Diversifying volunteering opportunities to widen participation

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 diversifying volunteering opportunities to widen participation. 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 importance of diversifying volunteering?

The Department of Health and Social Care's 10 Year Health Plan identifies NHS organisations as 'anchor institutions', with a role in developing a sustainable supply of locally recruited staff, supporting the health of communities and reducing inequalities.

NHS organisations can add social value by recruiting more people from their local communities to both paid and volunteer roles. A diverse volunteer workforce that includes people from local communities can enhance patients' engagement with health and care services.

What are local partnerships doing to diversify volunteering?

Working with local partners to understand barriers to volunteering
Herts and West Essex partnership worked with VCSE partners to engage with young people to discuss barriers to volunteering and identify ways to make roles more accessible.

Mapping demographic data of volunteers
Hampshire and Isle of Wight partnership is reviewing demographic data on current volunteers to inform development of a diverse and inclusive volunteering programme.

Widening engagement through targeted outreach
Birmingham and Solihull partnership increased engagement of young people as health and care volunteers by collaborating with local schools and community networks and focusing on micro-volunteering roles that offer young people flexibility in when they volunteer.

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

Action 1: ICBs, NHS organisations and local authorities should collect and review data on the demographics of existing volunteers to understand which communities are underrepresented

Understanding which communities are underrepresented in volunteering roles enables targeted efforts to widen participation. ICBs, NHS organisations and local authorities should **collect and review demographic data on existing volunteers and identify opportunities to increase diversity** in volunteering programmes. This intelligence can be used to engage LIOs to **explore opportunities for increasing engagement in volunteering roles**.

Action 2: ICBs, NHS organisations and local authorities should co-design volunteer roles with local communities

Working directly with local communities can identify potential opportunities for volunteer roles and start to address barriers to volunteering. ICBs, NHS organisations and local authorities should build on the relationships developed in Action 1 and work with LIOs and other relevant partners to **co-design roles with communities underrepresented in volunteering programmes**.

Action 3: Organisations that involve volunteers in health and care roles should work together to develop and adopt shared local principles for volunteer management

People that give their time to health and care organisations should be well supported to have a good volunteering experience. NHS organisations, local authorities and LIOs should work together to **develop shared local principles for volunteer recruitment, retention and development** and ensure these are adopted by people who manage volunteers. Shared local principles can **improve the volunteer experience** across a health and care system and **encourage the development of best practice between organisations.**

"Those who are marginalised in society benefit disproportionately from volunteering… the improved social connectivity and social capital derived from volunteering is especially beneficial for those who are subject to exclusion and disadvantage."

Adding Value Through Volunteering in NHS Trusts, The Kings Fund

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

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This snapshot was prepared by The Strategy Unit.