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Health
Charity

HELPING
OUR HOSPITALS
DO MORE



**Volunteering at
Imperial College
Healthcare NHS Trust**
Strategy Report, 2017-21

Working in partnership with

NHS
Imperial College Healthcare
NHS Trust

Volunteering at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

Strategy Report, 2017-21

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Volunteering)
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Executive summary

In 2017, we set ourselves an ambitious vision for volunteering at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust: to transform the existing programme and create an instantly recognisable community of volunteers who visibly make a positive difference to the experience of all patients, visitors and staff at our hospitals.

This report looks back on the three-year period between April 2017 and March 2020, during which time we mapped out and delivered a comprehensive programme of improvements to help us reach this goal. The report also examines the following year, 2020/21, which provided new and unforeseen challenges as we adapted our volunteering programme to help our hospitals respond to the extraordinary pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Looking back on this period, I'm extremely proud of the progress we've made and I believe our vision for volunteering has now become a day-to-day reality.

When we took over responsibility for volunteering on the Trust's behalf in 2016, there was little infrastructure in place to support an effective and meaningful programme. There were around 140 regular volunteers but they were not being set up for success in their roles, with a lengthy, paper-based recruitment process, limited training and little support available from staff at the hospitals. There was no active recruitment marketing and little was done consistently across the Trust to recognise and reward volunteers for their contribution.

Four years on and the picture is now very different. We've worked with partners in the community to grow our annual number of active volunteers to over 600, while creating a supportive culture in which volunteers are provided with comprehensive training, looked after in their roles and thanked for their enormous contribution.

Over the course of delivering this programme of work, I've been inspired time and again by the remarkable devotion of our volunteers, many of whom have been arriving for shifts every week for several years. Working alongside such a passionate and dedicated group of people has only reaffirmed my belief that volunteers can and do make an extraordinary impact in the healthcare environment.

The progress we've made during this time would not have been possible without an exceptional team, and I'm hugely grateful to my

colleagues in the Volunteering Department (past and present) who have worked incredibly hard to design and develop new tools and resources, introduce new volunteer roles, and run selection events so that volunteers can make a meaningful contribution to our hospitals.

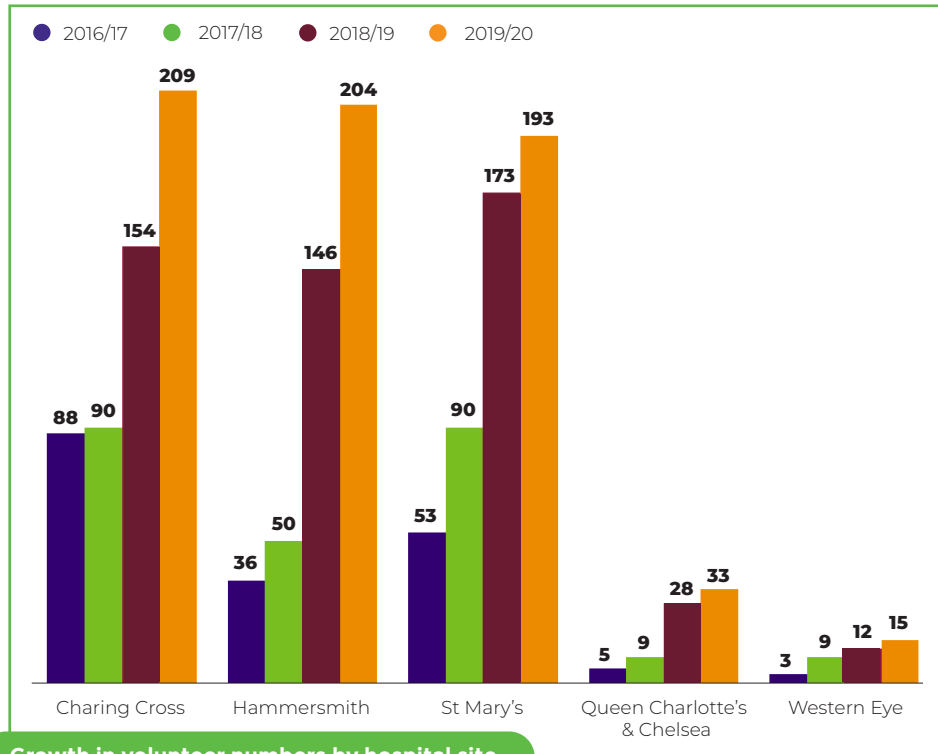
I hope the evaluation and learning taken from this strategy will inform and inspire others who are working with volunteers in the health sector.

Sam Morris

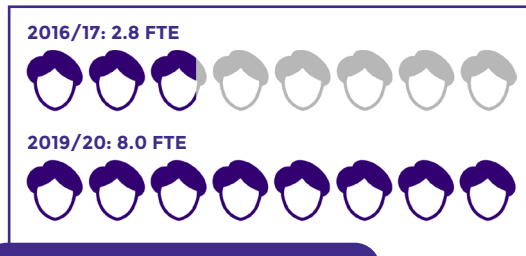
Head of Volunteering,
Imperial Health Charity



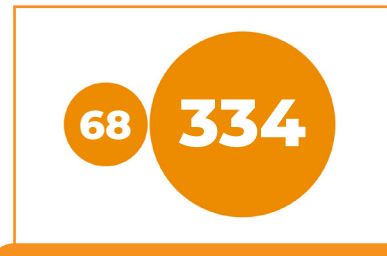
Our volunteering journey, 2017-21



Growth in volunteer numbers by hospital site



Size of volunteering staff team



New volunteers per year, 16/17 - 19/20

- Introduced a digital volunteering management system
- Established a core training programme for all volunteers
- Expanded our staff team to manage the volunteering programme across multiple sites

2017/18

- Achieved Investing in Volunteers accreditation
- Named as a finalist in the Third Sector Awards for Volunteer Team of the Year
- Developed staff team to include volunteering manager and support officer at each site

2019/20

- Started running additional learning sessions for volunteers

2018/19

- Published a new policy for volunteering within the Trust's hospitals

- Established Youth Volunteering Programme for 16 to 25-year-olds

- Delivered Covid-19 emergency volunteering response

2020/21

- Received a volunteering award from the Mayor of London

- Introduced the Crisis Response Volunteer role

Our impact on patients and patient care

Volunteers can transform the hospital experience for patients. By offering a friendly welcome or an ear to listen, they help to make the clinical environment a calmer and more comfortable space for patients at a time of distress, concern or anxiety.

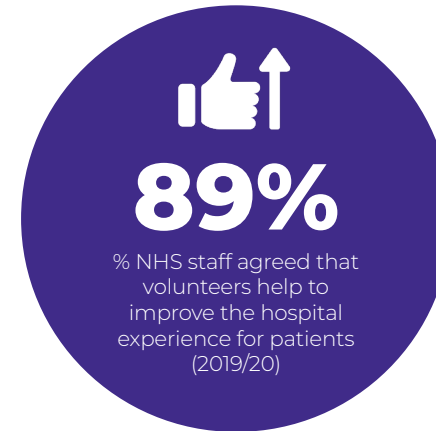
Over the last four years, we've introduced a wide range of dynamic volunteer roles across a large number of wards, departments and services, selecting volunteers with appropriate skills and experience to provide the best possible service.

Beyond simply supporting NHS staff, we've worked closely with teams to co-develop bespoke volunteer roles tailored to the particular needs of their service as well as involving hospital colleagues directly in the volunteer selection process. Many of these roles encourage volunteers to proactively engage with patients in hospital, providing valuable companionship support when staff don't always have the time.

Offering a friendly welcome or an ear to listen, volunteers help to make the clinical environment a calmer and more comfortable place.

We've worked creatively to introduce meaningful ward-based volunteer activities, which help to ensure patients feel valued and cared for – from serving food and drink at mealtimes to spending social time in day rooms.

To prepare our volunteers for carrying out these roles effectively, we've also overhauled the existing application and selection process and implemented a comprehensive training and induction journey. It means all our volunteers have a good understanding of the hospital sites, relevant health and safety requirements and our expectations of them in the role.



“Volunteers are very much appreciated and support patients’ needs. Their cheerfulness is a welcome sight on the ward.”
NHS staff member



Developing core training for volunteers


As well as being equipped to volunteer safely in the hospital environment, we wanted our core training to ensure volunteers felt welcomed as part of the charity - and the NHS Trust. Using the NHS core skills framework as a guide, we designed a programme that condensed the relevant learning points into a single day's training. During the pandemic we moved our volunteer training online to make it more flexible and accessible.



% NHS staff who agree volunteers reduce anxiety among patients



% NHS staff who agree volunteers reduce patient waiting times at reception



“We’ve seen a lot of positivity from patients. When Norman gets on the bed, they feel his paws and smile. One lady who hadn’t spoken to us for a couple of days couldn’t stop talking about the dog afterwards!”

Sarah Sparkes (and Norman)

Animal Visitor Volunteer,
Charing Cross Hospital

Our impact on NHS staff and hospitals

As well as improving the experience of care for patients, volunteers make our hospitals better places to work for NHS staff. Their contribution complements and enhances the care that staff already provide, improving the overall service for patients and their families.

But volunteers also boost morale, ensuring hospital workers feel appreciated, valued and supported.

We've built strong relationships at all levels of the Trust over the last four years – securing the support of senior management, engaging with site operations teams and collaborating with the communications division to share key messages.

Most importantly, we've worked in partnership with individual wards, departments and services to help them understand our ethos for volunteering, creating Volunteer Supervisor roles for those who welcome volunteers into their team and even giving NHS staff

The contribution of volunteers enhances the care that NHS staff provide, improving the overall service for patients.

the opportunity to improve their knowledge by volunteering themselves.

We've also devised and delivered basic training to enable staff to work effectively with volunteers, empowering them to co-develop bespoke roles and inform us about progress, challenges and opportunities.

To make sure our volunteers are instantly recognisable to staff, we've introduced a distinctive purple uniform for them to wear during shifts. In a 2019/20 survey, 82% of NHS staff agreed that volunteers were now easily recognisable within the hospitals.

71%

2016/17

96%

2019/20

% NHS staff who agreed volunteers help to improve their morale

44%

2016/17

82%

2019/20

% NHS staff who agreed volunteers are easily recognisable

"[Volunteers] made us feel cared for and valued. That was so important during a stressful time."

NHS staff member

"Thank you for everything. [The volunteers] were incredible and really pulled out all the stops. It made a massive difference and improved team spirit."

NHS staff member



88%

% NHS staff agreed that volunteers make their hospital a better place to work (2019/20)

Working closely with hospital staff teams



With hospital staff working in a demanding, high-pressure environment, our biggest challenge has been finding ways to engage them and ensure they supervise and support volunteers in their roles. To address this problem, we involved NHS staff in the development of new roles and volunteer selection events. We've also introduced an e-learning course for staff to complete before we place volunteers in their department.

“There are lots of people who arrive at the hospital and feel lost, not knowing if they’re in the right place. But when they see a friendly face, they relax a little bit.”



Mary Sloane (left)
Hospital Host Volunteer,
Charing Cross Hospital

Our impact on **the volunteer experience**

Going above and beyond to create the best possible experience for our volunteers has enabled us to maintain a highly-engaged and motivated community of volunteers committed to helping our hospitals.

In 2016 there was very little infrastructure in place to welcome volunteers, help them adjust to the hospital environment and thank them for their contribution.

Now, our programme is set up to support, acknowledge and reward volunteers throughout their journey with us.

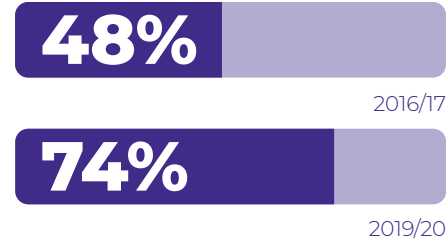
We've removed some of the biggest barriers to volunteering by creating roles and shift patterns that accommodate volunteers at different times of the day, including evenings and weekends. We've also made the application process more efficient, avoiding unnecessary delays and ensuring applicants can start volunteering as quickly as possible.

Our programme is set up to support, acknowledge and reward volunteers throughout their journey with us.

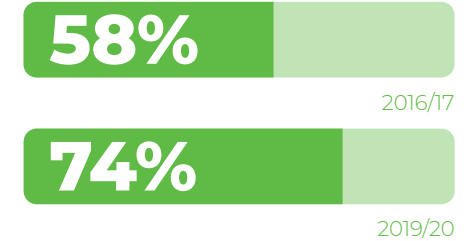
Once our volunteers have started with us, they can access one-to-one support at any time with staff teams based in our hospital site volunteering offices five days a week.

Beyond the hospital walls, we've introduced more sophisticated ways to stay in touch with volunteers, including a regular newsletter and an annual survey that gives volunteers the opportunity to share their views.

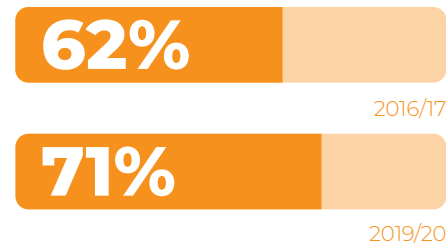
To acknowledge their enormous contribution, we've also established reward and recognition initiatives, such as celebration events and an awards scheme, so that we can say thank you to our volunteers in ways that are meaningful to them.



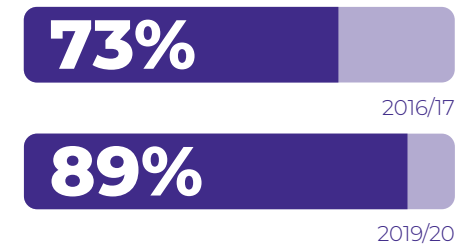
% volunteers who agreed volunteering improves their wellbeing



% volunteers who agreed volunteering improves their self-esteem



% volunteers who agreed volunteering improves their confidence



% volunteers who agreed they felt supported by our volunteering staff team



Creating a volunteer awards scheme



In 2016 the existing length of service awards scheme failed to recognise volunteers until they had completed at least five years, so we introduced new awards for contributions of 30 hours, 100 hours, one year and three years. To reward more volunteers for achieving specific standards, we also created awards aligned with the Trust's four values - kind, collaborative, aspirational and expert - and opened up the nomination process to anyone - staff, volunteer or patient.



Fatima Elshams (right)
Summer Youth Volunteering
Programme 2018, Hammersmith Hospital

“I’ve gained a lot of confidence and improved my communication skills. Volunteering is a great way to gain experience while giving back to my local community.”

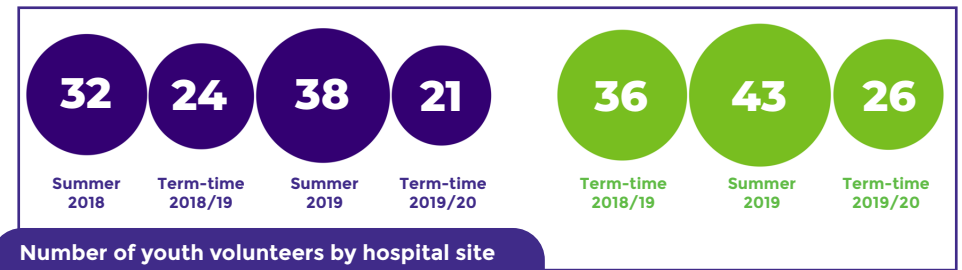
In Focus: Youth Volunteering Programme

In 2018 we launched a hospital-based volunteering programme for young people aged 16 to 25. Led by a dedicated programme manager, initially funded by the #iwill Fund and the Pears Foundation, the Youth Volunteering Programme has provided a platform for over 100 young people to gain valuable experience while giving back to their local community.

We worked with schools, colleges and community groups to encourage young people from a diverse range of backgrounds to take part for a minimum of 30 hours over the course of eight weeks during summer and over six months during term-time.

Beginning at Hammersmith Hospital in summer 2018, the programme was quickly expanded to Charing Cross Hospital and was due to start at St Mary's Hospital in 2020 only to be disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The programme has challenged perceptions about the contribution young people can make in the hospital environment, while creating a unique opportunity for 16 to 25 year-olds to develop valuable interpersonal skills. The programme is now accredited by the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme - the first NHS trust to be recognised as an approved provider for youth volunteering.



Number of youth volunteers by hospital site

○ Hammersmith ● Charing Cross



Next steps for our youth volunteers

62%

% youth volunteers who said they made new friends during the programme

93%

% youth volunteers who said they felt supported by Imperial Health Charity

“Volunteering has increased my confidence, provided a real insight into what working in the health sector is like and enabled me to give back to the community.”

Youth volunteer





Covid-19: adapting during the pandemic

The end of our three-year strategy coincided with the beginning of the 'new normal' and we were faced with the unforeseen challenge of adapting our volunteering programme to help our hospitals cope with the unprecedented demands of the global pandemic.

With visiting restrictions enforced and a large proportion of our volunteer community advised to isolate, we took the

decision to suspend our ward-based activities and undertake a rapid recruitment process, bringing on board hundreds of new Crisis Response Volunteers in April and May 2020.

These new volunteers carried out emergency tasks such as delivering hot meals to front-line workers, staffing hospital shops and offering hand sanitiser at entrance area welcome stations.

Later in the year, we developed additional roles including supporting the NHS staff vaccination programme and safely returning to wards to distribute meals to patients.

The rapid implementation of an emergency hospital-based volunteering response involved a huge reorganisation of resources, with additional charity staff redeployed to help supervise volunteers arriving for shifts between 8am and 8pm, seven days a week at the height of the first wave.

Our hospital-based site teams developed thorough risk assessment procedures to ensure volunteer activities were safe and appropriate, and we made additional efforts to maintain communications with those among our volunteer community who were unable to attend the hospitals at the time.

The response from NHS staff was overwhelmingly positive, and a survey conducted in July 2020 revealed that 92% of hospital workers had felt supported by the charity during the Covid-19 response.

 **583**

Crisis Response Volunteers participated

 **17,664**

hours completed by Crisis Response Volunteers during 2020/21

88%

% Crisis Response Volunteers who agreed they helped to improve NHS staff morale

79%

% Crisis Response Volunteers agreed they had an improved sense of local belonging

 **170,000**

free meals distributed to NHS staff

98%

% NHS staff said they valued the free meals

“The support from the volunteers has been so important to us.”

NHS staff member

94%

% Crisis Response Volunteers said they felt their role made a useful contribution during the Covid-19 pandemic

“I feel privileged to be working with a diverse group of people from different career paths and backgrounds. It’s great to feel like we’re contributing to the NHS effort to fight Covid-19.”



Luke Smyth

Crisis Response Volunteer,
St Mary's Hospital



Working in partnership with



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Acknowledgements

The Youth Volunteering Programme at Charing Cross and Hammersmith hospitals was funded for the first two years through the #iwill Fund by the Pears Foundation, thanks to a £40 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high-quality social action opportunities. We are extremely grateful to the Pears Foundation for their support and generosity.

Data sources

Survey of volunteers: 2016 (134 responses, 67% of max sample); 2017 (55 responses, 22% of max sample); 2018 (107 responses, 21% of max sample); and 2019 (129 responses, 20% of max sample)

Youth Volunteering Programme surveys: summer 2019 (47 responses, 75% of max sample) and term-time 2019/20 (22 responses, 50% of max sample)

Crisis Response Volunteer survey 2020 (201 responses, 65% of max sample) and annual volunteer survey 2021 (256 responses, 65% of max sample)

Survey of NHS staff working with volunteers: 2016 (117 responses); 2017 (61 responses); 2018 (97 responses); and 2019 (126 responses)

Big Charity Survey of NHS staff: 2020 (1,500 responses, 11% of max sample).

All images produced in accordance with national coronavirus guidance at the time that photography took place.

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