Volunteering in NHSScotland Programme

Annual Survey of Volunteer Practitioners' Network

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Background

The Volunteering in NHSScotland Programme began in October 2011 and was mainstreamed into core work of Healthcare Improvement Scotland – Community Engagement (previously known as the Scottish Health Council) in April 2016.

The programme provides a range of support to NHS boards on issues relating to volunteering via its Volunteering Practitioners Network:

- Community of Practice
- Peer networking / practice development opportunities
- Regular communication and updates on volunteering related matters
- Volunteering Helpdesk
- Management and administration of Volunteer Information System
- Training and 1-1 support on Volunteer Information System
- Development of guidance and resources to support volunteering in NHSScotland

In 2022-23 the programme delivered:

- 1:1 volunteer management support on 220 occasions
- 9 peer support / practice development sessions , with 113 attendees
- 15 information bulletins issued to the 86 members of the Volunteering Practitioners Network
- 9 Volunteer Information System training sessions delivered to 35 staff
- Weekly updates to the Community of Practice

Survey results

An electronic questionnaire was designed to elicit feedback on the support provided by the programme to NHS boards the previous 12 months, and to gather suggestions for future improvement.

18 responses were received from members of the network, from a possible 86. Generally, the feedback provided was positive. This response rate of 21% of membership, is less than anticipated, however we have analysed the feedback and identified a number of recommendations which we will incorporate into our work-plan for 2023-24.

Some respondents highlighted that they are unable to access some of our support provision due to capacity issues.

We noticed that in addition to the limited response rate, engagement from network members remains limited to a relatively small core group across all of our support provision. We will carry out an improvement project to better understand more about our network membership and consider how we can increase levels of engagement across the membership

1. The Community of Practice is an MS Teams channel where staff can find information on a range of topics relating to volunteering and connect with colleagues across NHSScotland.

Is the Community of Practice useful?

Yes	15
No	1
Never used	2

2. **What do you enjoy most about the Community of Practice?**

Being able to ask my Peers anything at any time.
I can get ideas for things that will support our volunteers
Being able to share information with others who are managing volunteers in healthcare. As my role is currently involving a lot of lone working this is hugely helpful to me.
That someone else is regularly reviewing best practice and including links in the CoP so we don't need to do it.
Updates and links you provide to interesting materials. training etc.
I have had little call for it over the last two years but can fully appreciate the need for such a space and what it can offer.
Opportunity to check with other Volunteer Manager's, and share practice
Up to date information at a finger tip
Ability to connect quickly and request info form colleagues in the network. Also online provision of up to date resources etc
easy access to others in similar job roles to bounce ideas off etc
To find out wider volunteering programmes from colleagues
Freedom to ask anything and a source of information
Sharing practice
Being part of a community with a shared interest
Have not had the opportunity to join more than once but I found it extremely useful to hear challenges and successes of others managing volunteers. I have found myself thinking of things I can discuss with them at the next opportunity. It felt like an instant support community

3. How could we improve the Community of Practice?

It is difficult for HiS to improve on a forum which has been created for the good of volunteer managers but perhaps not utilised as it should be.
I don't have any suggestions at the moment, sorry!
Making it a bit easier to sign in to the teams page, but I understand this might be due to my organisation's settings.
More files with exemplars from other boards of various key products would be really useful - e.g. volunteer policies, strategies, promotional materials etc
I think you have made great improvements over the last few months as we all get used to it. Nothing comes to mind just now.
Too much information sending to links it feels overwhelming
I wasn't aware of the service.
unsure as am still starting to use it a bit more fully
I don't think you could - it's an excellent source of information on an easily accessible platform
Good resource, works well now on Teams
Unsure
cant think of anything
Maybe add a Resources & Helpful Links section?
no comments at moment as I don.t have a lot of experience using this. I hope to build it into my regular work commitments

4. Peer networking sessions are an opportunity for staff working in volunteering or volunteer management roles to come together virtually via MS Teams to discuss the topics that are important to them.

Did you attend any peer networking sessions in 2022-23?

Yes	13
No	5

5. **What do you enjoy most about the peer networking sessions?**

The relaxed, informal setting. Janice welcomes everyone and puts them at ease. We are given the opportunity to suggest topics in advance or discuss on the day. People often use the chat box to attach useful links to discussion topics.
The chance to hear about what other colleagues are doing and learn from them
Being able to meet others in similar roles to me, and find out from them how they have overcome similar challenges to the ones I face. Even just meeting other people who are doing a similar job to me can be helpful when my role involves a lot of lone working as this can be useful and I get to see what ideas others have been able to put in to practise.
The opportunity to hear from colleagues in other boards. Its great how the topics just flow and very few times we are not talking about something topical.
Meeting colleagues
Opportunity to share information....catch up with other Volunteer Managers
Catching up with other volunteer managers over a wide geographical area.
Hearing form colleagues and shared challenges/successes
informal and supportive environment
Sharing good practice - even if I've got the session on in the background, it's a great opportunity to feel linked in to the wider world of volunteering
Updates on any new requirements or suggestions for improvements, learning from others
Janice & Angela's warmth & relaxed demeanour make it much easier to ask questions & raise issues at these sessions. Finding out that most if not all of the challenges have been faced by someone else down the line, with the distributed learning intrinsic to this.
opportunity to gain support from other professionals in a similar role to myself

6. **If you have not attended any peer networking sessions, please share why not.**

New to role and also I'm not a volunteer manager per se - I'm the manager of the volunteer managers.
I have had to prioritise frontline activity with patients, staff and volunteers in my hospital base and the sessions have not yet reached the top of the priority list of thing to do.
Not aware of the service
Always think these are a great use of time and an opportunity to learn and network, timings just didn't work for me in 2022, clashing with work commitments and annual leave
diary clashes unfortunately

7. How could we improve the peer networking sessions?

There is nothing I could add. If it's not broken don't try to fix it!
I think they're fine how they are, I haven't attended one for a while unfortunately but I do find them useful when I can get along.
Are we able to suggest topics for these? If we are apologies, but I think this might be useful.
Enquire why some boards don't participate? Maybe change the times /days
Don't have direct experience of sessions to be able to comment
Have one or two that are specifically for volunteer managers of NHS, so many other agencies now I feel we are not as focussed
This is well run and very informative. No suggestions
Not aware of your service
whilst it is an open session it would be helpful to have a loose agenda of sorts or perhaps we could be asked a couple of weeks in advance if we have any items to add to an agenda?
I like them as they are
Can't think!
unsure

8. Practice development sessions are opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge and skills in volunteering through presentations and workshops. The NHSScotland Volunteering Programme hosted two practice development sessions in 2022-23, on Evaluation & Impact (July 2022) and Social Media (November 2022).

Did you attend any of the practice development sessions 2022-23?

Yes	6
No	12

9. What do you enjoy most about the practice development sessions?

Evaluation & Impact, it is difficult to think back so feedback would be better taken at the time.
Chance to learn about something that we haven't tried yet or that we don't use enough.
It was good to hear from the experts and get some advice. It gives a taster to develop skills further.
Good way to learn and share

learned more about what others are doing and picked up good ideas
The expertise of the speakers & the discussion that ensued afterwards.

10. If you have not attended any practice development sessions, please share why not.

Other scheduled commitments.
New to post - sessions were before my time.
dates not suitable
I may have been on annual leave, otherwise would have attended
Time constraints
Not aware of the service
Due to capacity issues - a colleague from our team attended on our behalf.
diary clashes
My availability
Previously attended 2 day training with on Evaluation & Impact organised via HIS several years ago and unable to attend social media session
time constraints as my role is largely clinical

11. How could we improve the practice development sessions?

Nothing to add.
Maybe by running them twice (the same session twice)? I was able to attend one but missed the other due to a diary clash. Having an alternative date would have helped. I feel like the one I did get to was well attended though so it might not make much of a difference or it might end up with one of the sessions not being very well attended and so less worthwhile.
I think I would take more out if this if it were face to face but time and budgets are an issue so it is better to offer via teams rather than not at all.
Not aware of your service
unsure as have not attended
have not attended
For both this & the Peer Networking sessions, as someone on a remote Island Board really looking forward to when I can meet up in person with valued colleagues again.

unsure

12. We provide a 'helpdesk' for staff to get for support or help on any matter relating to volunteering.

Did you contact the NHSScotland Volunteering Programme for support over the last year?

Yes	7
No	11

13. Did you receive the support you needed?

Yes	7
No	0

14. Did you get the support you needed in a timely fashion?

Yes	7
No	0

15. How could we improve the support we provide via our 'helpdesk'?

Nothing to add.
I feel like the team are really responsive and I know I can come to you guys for help. Could this be something though maybe for the Community of Practice, like the requests could help to form an ongoing FAQ on there?
I am an external member working for an organisation other than NHS Scotland so I am unsure, as I would contact our Volunteering Department with questions or problems.
Nil - have been happy with support received.
If there are common questions asked of the helpdesk would a list of FAQ's be helpful?
Can't answer
Working well no need to improve
No suggestions I know support is there should I need it. Sometimes that's enough to know we have that extra body of support.
Not aware of your service

Janice couldn't have responded better when I have raised issues with her 1:1 on Teams.
unsure

16. Volunteering Information System (VIS)

Have you needed any support using VIS during 2022-23?

Yes	2
No	16

17. **Did you get the support you needed?**

Yes	2
No	0

18. **How could we improve the support we provide for the Volunteer Information System?**

Nothing to add.
I think it's fine, VIS is what it is, I'd be confident asking for help if I needed it.
Just need a new system please :)
I think the support is available if needed
I attend the refresher when I need it and this is always helpful.
Just looking forward to getting the new system up and running. Lots of improvements needed as present system is so outdated.
Not aware of your service
no suggestions as operating within the remit of the present VIS
Just looking forward to the new system!
unsure

19. We develop guidance and resources to support NHSScotland volunteering and make these available via our website and via the Community of Practice.

Did you access any of the guidance or resources during 2022-23?

Yes	8
No	10

20. **Were the guidance and resources that you accessed useful?**

Yes	8
No	0

21. **Which guidance and resources did you access?**

What was on the Community of Practice under files. The information on the Scottish Government National Volunteering Framework was useful when producing a new volunteer strategy.
Expenses, strategy, best practice handbook.
I've looked at the some of the files you have uploaded, links in the CoP page as well as previous minutes of the Advisory Group.
I accessed latest research papers and plan to catch up on the podcasts when I have the opportunity.
do not recall
Review and investigation forms
Looked back at some guidance on volunteer expenses and generally just scroll through what's there when I get a minute
Bevan Commission Value and Values of Volunteering Engaging with Asylum and Refugee Communities Webinar (recording)

22. **How could we improve our guidance and resources?**

Nothing to add.
I'm not sure
Perhaps best practice guides on key strategic priorities would be helpful e.g. evaluation and inclusive volunteering?
I think the files page could be easier to navigate.

Not aware of your service
The resources available seem to be up to date and relevant
no suggestions
Maybe link up to Vinspired, the UK-wide youth volunteering programme for young people aged 14-30? https://vinspired.com/
I need to familiarise myself more with this

23. What practice development topics would you like to see covered?

Supporting young people into volunteering. Engaging employed people to volunteer prior to retirement.
I think there's already been some stuff up on inclusive volunteering but it's a hot topic right now so maybe more of that?   Also, maybe something around supporting volunteers to develop and even move on it's something I've been asked about recently.
Supporting Volunteers with difficult situations How to make opportunities inclusive specifically in a healthcare setting where there can be a number of restrictions on who can volunteer. Talking about the impact of volunteering in healthcare.
Supporting with people with disabilities eg autism to volunteer
VIS : Having easy access to refreshers for VIS is most appreciated by me as I am aware that I am too inclined to not allocate admin time to use of VIS.
Impact & Evaluation as a face to face session not on line
happy with topics that are already identified
Addressing issues such as the increasing demand for volunteers, at a time when volunteer enquiries are dropping and volunteers are less able to commit to extended periods of engagement.
Something around influence would be good, to help empower us to promote our services at board level and gain buy in (and funds!) at strategic and board level.
Recruitment of volunteer drivers seems to be a widespread problem, would welcome some discussion on how we might improve the situation
Improving the diversity of volunteers
Volunteer Scotland Quality Standards - Volunteer Charter, Volunteer Friendly or Investing in Volunteers? Reasonable Adjustments for Volunteers with health/special needs

Topics on effective communication with a group of volunteers.

How to gain information on service users experience of volunteers.

How to integrate volunteers and staff to contribute to effective use of volunteers.

24. What national guidance and resources would you like to see us develop?

Induction for volunteers handbook.

Similar to above I think, something around inclusive volunteering and supporting volunteers to develop. Maybe also around generally supporting volunteers.

Guidance on inclusive volunteering
Wellbeing support available for volunteers and volunteer managers

A national Memo of Understanding document.
Volunteer Handbook
Training available for volunteers who can not access IT

Resources : funding to maintain, develop and sustain the person centred programme

Volunteer Handbook

unsure

NHS volunteering strategy
open letter or recommendation to strategic leads that boards should have some form of ring fenced fund to support volunteer services over and above staff pay

Definitely a place for generic training resources suitable for all NHS volunteers, could possibly spend a bit of time agreeing a priority list of subjects for everyone's use?

Volunteer management best practice guidance/national policies

Mentoring and Volunteering - complementary rather than interchangeable?

some of the above topics as national guidance

25. What training (for volunteers or staff working in volunteering) would you like to see us develop?

Staff - how to celebrate the achievements of the volunteer service and volunteers.

I think it'd be good if we could have like some kind of joint training thing or both volunteers and volunteer managers. Maybe like something that could be ran by volunteer managers for their volunteers but that all would benefit from? I was thinking around managing responsibilities and your mental health or something like that.

Unsure, but potentially training in how to manage our own wellbeing while working in a challenging field.

A staff handbook / Turas module
More things on Turas for volunteers - eg Dementia awareness/ falls awareness

I already have access to learn pro, third sector training, specialist mental health training where relevant for volunteers and partners of the programme. All of this is very helpful and relevant for the setting.
Interactive Induction Training that is creative and engaging, training pack for staff to deliver but with training days that are face to face, too much on Teams. Then this could be delivered face to face to new volunteers and developed for Refresher training too.
Equalities training
Appropriate to role, Bereavement training.
Managing complex volunteer relationships/dynamics in a team A refresher on managing difficult volunteer scenarios/when the role isn't working out.
National volunteer development days/opportunities. Perhaps offered online
Engaging with the seldom heard & the disenfranchised
training in GDPR, supporting volunteers with boundaries of care and feeling included in the work place

26. Do you have any other feedback or comments that you would like to share?

It is lovely to spend time with your colleagues facing the similar challenges in volunteering. It is beneficial to come together and meet in person, even once a year. I would like to thank Janice and the team at HiS for their ongoing support.
No, thanks for the opportunity to feedback!
I've really appreciated the national support and guidance available - as someone new to role, it's been invaluable.
The Teams channel is a great asset we just need more people to look at it and engage. I like the changes made to the bulletin and updates on the CoP page - easy to see what's new. You are all doing a great job and keep us informed.
Nothing asked about our Volunteer Managers Network would be good to have three of these every year either Glasgow or Edinburgh, would be good to make these a priority, full day so much could be covered as many of us are working in isolation.
To thank the team for support offered. Keep up the good work. Our team really appreciates all that you do.
The face to face networking session was definitely one of the highlights of the year, it would be great to have these sessions twice a year if at all possible.
Liaise with Generations Working Together Scotland re: intergenerational volunteering bridge-building

Recommendations

The results of the survey will be used by the Volunteering in NHSScotland Programme to improve support provision to the Volunteering Practitioners' Network. The recommendations identified are:

1. Carry out an improvement project to better understand more about our network membership and consider how we can increase levels of engagement across all of our support provision.
2. Continue provision of the Community of Practice whilst encouraging an uptake of use by current non-using network members.
3. Gather examples of templates and resources used by volunteering teams for the 'files' section of the Community of Practice.
4. Invite topics for discussion to be submitted by members in advance of peer networking sessions.
5. Carry out an evaluation at the end of each practice development session, and remove this question from future annual surveys.
6. Offer more than one date for each practice development session or alternatively, record all sessions and share via the Community of Practice.
7. Create an FAQ of commonly asked queries received via the Volunteering Helpdesk, and share via the Community of Practice.
8. Include a session on Inclusive Volunteering at a hybrid Volunteering Practitioners Network event.
9. Develop a programme of practice development sessions based on topics suggested.
10. Draw up a plan for the development of national guidance and resources based on suggested topics
11. Take the suggestion for an open letter or recommendation that NHS boards should be providing a budget for volunteering, over and above staff pay costs, to the NHSScotland Volunteering Advisory Board for consideration.
12. Carry out a scoping exercise to develop a plan for national education and training development for volunteers.

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