

Volunteer Services



North Bristol
NHS Trust



Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Foreword

“ Our volunteers are an integral part of our NBT family. ”

We are privileged to have an established team of over 400 volunteers delivering up to 30 different volunteer roles across North Bristol NHS Trust (NBT). Whether the volunteer role is supporting our wards, directing our outpatients, providing peer support, or fundraising for our hospital charity, each supports our patients and truly contributes to meeting our Trust aim to deliver an outstanding patient experience.

As I reflect on the impact our volunteers make, I think about how I have seen firsthand the vital role they play in bringing comfort, companionship, reassurance and joy to our patients and their loved ones. They are also an invaluable voice to shape our hospital services, through their own lived experience, or through speaking and listening to patients.

Personally, I have enjoyed a cup of tea at our League of Friends at Cossham and Southmead, benefitted from listening to the music provided by our Fresh Arts musicians, and enjoyed meeting our furry friends with Pets as Therapy!

This strategic plan places diversity and inclusion at its heart. The plan embraces the opportunity to reach out to our local community to understand the barriers faced by those who wish to volunteer with us. Striving towards our Trust objective of being an anchor in our community.

A strong theme resonates through this plan, to work collaboratively through existing community links, to achieve our Trust objectives. Not only to expand the support provided by our volunteers to the hospital, but to enhance the volunteer journey too.

In keeping with our Trust values, the new mission statement signifies our ambition to shift from sustaining our volunteer service to enhancing its success through a philosophy of continuous improvement, championing new ideas and innovation.

Finally, I want to thank all our volunteers for dedicating your time, passion, and energy, and placing patients and staff at the heart of everything you do. You are a hugely valued part of the ‘NBT family’ and we are so grateful to you all. I am pleased to introduce this strategic plan to build on your excellence and to continue to improve patient experience for many more years to come.

Professor Steve Hams
Chief Nursing Officer



Our Volunteers

We know how valuable volunteering is to our volunteers.

Istar,
Ward Support Volunteer



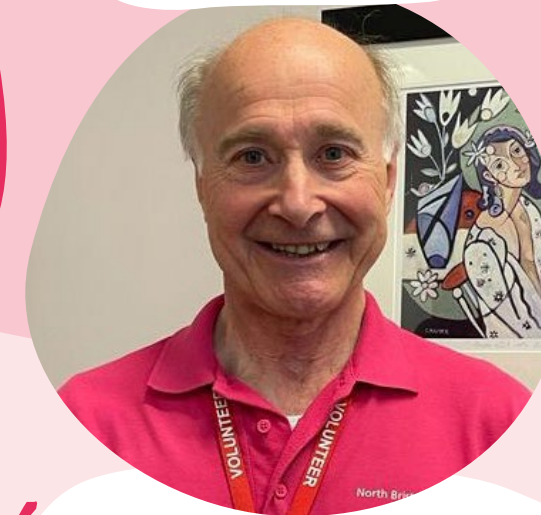
“ I volunteered to gain some experience in a hospital setting ahead of applying to study Adult Nursing. Everyone was so welcoming and friendly... and I now have an offer of a place to study Adult Nursing at university. ”



Anela,
Patient and Carer Partner

“ I have been involved with the hospital as a Patient Partner...I became involved through the Bristol Sight Loss Council. I thought it was a good way to feed into services from my own personal experience. ”

Bob,
Move Maker



“ I volunteer because I enjoy helping people. It runs on from when I was a postman and was always willing to help people on my rounds! ”



Our Previous Strategic Plan

Our previous strategic plan (2021-2024) focused on making operational improvements to help recover the service following the Covid-19 pandemic. We reviewed our volunteer role descriptions, moved our recruitment process on to Trac, we returned our volunteers safely to their roles, and created new ones that enhanced the patient experience. At the forefront of our ways of working was keeping our volunteers and patients safe.

Key successes:

- We worked with Bristol Sight Loss Council to train our volunteers and staff to guide a patient, and create a supportive way for visually impaired patients to seek assistance for their appointments.
- We brought all our volunteers together under one central recruitment process and made our training more accessible through supportive literature and in person E-Learning support. However, we recognise our required mandatory training to be a barrier to some for volunteering, and we endeavour to make this more interactive.
- We created a new Volunteer Handbook, opened a social media platform, improved our intranet and website pages, the latter becoming the key entry point for many volunteers to apply with us through our online process.
- We forged relationships with SGS College and NHS Cadets which opened up opportunities for young volunteers to join our team. We are looking forward to building on this experience in the coming years.
- We created new roles, such as our Adverse Weather drivers, Mealtime Companion, Purple Butterfly, Patient Feedback volunteer, Patient Buddy Role and our Maternity volunteer.

Looking forward

There were two key areas where we did not meet our objectives. We missed the opportunity to introduce a volunteer survey, a priority which we will bring forward to our new strategic plan.

We also fell short of our original KPI of 35% of our team being aged under 50, achieving 28% in 2024, an increase of 4% since 2020. In our new strategic plan, we will carry forward and broaden our ambition to radically change our culture, to understand the barriers to volunteering for those with different protected characteristics and become an appealing and supportive environment for everyone who wishes to volunteer.

For more information about the demographics of our volunteers please contact volunteer.services@nbt.nhs.uk for a copy of our report.

OVER 400
volunteers



**Our
Volunteer Service
Today**

19
Patient and
Carer Partners



35,000+
annual
buggy journeys



**OVER
650**
hours of music a year



**UP TO
30**
volunteer roles



44+
annual PAT
dog visits



3525
Purple Butterfly
visits, benefiting
1215 patients and
their families



1,440+
items of clothing to
benefit our patients



39,000+
hours donated a year



**AWARD
WINNING**

Purpose

We are excited to look ahead to the future. The purpose of this ambitious strategic plan puts inclusive practices, continuous learning, and a welcoming culture at the heart of all we do. We want to elevate our service to diversify our pool of volunteers, break down barriers to volunteering, and further improve the experience for our patients and volunteers. We will bring our service into a modern era where our systems are fit for purpose.

This strategic plan has been designed through conversations with staff, volunteers, and voluntary sector partners. It has also been influenced by the Trust Strategy, Joint Clinical Strategy, Patient and Carer Experience Strategy, internal audit and CQC Quality Statements. Our Volunteer Service vision is:

To deliver an inclusive, supportive, and safe Volunteer Service, driven by continuous learning and our commitment to put the patient experience at the heart of everything we do.

In this strategic plan we are focusing on four key objectives to transform our service from the start of the volunteer journey to the patients who are at the heart of our service. Further details of our work plan to support these objectives is available upon request at volunteer.services@nbt.nhs.uk



Objectives

We will;

Objective one:

Foster a culture of inclusivity throughout our service, with the aim to break down barriers to volunteering with us, and in turn diversify our pool of volunteers.



Objective two:

Improve the experience for our patients through enhancing our existing volunteer offer.



Objective three:

Develop the volunteer journey to provide an individualised and supportive experience with an open and welcoming culture.



Objective four:

Modernise our systems to manage our data, more widely capture our impact, and embrace the Group Model.



Objective One: Foster a culture of inclusivity

Trust Objective Link:
Anchor in our Community



We recognise the importance and value of a diverse volunteer workforce. To achieve this, we need to learn and listen to our community to understand the barriers to volunteering and how we can improve our recruitment practices, culture and support. This is our **priority commitment** because it will embed a new way of working which will influence all our other service actions, we know this will take time and commitment to achieve properly.

"We understand that we will only make real progress if we all proactively 'own' and are responsible and accountable for the EDI agenda and delivery of change."

- NBT EDI 3 year Plan



Our volunteer demographics

In June 2024 we looked at the demographics of 366 of our active volunteers, this analysis did not include the League of Friends Cossham, who have a volunteer team of 71, due to our independent data gathering methods. We were also able to cross reference this data with the same gathered in February 2020 and February 2023.

Our covering report displays an in depth break down and cross section of our demographics by year, team, and in comparison, to our NBT staff workforce and BNSSG population. This has given us a richer understanding of our volunteer teams and formed a basis for our initial decision making around our approach to diversifying our pool of volunteers.

Culture not quota

As the saying goes, culture eats strategy for breakfast. We know that in order to meet this objective we need to embed diversity and inclusion into our values and at the heart of our culture. Any required changes to processes should follow this. We need to work with our community partners to understand the barriers people may face to volunteering with us and how we can overcome them.

We aim for an increase in the number of volunteers aged between 17-30, a larger number from a global majority background and more volunteers who identify as having a disability.

We do not see this as a tick box exercise! We want to approach this in an authentic way that fosters a genuine welcome and open culture without assigning specific KPI's which risk tokenism and volunteers feeling they have been targeted to fill a quota. The following approach sets out our initial plans to foster a welcoming culture, reach out to our local community, understand and overcome barriers, and work in collaboration across the Trust.

We recognise four key themes to support this

1.

Forging strong cross-departmental relationships and utilising their community links

We know that there is a wealth of work and knowledge across NBT to work towards the Trust commitment to be an anchor in community. Whilst we have historically forged our own community links, we feel that working closely with others and aligning our practices will bring a greater benefit to the communities we serve. This will not only allow for greater cohesion, but also will ensure that we are as informed as we can be before approaching specific community groups.

We aim to work with the existing experts to understand local health inequalities and ask our community what barriers they experience to volunteering.

2.

Volunteer Role Promotion Opportunities

The locations in which we promote our volunteering opportunities will be integral to reaching a wider audience.

We will work closely with the central Communications and Talent teams to promote our roles, and we will look at ways to be creative, accessible, and inclusive with our messaging and imagery to attract a wide range of volunteers.

3.

Ensuring our recruitment staff are trained ...

As a staff team, it is important that we are all open to genuinely understanding the benefits of a diverse volunteer team and the value this brings to our patients, visitors, and staff. Even if something has worked well before, we understand that it might not be the right process for us now. It is important for us to recognise our bias's, embrace and be open to change, and continuous learning.

We will ensure meaningful, up to date, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion training for our staff team. Exploring scenarios from our recruitment practices and recognising where we can improve.

...and our interview panels are diverse

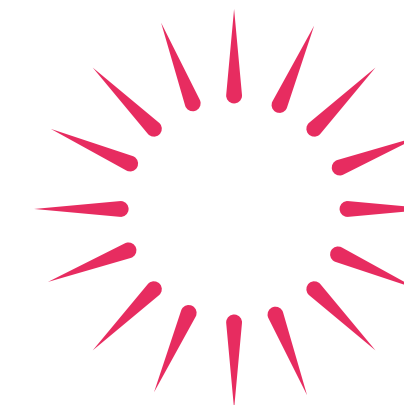
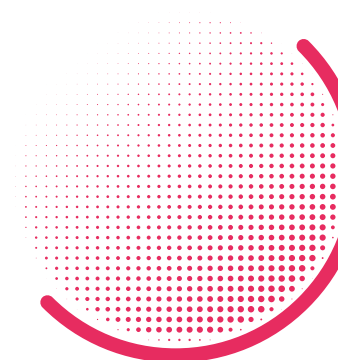
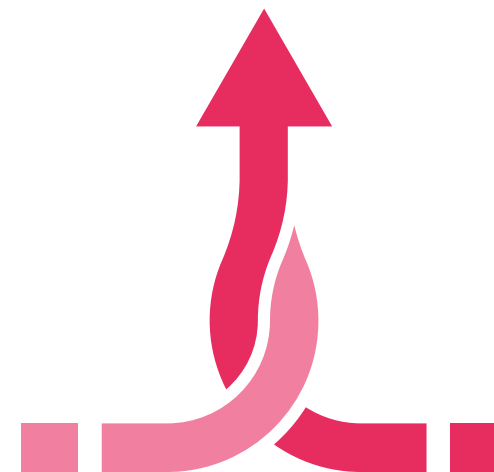
Recent research from the NVCO tells us that "a culture of trust and respect, recognition, and a sense of belonging are particularly important to people from the global majority. These factors influence overall satisfaction with volunteering". To help mitigate unconscious bias and groupthink, we will strive to have representation on our interview panel from a volunteer or staff member who can act as an ambassador. This individual may be from a global majority background, have a disability, or other protected characteristic.

4.

Reviewing our Recruitment process

The NHS Volunteer recruitment process follows a robust and structured approach to ensure that we are upholding our duty of care to our patients by implementing a safe recruitment process. Conducting a DBS check, two reference checks, an Occupational Health review and a suite of mandatory training can be a long process which some applicants find demanding and off putting.

We are committed to ensuring our process is safe, however we recognise that we can learn from other Trusts to understand how they may have streamlined their recruitment and training process to make the journey smoother and our training more accessible to volunteers.



“ Ultimately, effective recruitment ensures that the volunteer department is well-positioned for success, providing a strong foundation from which volunteers can thrive and make a meaningful impact. ”
- Helpforce





Objective Two: Enhance our Existing Volunteer Offer

Trust Objective Link: Outstanding Patient Experience



Our Volunteer Service proudly sits within the Patient Experience Team. In conjunction with this strategic plan, we have committed to objectives that contribute to the wider patient experience through the Patient and Carer Experience Strategy 2023-2026. Our patients are at the heart of everything we do, and our volunteers play an important role in not only improving their experience but also gathering impact and patient stories which will inform broader changes across the hospital. This gathering of patient feedback not only meets the CQC statement that NBT “make it easy for people to share feedback and ideas”, but it is also a key mechanism to measure the outcome of our Trust objective to achieve an outstanding patient experience.

We know that 14% of our patients’ interactions at NBT involve a mental health diagnosis. **We will support our NBT’s Mental Health Strategy by equipping our**

volunteers to be confident and able to offer appropriate support and interact with patients who may need additional support as they enter our hospital.

“To ensure all our workforce are capable of recognising and responding appropriately to a patient with mental health needs”

- The North Bristol NHS Trust Clinical Strategy

Southmead Hospital Charity has a small team of dedicated volunteers who support with fundraising and events. To support their volunteer team to expand and become more sustainable in the long term we will work alongside them and the communications team to ensure that targeted advertising increases interest in the role. The nature of the occasional events could be an opportunity to advertise more flexible short-term roles to both our staff and younger volunteers.

We work alongside and collaboratively with our colleagues in Chaplaincy, PALS and Complaints, and Fresh Arts. All of which directly support and manage their own teams of volunteers. These volunteers

bring specialist support, lived experience of using our hospital, and provide music and creative arts to benefit our patients, visitors, and staff. **We have identified objectives within our action plan which specifically focus on improving and broadening these volunteer roles**, as well as supporting our Hospital Charity and training for our volunteers.

Lastly, **we will consider how we can expand our volunteer offer to include staff**. The five ways to wellbeing show the value of volunteering, and how connecting with others, learning new skills, and giving your time can improve your mental and physical wellbeing.

“Our Clinical Strategy commits to developing our strong positive culture by prioritising staff wellbeing, empowering staff to drive transformation, and celebrating and sharing success.”

We know that our NBT staff have a wealth of knowledge, skills, and ideas that can improve the experience of our patients and we will explore how to promote the benefits of volunteering not just internally but externally to encourage community links and improve staff wellbeing.

Objective Three: Develop the Volunteer Journey

Trust Objective Link:
Proud to Belong



“Recruitment is just the beginning. Retaining volunteers is the linchpin that ensures the enduring success of your program. Through recognition, feedback, and a commitment to their growth, you can create an environment where volunteers feel valued, supported, and inspired to continue their vital service.”

- Helpforce

We want to provide a high-quality service which truly cares, supports, values, and nurtures our volunteers. It is important that the volunteers have a voice to shape our service, and that they feel they are

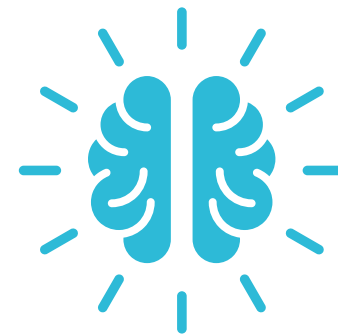
supported by our staff as well as the departments they volunteer within. We want them to have a smooth experience from start to finish on their volunteer journey and feel that they are well equipped to conduct their role and support our patients.

We will provide more opportunities for our volunteers to express their feedback and ideas. We want our volunteers to feel connected with each other, understand what the wider volunteer and Patient Experience team are accomplishing and be able to easily access wellbeing support. We will commit to conducting an annual volunteer survey to provide the volunteers with an opportunity to feedback anonymously about their volunteer journey. Furthermore, we will explore additional feedback and support opportunities, such as formalised supervision sessions and volunteer peer support.

We know that volunteering is a well-recognised route into employment for the NHS as well as providing a platform for students considering medical, nursing, and allied health professional degrees. This is reflected in the national NHS long term plan

and our Trust's clinical strategy which aims to provide “investment in workforce to support volunteers and new entry routes for staff e.g. apprenticeships.”

We will grow our pool of young adult volunteers, including our NHS Cadets, to support the next generation of the NHS workforce. To do this we want to forge greater relationships with our local colleges and universities, and stronger links with our apprenticeship and work experience programmes. **We want to work towards seeing a clear volunteer to career progression for our volunteers** who are looking for health care opportunities. These are big ambitions which will take time to establish, and our approach may evolve as we receive feedback and shape our actions on our volunteer responses.



League of Friends



Objective Four: Modernise Our Systems

Trust Objective Link: Unlocking a better future



In February 2024 we received the results from an external audit of our volunteer recruitment process, this was an important time for us to reflect on what processes could be improved. We have already started implementing actions to address the recommendations made. **We will complete all of these actions to ensure we have clear evidence to demonstrate the basis of our recruitment decisions.** Establishing those actions has highlighted an area for development within our volunteer management systems.

We will explore Volunteer Management systems to improve the efficiency of our service. As stated in our Clinical Strategy "investing in technology can reduce strain on workforce, improve the sustainability of healthcare and offer a better experience to patients." In the context of our service, modernising our approach will secure a sustainable and efficient future. It will also enable us to improve our local and

national reporting and demonstrate the incredible impact our volunteers have.

Inspired by the ambitions of Our Joint Clinical Strategy and our group model approach, **we will embrace the opportunity to work more closely alongside University Hospital Bristol and Weston (UHBW) Volunteer Services.**

Key areas include;

- We see a great long-term benefit to aligning our recruitment process and policies, where appropriate.
- We recognise that they will have different ideas and approaches that we would benefit from shadowing and learning from.
- Their recent implementation of Assemble Volunteer Management software will be an opportunity for us to understand the advantages and disadvantages of this programme and may be an opportunity for us to explore implementation of the software to manage our volunteer database and rota system.



Governance and reporting

- We will provide a summary report on the progress of the strategic action plan quarterly to the Patient and Carer Experience Group (PCEG) meetings, as recommended by our KPMG audit. This will include an annual update on our volunteer demographics.
- We will also continue to attend and report into the Divisional Patient Experience Group, Patient and Carer Partnership Group, Carers Strategy Group, Dementia Strategy Group and JCNC subgroup when appropriate.
- We will contribute a summary of our activities in the Patient and Carer Annual Experience Report and the NBT Quality Account.
- We will provide our volunteer statistics to the NHS National Data Collection framework, in keeping with the requirement by NHS England to provide statistics on the number of volunteers we have, the hours they donate, and their demographic information.
- We will audit our volunteer files on a bimonthly basis to ensure compliance rates are maintained.





Who we will work with



NHS Cadets



Volunteer Services are proud supporters of the St John Ambulance NHS Cadets scheme, enrolling students into our volunteer roles to give them experience within the hospital environment.

“NHS Cadets has given me an insight into different health care professions, which has then led on to me choosing Optometry as my future career.”

Zahur, NHS Cadet and NBT Volunteer



“I always knew I wanted to work in the NHS but wasn't sure what role to pursue. Being an NHS Cadet with St John has really helped me narrow down what I wanted to do – I can't wait to start my career as a paramedic.”

Sumia, NHS Cadet and NBT Volunteer

Peer Support Volunteer



We are privileged to have many peer support volunteer roles throughout different specialities. They use their lived experience to support our current patients.

“I am part of the Kidney Peer Mentor Group and I speak to and support people who are about to start dialysis, need to start dialysis, or are already having dialysis. I know that getting diagnosed with renal failure can be quite daunting to a lot of people. It is nice when the patients I've been supporting feel safe to speak to me when they're anxious about anything and they seem really grateful– I've been described as “a Godsend”.”

Adebomi, Kidney Peer Support Volunteer

Patient Experience



Our survey volunteers gather and encourage feedback from our patients and people who look after them at home.

“This is a great way of obtaining real time patient experience... I have enjoyed meeting and chatting to a wide range of patients on different wards.”

Val, Patient Experience Volunteer

Move Maker



Our Move Makers are often the first interaction our outpatients or visitors have when they arrive at our hospitals. They strive to make everyone's visit as welcoming and stress-free as possible.

“When I retired, I initially cared for my wife, but after she passed away, I found I had time on my hands and I missed the workplace. I wanted to stay active, physically and mentally, and use some of my life and business skills. Being a Move Maker gives me a sense of purpose, a reason to get up in the morning, and the satisfaction of doing something worthwhile. Oh... and I really enjoy it!”

John, Move Maker

Patient Befriender



Volunteer

Our patient befrienders offer company and companionship to our ward based patients to help reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.

“I know what it is like to be in hospital for a long time, as a patient, and how isolating that can feel, so the best thing about volunteering for me is cheering people up and letting them know that they're not alone.”

Stewart, Patient Befriender Volunteer

Volunteer Profiles

If you would like this document in an alternative format, please contact the Volunteer Services Team at volunteer.services@nbt.nhs.uk or 0117 414 0110

Se desejar este documento em um formato alternativo, entre em contato com a Equipe de Experiência do Paciente em volunteer.services@nbt.nhs.uk ou 0117 414 0110

Jeśli chcesz otrzymać ten dokument w alternatywnym formacie, skontaktuj się z zespołem obsługi pacjenta pod adresem volunteer.services@nbt.nhs.uk lub pod numerem 0117 414 0110

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Kung gusto mo ang dokumentong ito sa alternatibong format, mangyaring makipag-ugnayan sa Volunteer Services Team sa volunteer.services@nbt.nhs.uk o 0117 414 0110

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With thanks to all who contributed in shaping this strategic plan.