

MEANINGFUL MAY YOUTH VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME 2024



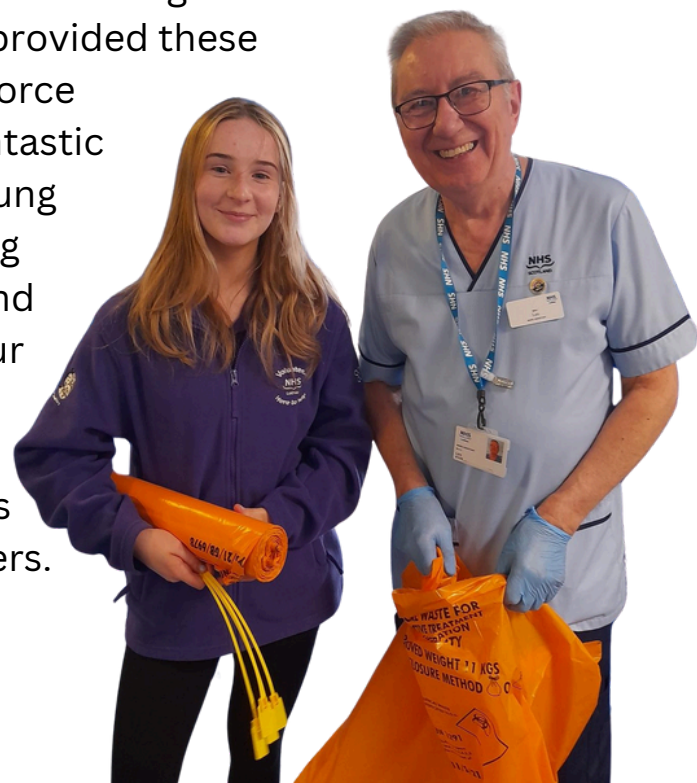
IMPACT REPORT

Foreword - Caitlin Nisbet, Voluntary Services Manager (Youth Volunteering)



This programme is a fantastic opportunity for young people who may not normally choose to volunteer to gain real insight into the amazing work that takes place day to day within our hospitals across the Lothians. We hope this experience will serve to inspire the next generation of our NHS workforce!

Following the successful delivery of the Youth (16-25) Volunteering Summer Programme last year, we were delighted to launch the Meaningful May Youth Volunteering Programme 2024. This programme builds on what was achieved last year and the long-lasting outcomes have been fantastic. It's been a pleasure to watch this year's cohort of young people push themselves, learn about their likes and dislikes, try new things, create connections with one and other and develop their confidence in a new environment. The completion of the programme by the entire cohort, alongside retention of almost half the cohort as regular volunteers, as well as interest in the Modern Apprenticeship programme and a desire within two thirds of the group to explore careers in healthcare, speaks volumes for the encouraging and nurturing environment that staff and experienced volunteers have provided these young people. With thanks to the Workforce Development team, who delivered a fantastic Employability Skills workshop to the young people, I can't wait to watch these young people progress into their next steps, and I'm looking forward to asking some of our new core volunteers to support with future iterations of this programme, and share stories from their experiences when it was their turn as youth volunteers.



Overview of Delivery



This youth volunteering programme was initially developed in 2022 to meet the need for inclusive taster sessions and to showcase to young people who may not ordinarily volunteer what it's like to be involved within the NHS. Building on the progress and learning from previous years and some reflections of staff and experienced volunteer capacity, it was felt that May would address staff and volunteer gaps whilst being well-suited to young people who wouldn't be sitting exams and would be looking for alternative ways to spend the month, as opposed to exam leave. Recruitment was undertaken via a range of methods including close collaboration with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and Skills Development Scotland, social media promotion and through extensive networking with a variety of external partners. Three selection days were successfully held at the end of March 2024. These selection days were designed to be informal, inclusive and NHS values-based and included ice breaker tasks, getting to know you activities and a 1:1 chat with a staff member. Voluntary Services and Workforce Development staff used these sessions to identify the candidates that really displayed NHS Lothian's values of Care and Compassion, Openness, Honesty and Responsibility, Teamwork, Dignity and Respect and Quality. As the aim of this programme was to provide opportunities to young people with barriers who wouldn't ordinarily consider volunteering, staff also used these days to identify young people who would get the most out of this type of opportunity. Other young people who were unsuccessful in this instance were redirected to our core programme if more suitable or to their local Volunteer Centre for a better-suited opportunity.



Overview of Delivery

A welcome day was held for successful applicants at the Western General Hospital on 1st May where the new volunteers were inducted into NHS Lothian, given full training by four Voluntary Service staff members and issued necessary paperwork, ID badges and uniform. The volunteering programme then commenced from 2nd May onwards and ran until 31st May when a closing day was held. All volunteers were scheduled at least 8 volunteering days and were provided with a bespoke volunteering

timetable, created by the Service Manager on site with the intention of giving each volunteer a real insight into the goings-on within the

hospital. Volunteering was carried out across a wide range of areas and wards across hospitals, including (but not limited to) renal wards, medicine of the elderly, maternity, stroke, orthopaedics, general medicine, dialysis and oncology. As well as having a presence on wards as ward helpers, volunteers also spent time as welcome guides, gardening volunteers, meaningful activity volunteers, clothing store volunteers, staff experience volunteers and therapist volunteers. They were placed across the Royal Infirmary, the Western General, St. John's Hospital, East Lothian Community Hospital and Royal Hospital of Children and Young People.



Our Meaningful May Volunteers

We received 32 applications and from this invited 26 to our selection days. From our selection day we recruited 20 volunteers. Out of the 20 volunteers recruited, all 20 successfully completed the 4-week programme.

11 are living in an area ranked in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as 1 or 2 (within the top 10% and 20% most deprived areas in Scotland) (6 of these in an SIMD 1 area)

6 disclosed neurodivergence/neurodivergent conditions

6 disclosed recent or ongoing mental health conditions

5 disclosed recent or ongoing caring responsibilities

4 described themselves as unemployed and not in any education or training

6 disclosed a learning difficulty, learning disability or long-term health condition

1 disclosed being care-experienced



Programme Impact

20 volunteers completed an astounding 165 days' worth of volunteering, or around 725 hours!



The volunteers were asked to complete a pre and post-evaluation survey on the welcome day and then once the programme had reached completion in order to measure the impact the programme had made.

93% reported an increase in confidence. The largest increases were around attending new places, conversational skills and taking initiative in new situations, with average scoring on the 5-point evaluation survey increasing by at least one point per volunteer.

58% reported an increase in communication skills. The largest increase was on the volunteers' active listening skills, with average scoring on the 5-point evaluation survey increasing by at least one point per volunteer.

33% reported an increase in their connections.

83% reported an increase in their self-management abilities. The largest increase was around the volunteers abilities to deal with problems they are faced with, with average scoring on the 5-point evaluation survey increasing by at least one point per volunteer.

75% reported that they felt more confident about their futures.



When the volunteers were asked what went well with Meaningful May, the four main areas that were identified were personal development (development of skills, future goals and confidence), meeting new people, the patients, and the structure and content of the programme.

Volunteers and staff were very friendly, they knew that we needed more support

It was a positive experience

I got to talk to experienced volunteers about my future

I got to talk about what I want to do with paramedics and trainee paramedics

Met lots of diverse people

I developed my communication skills and how to approach people in different ways

I really enjoyed chatting with patients and learning about their pasts

I was able to talk to strangers

I got to meet new people

The positivity of the people within the hospital was inspiring

I felt included, felt a purpose

I liked being able to help people

I have learned about different ways I could become a midwife

I enjoyed being a team with my experienced volunteers, after I met them all my fears were gone. They were welcoming and I felt happy, relieved and excited

I have built my confidence

It has really improved my social skills and some other general skills I wouldn't have expected to learn in a hospital

Joking around with patients and forming genuine connections with the patients



I developed new goals for my future career

The patients seemed excited to see me and interested in what I was doing. The staff enjoyed and appreciated my company

Next steps for volunteers

Eight of the volunteers have submitted applications for our core volunteering programme in sites across the Lothians and intend to continue to volunteer with us in Welcome Guide, Ward Helper and Therapist Volunteer roles. One has secured a paid role as a Clinical Support Worker. Thirteen of the volunteers have expressed a desire to continue down a pathway into working in healthcare.



After the successful appointment of two of last year's summer programme volunteers to NHS Lothian's competitive Modern Apprenticeship programme at the beginning of this year, the intention is to build on this pathway for volunteers. Five of our volunteers have expressed an interest in NHS Lothian's Modern Apprenticeships programme, with two having submitted applications to the most recent intake.

"My biggest take away from the Meaningful May programme has been that I can reach my goal, and I should believe what people say to me - everyone is positive. Just because I have worries doesn't mean I can't overcome them with the right [support] around me"



Change Story - C

C was referred to the programme via Skills Development Scotland, and was keen to take part as they have an interest in nursing, and they wanted to build their confidence and become more comfortable with meeting new people. C is neurodivergent and living in kinship care after experiencing parental bereavements. C is also a secondary carer for their young relatives. They acknowledged many elements of the programme would be out of their comfort zone, however were keen to push themselves to make the most of the opportunity. Despite anxiety around the recruitment process and having to speak out within a group setting, C performed well at interview, exceeding their own expectations, feeding back to the Voluntary Services team: *“I came to email to say a massive thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend yesterday’s interview. The interview has had a massively positive impact and boosted my self confidence to a huge extent due to how well I was able to communicate.”*

C went from strength to strength throughout the programme, receiving consistently positive feedback from staff and other volunteers. They attended an employability session which was delivered to help equip the volunteers with the skills needed to perform competitively at NHS Lothian interviews.

When asked about their experience, C said:

“My favourite moment of the programme has been meeting new people and the therapists. I loved seeing how happy the therapists made the patients, it made me feel happy. My biggest takeaway from the Meaningful May programme has been that I have developed my communication skills, and went from being extremely shy to fairly confident.”

In evaluation surveys completed before and after the programme, C reported considerable improvements across each measurable – confidence, communication, self-management, connections and their future self. Each measurable increased on average by one point along the 5-point scale. The largest changes could be seen in how C perceived their confidence, progressing from mostly “not confident” to mostly “confident” across most markers.:

Pre-programme evaluation

	1 Really not confident	2 Not confident	3 Okay	4 Confident	5 Very Confident
How do you feel when meeting new people?			X		
How comfortable are you attending new places?		X			
How comfortable do you feel making eye contact when speaking to others?		X			
How do you feel about your conversational skills? (outwith your family and friends i.e when volunteering / college)			X		
How do you feel working in a group?		X			
How comfortable are you with taking the initiative in new situations?		X			
Any other information or comments?					Overall score (1-5) 2.3

Post-programme evaluation

	1 Really not confident	2 Not confident	3 Okay	4 Confident	5 Very Confident
How do you feel when meeting new people?			X		
How comfortable are you attending new places?				X	
How comfortable do you feel making eye contact when speaking to others?			X		
How do you feel about your conversational skills? (outwith your family and friends i.e when volunteering / college)				X	
How do you feel working in a group?				X	
How comfortable are you with taking the initiative in new situations?				X	
Any other information or comments?					Overall score (1-5) 3.7

C is awaiting disclosure clearance to become a core volunteer with us to continue this progress, and will go to college at the end of summer to begin a gateway to healthcare college course, with a firm goal of a career in nursing.

Engagement of existing volunteers and NHS staff

The involvement of our existing volunteers was essential in ensuring the success of the programme. Each Meaningful May Programme Volunteer was matched with an experienced volunteer or a staff member for every volunteer shift, allowing them to learn throughout their placements from those who know the wards and sites best and to provide some encouragement and support as they carried out their volunteering roles. We wanted this to be a mutually enjoyable experience for the experienced volunteers, and hoped that this opportunity to mentor a new volunteer in a role would provide an added sense of fulfillment and satisfaction as they watched the Meaningful May volunteers grow in confidence and develop their skills.



Western General Hospital

25 Volunteers
6 Activity Coordinators
1 Ward Assistant

Little France

24 Volunteers (RIE)
19 volunteers (RHCYP)

East Lothian Community Hospital

10 Volunteers

St. Johns Hospital

33 Volunteers
1 Receptionist

In total 111 Volunteers and staff members were directly involved in supporting our Meaningful May Volunteers to volunteer. We can't thank them enough for all they have done to help this programme thrive!

Thank you, it was lovely to be involved with the Meaningful May programme. The patients always enjoy chatting to the volunteers, it really brightens up their day! And it's such a great way for the volunteers to gain some experience on the different wards and learn first-hand about patients' experiences and their lives.

- Taryn, ELCH

The volunteers shadowed well and read the situation in each ward with very good awareness. They brought different conversations to the ward. Even seeing a younger face brought questions from patients and staff from sometimes stagnant silences. and definitely encouraged left-field conversations. It gave the students a visual and in the moment, powerful hands-on new experiences. Some of them decided to focus on careers on caring. What more can be done than that?

- Ann, SJH

I am always pleased to support the aspiring volunteers! I find the patients are pleased to see a new face and my shadowees are always keen to get stuck in and chat a bit with the patients!

- Andrew, ELCH

Thank you so much for offering me the opportunity to participate in this programme. It was a pleasure working with the young people, especially since the ones I worked with were all around my age. It was a truly collaborative experience where we were able to both learn from and support each other.

- Mikka, RIE

I enjoyed my time with both volunteers, Aseel and Victoria. It was a great opportunity for me to speak one to one with older teenagers as I don't have much contact with that age group currently. Both were very respectful, polite and interested. All in all this was a really worthwhile experience for me and so refreshing to meet such lovely, keen and genuinely interested young people.

- Lynne, RHCYP

Throughout my sessions, I met different volunteers but all of them had a few things in common: they were kind, compassionate and more than willing to help. I enjoyed watching their confidence grow as the session went on and I found their caring, friendly demeanor, with which they attended to the patients, endearing. Overall, I thoroughly appreciated my time with the new volunteers during the Meaningful May programme and I am certain that they will be a wonderful addition to the team in the future.

- Desandhi, RIE

The volunteers were always keen to have chats with the patients entering the building - it was lovely to see them jump at opportunities to point patients in the right direction. When faced with an unsure question they were not afraid to ask us or each other for help - a lot of teamwork which was great to see.

- Elise, SJH (former Summer Programme Volunteer)

Future Improvements and Looking Ahead to 2025

Some constructive suggestions were gathered in the volunteer feedback session revolving around the length of volunteer days, volunteers feeling better prepared for difficult situations within the hospital and the organisation of timetables and scheduling. These suggestions will be helpful in future planning sessions for the programme, scheduled to occur in Mid-August.

There is an ongoing discussion about the programme dates, and when would be best for this programme to run. As opposed to running between July and August, it was felt that May would be a great month for young people not partaking in exams and looking for other opportunities during exam leave, as well as answering some concerns around staff and experienced volunteer capacity. Whilst there was much more capacity in May as opposed to the summer months, we received less applicants than the previous year, and in particular less than expected from young school pupils who were not undertaking exams. The programme was still successfully delivered to a cohort of young people with barriers who benefitted from the support, however the recruitment did come from a number of different sources as opposed to being largely from schools and other education providers. We had chosen May specifically to cater to this demographic of young people, therefore for future iterations we will consider if another month may be more suitable, and more accessible for young people with barriers. Further discussion on programme dates is due to take place in August 2024. When this is established ample lead in times for staff, experienced volunteers and applicants can be ensured.





**With thanks to
our funders**



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DYW, SDS, West Lothian Council Supported Employment service, West Lothian College, Edinburgh College, The Action Group, the Welcoming, Volunteer Edinburgh, Volunteer Midlothian.

