels, we owe them so much*

*A fantastic support for families using our service as well as supporting staff*

*We see the Pets As Therapy dogs every week which is always a pleasure. They light up the day. We also have a trolley volunteer who calls in twice a week and again, he brings cheer and chat to the office. He goes out of his way to come over to us.*



## Our Volunteers Strategy

### Our vision for volunteers

**To provide an outstanding volunteering experience, so our volunteers can continue to enhance the experience of our patients, carers and staff**

### Our priorities for volunteers

An outstanding **volunteering experience** for all of our volunteers

Develop **new roles** in key services where volunteers can enhance patient and staff experience

Increase the number and **diversity** of our volunteer team

Setting an ambitious **future direction** for volunteers at the RUH

Over the three years of this strategy, this will:

- **Double the annual volunteering hours to 80,000 hours** a year from 40,000 hours a year in 2019.
- Increase the number of **young people** volunteering at the RUH
- Introduce a consistent method of understanding **volunteers' experience** of the RUH, and a clear, prioritised action plan so that we work to improve the experience we offer
- **Develop new roles** to support our patients, families and staff, focussed on social activities, patient flow and patient experience.



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## Context

### National developments in volunteering

In the last year, several national initiatives have been announced which aim to build on the important role that volunteers play in supporting patients, carers and staff. In developing this plan, we have taken account of:

The **NHS Long Term Plan**, published in 2019, which committed to doubling the number of NHS volunteers over the next three years, and developing new roles for older people to stay physically active and connected to their community, and younger people to develop skills and experience for work and education.

**Helpforce**, an initiative by NHS England/NHS Improvement to create a unified and integrated approach to volunteering in the NHS, supported by £2.3 million of funding to scale successful volunteering programmes across the country.

The **Unison Volunteering Charter**, which outlines the valuable contribution volunteers make to the NHS in England and clarifies the relationship between volunteers and paid staff. It also defines what volunteering looks like in a healthcare context and provides a framework against which concerns about volunteer roles can be taken forward within organisations.

The **NHS People Plan**, issued in 2020, reflects on the increase in volunteers supporting the NHS and its duty to “*make sure that volunteers are deployed safely and effectively*”. It refers to the National Learning hub, which will provide standardised training for volunteers. It also looks to support long-term volunteering opportunities, making volunteering roles meaningful and enabling routes in to employment in the NHS for those volunteering.

### Changing population

COVID-19 drastically changed the way that volunteers worked at the RUH, from new roles developed to support staff during the pandemic to the requirement for some age groups to isolate/unable to attend site. We are incredibly grateful for all the volunteering support provided through the pandemic. This has shown us though that we need to continue to adapt our volunteering roles so that volunteers can support staff and patients in a meaningful way and where it is most needed. To do this we need to ensure that volunteers are trained and supported in their volunteering roles.

Nationally, rates of formal volunteering among young people (16-25) have seen a steady increase. The Trust recognises that supporting young people to volunteer and develop skills and experience for work and education is important as the RUH is a major employer in the local community.

Local volunteering allows older people to stay physically active and connected to their communities, they often want to volunteer to be able to 'give something back' and have a wealth of experience to offer and usually more time to give on a regular basis.

Whilst the NHS requires an increase in volunteering positions, this is faced with challenges such as the increase in working age and support that retired people now offer with childcare. As such, the RUH needs to offer an enticing volunteer package to encourage people to give up their time.

## RUH Strategy

In 2018, the RUH launched our Strategy for the next few years:

### Our True North

To provide the highest **quality** of care;  
delivered by an **outstanding** team who all live by our values.



Everyone Matters Working Together Making a Difference

We see volunteers as a vital part of our work to achieve our vision and goals:

- Volunteers make a critical difference to the experience of our **patients**, offering vital services to support our patients and reducing the social isolation many experience while in hospital. Some of our volunteers also undertake activities to help us understand the experience of our patients, for example through surveys and questionnaires.
- Our **staff** also use services provided by our volunteers – for example the Friends shop and café – and also value the role volunteers play in supporting patients, carers and families.
- We work with a range of voluntary sector **partners**, including the Friends of the RUH, our main provider of volunteers, and organisations providing specialised services, for example Dorothy House, Bath Hospital Radio and the Alzheimer's Society.





## Where are we now

Currently, the RUH is privileged to have over 400 volunteers across the hospital, from 10 different organisations and in over 25 different roles:

The majority of our volunteers are recruited and supported by the Friends of the RUH. The Friends have over 12 different volunteer roles currently available:

- Emergency Department Volunteer
- Audiology Volunteer
- Infant Feeding Support Volunteer
- Eye Clinic Volunteer
- Gardening Volunteer
- Guides
- Lunch Time Helper
- Maternity Volunteer
- Oncology Clinic Volunteer
- Physiotherapy Volunteer
- Shop Volunteer
- Shop Trolley Volunteer
- Ward Volunteer
- Spiritual Care Centre

The Forever Friends is the official charity for the RUH. The charity funds projects to support patients being cared for at the hospital. The charity has a team of corporate and community volunteers involved in fundraising activities.

Other roles available at the RUH through other volunteer organisations include:

- Pets as Therapy
- Compassionate Companions (in collaboration with Dorothy House Hospice)
- Alzheimer's Society
- Bath Hospital Radio
- Art at the Heart
- Macmillan Cancer Centre

We are incredibly grateful for the work of all of our volunteers, and we know that it makes a real difference to the care our patients' experience, and the working lives of our staff.

Volunteers are encouraged to support the RUH for at least 6 months, and many stay far longer – we know of volunteers who have been with the RUH for over 20 years.

For the majority of our volunteers, we have limited equality monitoring data about our volunteers. We currently capture gender and age, two of the nine protected characteristics. The majority of our volunteers are white British women, aged 60 and over. There is an opportunity for us to involve younger volunteers as our potential future employees. Many under 25's use volunteering opportunities to gain experience and knowledge of the NHS before attending further education or university.



When we began work to develop this Strategy, we went out to speak to volunteers, staff and patients about how they experience volunteering, using structured interviews, workshops and surveys. Full reports are available on the feedback from all three groups, and a summary of feedback is provided below.

### Volunteer's experience

**90%** of Volunteers surveyed said that they felt valued by the RUH

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Volunteers have worked at the RUH ranging from **2 Months** to **20+ Years**

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Volunteers work on average **5.5 hours a week**

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**76%** of Volunteers were motivated to volunteer at the RUH to “give something back”

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Key themes from volunteers included:

#### Motivation

Volunteers talked to us about wanting to *give something back* to the RUH and to the NHS, with many being former patients or having family who have been cared for by the RUH. Volunteers also talked about wanting to *make a difference* to patients, families and staff at the RUH. Many volunteers also talked about their enjoyment of volunteering – the opportunity to spend time out and about in their community, the social aspects of volunteering, and the sense of having purpose.

#### Frustrations

Volunteers also shared their frustrations about their experience with us.

- Feedback showed that volunteers prefer areas where they felt like they had a clear purpose - 53% of volunteers felt that having **clearly defined activities** was important to them, and this is reflected in where volunteers enjoy giving their time across the Trust. Our volunteers told us that sometimes they worry that they get in the way of staff

- 63% of volunteers said that **regular contact with staff** was important, this is also demonstrated by the effort that more popular areas make with their volunteers, such as giving Christmas presents or including them in using staff break room facilities or staff gatherings

However, some feedback suggested that while volunteers want to help and support staff, they feel like an 'outsider' to their place of work and not part of the team. When opening the discussion further with volunteers, feedback given stated that volunteers don't have a single point of contact on the wards they work on and even if provided with a role, this can change due to demand for staff resource "*this isn't my ward*" or shift patterns "*xx isn't in today*", potentially leading to volunteers not feeling valued or part of the wider RUH team

- Volunteers told us how important it is that they have the **skills** to do the role they undertake. Some felt that the induction process wasn't enough to help them feel confident in their role, and most volunteers didn't describe having any ongoing training
- Volunteers talked to us about issues with **processes**. Car parking is a frustration for volunteers who drive to the RUH site, and the newer volunteers told us that the recruitment process was lengthy and cumbersome
- **Equipment** to undertake their role was also an issue some volunteers noted – we heard that the shop trolley is difficult to manoeuvre, and that not having supplies for tea and coffee makes it harder to do their role

### Staff experience

Feedback from staff around their experience of having volunteers on the ward was that they provide real support for the ward and need to feel part of the wider team, describing them as "*angels*" and a "*boost to morale*".

It was acknowledged that on some wards, due to shift patterns/bank or cover staff, volunteers aren't always expected or known by staff and this can lead to volunteers feeling unknown and untrusted which damages their experience on the ward.

### Patient experience

Patients overall appreciated the volunteers, stating that "*they helped restore hope and optimism*" and "*[they are] something to look forward to... it's lonely on my own*".

Carers general feedback was that they were not aware of the volunteers on the ward, stating that should "*make [them] more noticeable, didn't know any were volunteers*" and "*...14 years here and [I] didn't know there were volunteers*".

# Andy's Story



Hello, my name is Andy. I volunteer with the Friends of the RUH on both the Respiratory ward and in A&E.

It's always busy in A&E and my role there is to help the staff and patients as much as possible. I'll try my best to cheer up the staff with a smile and a bit of banter, and do my best to help them during a difficult shift.

I do a variety of different jobs, such as helping to strip and sanitise trolleys to make sure that the next patient can get in the bay as quickly as possible. I do my best to try and take the pressure off nurses, so that they can focus on patient care.

I help out with looking after patients, doing tea and biscuit rounds, having a chat with them and generally trying to make a scary place much less frightening for them. A cup of tea can make a big difference for patients and their families after a stressful time.

Sometimes the patients who come in to the department have dementia and may try to walk off. I stay and chat to these patients, keeping them calm. This can take a lot of pressure off the staff – they know that the patient is safe with me.

Working in A&E gives me immense pride and satisfaction as I feel I am really making a difference and am part of the team. I take part in the 'improvement huddles' where I can raise a suggestion if I have seen something that could be improved. It's nice to know that my ideas are taken on board and will improve the experience for the patient.



# Volunteers Strategy

## Our vision

Our vision for volunteers is:

***To provide an outstanding volunteering experience, so volunteers can continue to enhance the experience of our patients, carers and staff.***

Over the three years of this strategy, we intend to:

- **Double the annual volunteering hours to 80,000 hours a year** from 40,000 hours a year in 2019

This is the equivalent of going from 20.5 full time members of staff to over 50 full time members of staff. We will do this through:

- Recruiting more volunteers and retaining our existing volunteer workforce, to increase our total number of volunteers
- Creating more flexible and attractive volunteering roles, so that we increase the average hours that volunteers provide
- Increase the number of **young people** volunteering at the RUH
- Introduce a consistent method of understanding **volunteers' experience** of the RUH, and a clear, prioritised action plan so that we work to improve the experience we offer
- Develop **new roles** to support our patients, families and staff, focussed on social activities, patient flow and patient experience

To achieve this, we will work on four priority areas:

## **Priority 1: An outstanding volunteering experience**

**We will achieve this by:**

- Work with staff across the organisation to ensure that volunteers feel supported and valued by the teams they work in
- Creating a dedicated ward/volunteer ambassador to support volunteers when they are on the ward, ensuring their experience is meaningful for both the volunteer and the patients

- Ensuring that all volunteers have clear job roles, and the induction, training, development and equipment they need to undertake the role
- Offering all volunteers an annual review to identify areas for improvement
- Supporting volunteers to access training and development opportunities through the Trust
- Working with volunteers to help them share their knowledge about patient experience, by supporting volunteers to be included in our *Improving Together* approach to quality improvement. One way that volunteers will do this is through contributing ideas to ward and outpatient department improvement huddles
- Improving the information shared with volunteers about the Trust, so volunteers can be advocates for the Trust and have the knowledge they need to do their role well
- Investing in a Volunteer's Services Manager to lead on implementation of this Strategy

**We will measure our success by:**

- Developing a regular volunteer experience survey, and acting on the outcome
- Working with our partner volunteer agencies to achieve Investing in Volunteers accreditation
- Increasing the average weekly hours that each volunteer offers to 2 hours a week.

## **Priority 2: Develop new roles in key services where volunteers can enhance patient and staff experience**

**We will achieve this by:**

- Proactively identifying and targeting services where volunteers could have the biggest impact on the experience of our patients and volunteers and look to create flexible roles that allow volunteers to go where they are most needed
- Expanding the number of volunteers in critical areas. We have identified the following existing roles where we believe there is the biggest potential benefit:
  - Volunteer guides to welcome patients and visitors, and to offer directions/travel support. We believe that this is a crucial role given the ongoing developments and access changes to site, meaning patients may be attending appointments alone
  - Continuation of the dementia befriending volunteers
  - Urgent and Emergency Care support volunteers, working in front door areas such as the Emergency Department and Medical and Surgical

- Mealtime assistants
- Discharge Hub volunteers
- Developing new roles. Given the feedback from our clinical teams and reflections from the COVID-19 Pandemic, we believe that the biggest areas of impact will be:
  - New roles to support patients to take part in social activities, freeing up time for nursing teams to prioritise clinical care, helping to keep patients mobile and active while in hospital and reduce the impact that admission to hospital can have on patients. This is one of the Trust's Quality Account priorities for 2020/21
  - Flexible roles, which allow for a dynamic and meaningful volunteering experience as volunteers adapt to offer support where they are needed most. For example, runner roles in the Emergency Department
  - Patient experience roles, where volunteers help us to understand patient experience in greater depth, for example by gathering patient feedback or through mystery shopping visits, so we can improve the services we offer
  - Patient flow support – roles to help patients and staff on the day of discharge and support the work to improve patient flow
- Developing a skills matching service, so volunteers with specialist skills, for example hairdressing or language skills, are able to use them where most needed

**We will measure our success by:**

- Monitoring the number of volunteers working in the priority areas identified above
- Monitoring the number of volunteers working in the new roles identified above
- Increasing the overall number of volunteers at the RUH from just over 400 to 1000

### **Priority 3: Increase the number and diversity of our volunteer team**

**We will achieve this by:**

Working with volunteer organisation partners to improve recruitment and development for volunteers, including:

- Providing clear, engaging information about volunteer roles in a variety of locations, so we proactively reach potential volunteers
- Ensuring that the recruitment process for volunteers is welcoming, easy to use and effective



- Developing a new internship programme, designed to support younger volunteers who are considering a career in the NHS
- Working with colleges, universities and schools to promote volunteering opportunities for young people
- Developing a programme for corporate volunteers who may only be able to donate a day's support to the RUH
- Creating a reward and recognition scheme for all RUH volunteers
- Working with specialist charities to recruit volunteers with an interest in a particular area
- Providing access routes to employment for our volunteers

**We will measure our success by:**

- Increasing the number of young people volunteering at the RUH
- An increase in the number of volunteers and range of roles, targeting a year on year improvement, ultimately delivering an increase in total number of volunteers from 400 to 1000 by the end of this Strategy
- An increase in annual volunteering hours from 40,000 to 80,000
- Implementing a process to capture information on the protected characteristics of our volunteers, to help us identify areas for improvement, based on the approach currently taken by the Alzheimer's Society

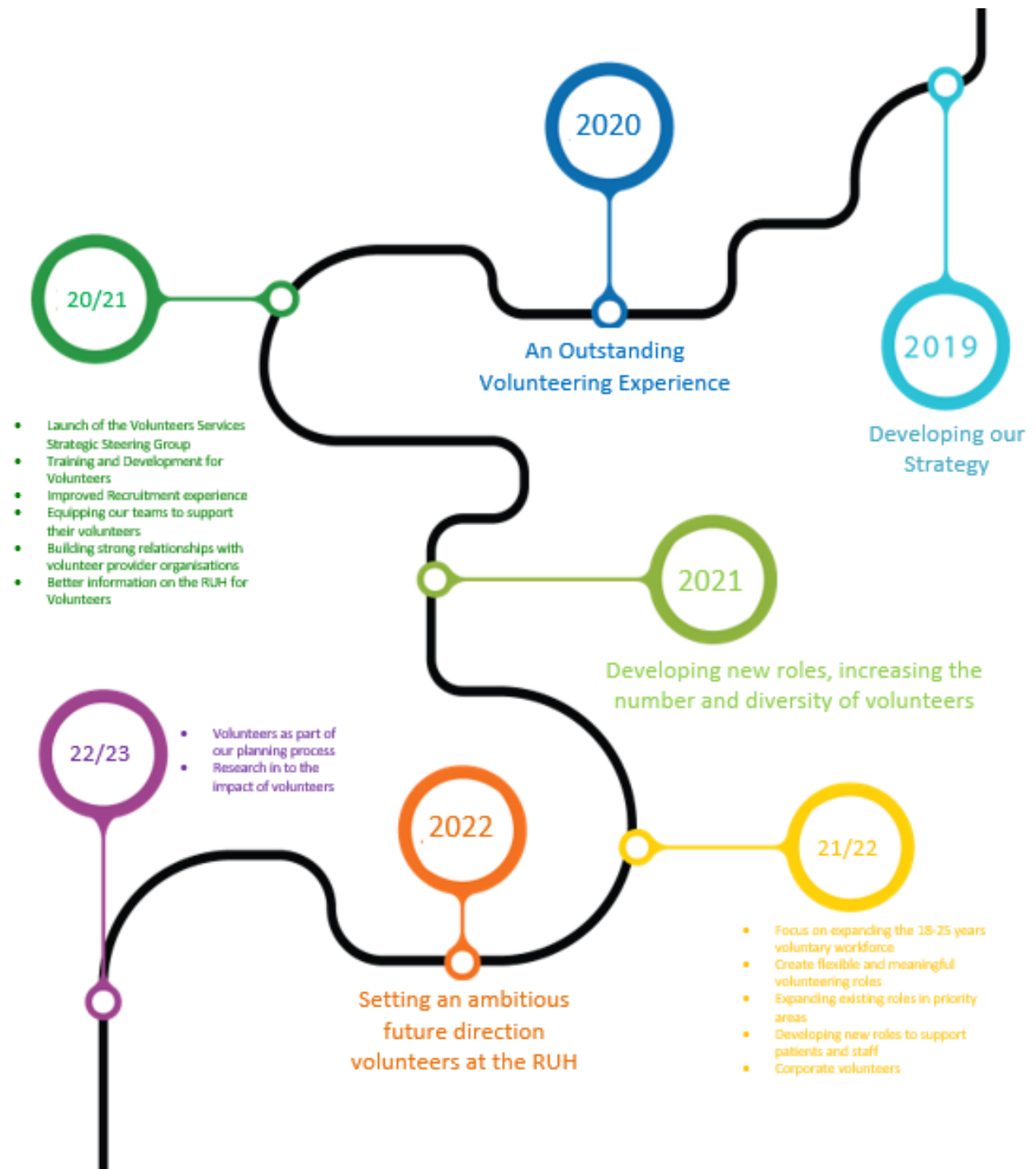
#### **Priority 4: Setting an ambitious future direction for volunteers at the RUH**

**We will achieve this by:**

- Creating a culture where volunteers are considered alongside patients, carers and staff in the Trust's decision-making
- Celebrating the contribution volunteers make to the lives of our patients, carers, visitors and staff
- Ensuring strong working relationships with volunteer organisations, underpinned by clear agreements which set out how we ensure good governance of volunteer activities, and ensure equitable support and access for all volunteers
- Setting up a Volunteers Steering Group, chaired by our Director of Nursing and Midwifery and reporting to our People Committee, to drive the implementation of this strategy
- Undertaking research in to the impact that volunteers have on our patients, carers and staff



## Next steps





**A detailed work plan, setting out the major milestones for strategy implementation, is available in Appendix A.**

To oversee delivery of the Strategy, we will establish a Volunteers Strategy Implementation Group in 2020, chaired by an Executive Director and with representatives from the Trust and the Friends of the RUH. Through the Volunteers Forum, we will work closely with all of our partner organisations to deliver the ambitions in this strategy.

## How we developed our Volunteers Strategy

The team worked with the Lead for Patient and Carer Experience to identify the best process for engaging with volunteers and staff:

- A survey was created via survey monkey and used a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions to try and identify a round picture of how it felt to be a volunteer at the RUH. This was sent out to volunteers through the Friends of the RUH and other volunteer organisations
- A separate survey was created in the same way for staff in order to capture opinions from all roles which may encounter a volunteer in their work day but also to capture those who did not have use of volunteers and may benefit from doing so
- Based on the responses to the survey, which ran over two weeks, the teams then set up two workshops, one for staff and one for volunteers to dig deeper in to the themes which were presented by the surveys

The team also utilised the Volunteers Forum, a meeting where representatives from all volunteering teams, both internal and external, attend. This was used to disseminate the survey, feedback information and invite volunteers to the workshops held.

The Patient Experience Team utilised a medical student to support engagement with patients, relating to our volunteers. The student has written a full paper explaining the findings which can be requested from the patient experience team.

Best practice examples were also sought, both within the NHS and externally. Good examples were provided by other Trusts, as well as charities such as Westonbirt Arboretum, which has undergone a similar transformation with its volunteering staff.