

# NHS Scotland Volunteering Programme Annual Report 2023-24



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*“Volunteers are the unsung heroes of the NHS. In your many and diverse roles, you are making a massive difference to the experience of our patients throughout Scotland. In doing so, I’m sure you are also contributing to your own wellbeing - there is nothing more uplifting than helping others at their time of greatest need.*

*On behalf of NHS Scotland please accept my heartfelt thanks”.*

Tom Steele, Chair, NHS Scotland Volunteering  
Advisory Board

(Tom is also Chair of the Scottish Ambulance  
Service Board )

## Strategic Vision 2023-28

We published our refreshed Strategic Vision for the NHS Scotland Volunteering Programme in September 2023.

Clare Morrison, Director of Community Engagement, Healthcare Improvement Scotland said:

“Having a clear vision is essential for guiding our work. It is about keeping us continually focused on achieving our aim of driving excellence in volunteering. The vision puts people, communities and volunteers at the heart of everything we do.”



We will drive forward the volunteering agenda in NHS Scotland through evidence, improvement and assurance. **Meaningful engagement matters** and volunteering is one of the best ways for people and communities to engage with health and care services. It supports the delivery of high quality, safe care that is person-centred. It improves the health and wellbeing of volunteers and communities.

*We will achieve our vision by:*

1. Building and sharing **evidence** demonstrating the impact of volunteering.
2. Using knowledge and expertise to **improve** volunteering.
3. Providing **assurance** that volunteering in NHS Scotland is high quality, safe and effective.

## Experiences of NHS Scotland Volunteers



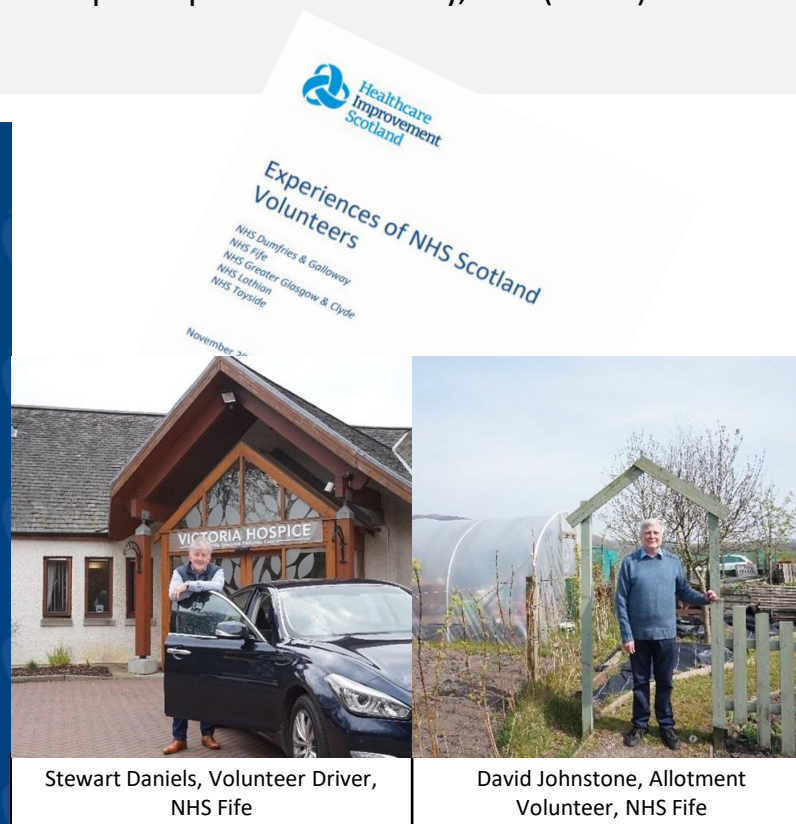
Volunteer Managers from NHS Dumfries and Galloway, NHS Fife, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside and worked together on a pilot of an NHS Scotland Volunteer Experience Survey, supported by the NHS Scotland Volunteering Programme Team.

The purpose of the survey was to take a consistent approach to gathering data on volunteer's experiences of volunteering within their NHS board, and for the entire data set to be analysed at a national level against the Volunteering for All: National Outcomes Framework principles.

A total of 1557 volunteers were invited to participate in the survey, 460 (30%\*) participated.

*“The staff I work with have been fabulous. They treat me as a colleague and include me in events. My mental health has improved as I am no longer so lonely.”*

*NHS Scotland volunteer*



Stewart Daniels, Volunteer Driver, NHS Fife

David Johnstone, Allotment Volunteer, NHS Fife

## Survey headlines

95% feel able to give their time on their own terms

95% feel valued for what they bring

99% enjoy taking part in volunteering

93% feel that their knowledge, skills and experiences are respected and utilised

97% enjoy the experience of volunteering

92% felt that their volunteering makes a difference

\*30% is considered statistically acceptable.

# The value of NHS Scotland Volunteering

“Helping a patient talk through his grief and two days later having them tell me that it really helped. So much so that they had been dreading an anniversary of their partner's death (that day) and could now be grateful for their life together instead of angry about their loss.”

*NHS Scotland Volunteer*

NHS Scotland volunteers give their time to almost every NHS board in Scotland, making a meaningful difference to staff, patients and their families in a huge variety of ways.

Volunteers provide support in hospital wards and outpatient departments – they assist patients and visitors to find their way around, tend gardens, provide befriending and listening services.

They are also Community First Responders providing lifesaving intervention before an ambulance arrives or they are Public Partners helping Healthcare Improvement Scotland to create guidelines and standards.

These are just a few examples of the ways which volunteers contribute to NHS Scotland. Every volunteer who chooses to give their time contributes to the considerable impact that volunteering has on NHS Scotland.



**3485**  
volunteers per  
month

**19%**  
increase  
on 2022-23



**584,000**  
hours of  
volunteering  
in 2023-24

**21%**  
increase  
on 2022-23



**£11.5m**  
equivalent  
economic  
contribution\*

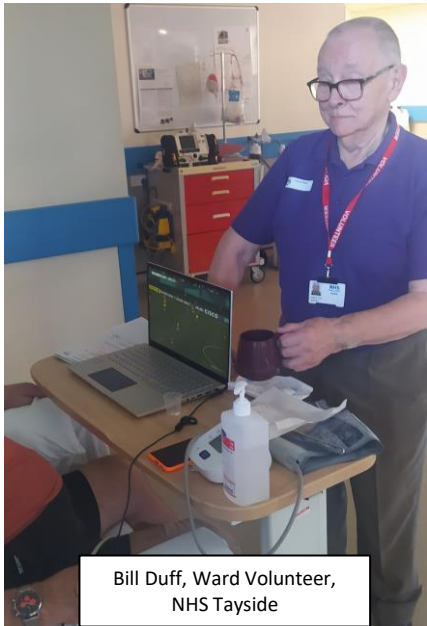
**53%**  
increase  
on 2022-23

“While the evidence is clear on the impact volunteering has on the health and care system in Scotland, we are equally keen to support volunteering because of the positive benefits it brings to the volunteers themselves”.

*Suzanne Dawson*  
Chair, Scottish Health Council

\*calculated using [Volunteer Scotland's](#) formula

# Improving Practice in Volunteering



“Volunteer management is a complex profession, which requires a diverse set of skills to provide meaningful volunteer experiences which add value to NHS Scotland services. Exploring Best Practice is a tool which supports staff to deliver high quality, safe volunteering of the highest standard.”

*Janice Malone  
Programme Manager - Volunteering*

Volunteers across NHS Scotland carry out a wide variety of roles across the country, improving patient experience, adding value and freeing up staff time.

These volunteers are supported by volunteer managers, co-ordinators and administrators who ensure that volunteering is continually developed, managed safely and provides the best possible experience for those who choose to give their time to NHS Scotland.

The ‘Exploring Best Practice’ guide is intended to be a resource which can be a reference tool for experienced volunteer managers, or to help to build knowledge, skills and confidence for staff who are new to volunteer management.

Content within the guide may also be helpful for teams who support the recruitment of volunteers such as HR teams and Occupational Health teams. While the guide has been written to support staff managing volunteers in hospital settings, much of the content is applicable for other healthcare settings such as Health and Social Care Partnerships.



## Volunteering in NHS Scotland

Exploring best practice

(updated February 2024)

72 downloads  
between  
October 2023  
and March 2024



## NHS Scotland Volunteering Practitioners Network

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

- Community of Practice / peer networking / practice development opportunities.
- Regular communication and updates on volunteering related matters / Volunteering Helpdesk / Development of guidance and resources to support volunteering in NHS Scotland.

In 2023-24 the programme:

- Responded to 162 requests for advice and support.
- Hosted six peer support networking sessions.
- Delivered one hybrid learning and networking event.
- Facilitated two virtual practice development sessions.
- Trained 17 new users of the Volunteering Information System.
- Hosted webinars in Volunteers Week and International Volunteers Day.
- Issued eight email bulletins to the network membership.

“Invaluable to hear from colleagues, ensuring that we are meeting the right standards, great to be able to speak to colleagues across Scotland. It’s a safe space to be able to share and its where some of the best ideas come from.”

Improvement Project Interviews Participant

## Improvement Project

We began an improvement project to better understand the network membership, their needs and to consider what improvements we can make. Invitations to participate in semi-structured interviews were sent to all members of the Volunteering Practitioners Network and to Strategic Leads for Volunteering in all NHS boards, totalling 100 invitations. 53% of people invited participated. The key recommendations were:

Improve communication with network members

Scope the feasibility of creating a subset of networks for different areas of volunteering

Scope professional development needs of staff who engage or support volunteers

Continue to involve Third Sector organisations in the network

Scope the creation of a mentoring / buddying system

Encourage Strategic Leads for Volunteering to support staff to participate in network activities

Provide opportunities for network members to design and deliver practice development content / showcase their work

Share the suggestions for improvements to volunteering infrastructure with the NHS Scotland Volunteering Advisory Board

## NHS Scotland Volunteering Advisory Board

The NHS Scotland Volunteering Advisory Board provides a strategic steer to the Volunteering in NHS Scotland Programme and provides leadership, advice and guidance for volunteering across NHS Scotland.

During 2023-24 the advisory board have:

- Provided leadership support for the business case for a new Volunteering Management System for NHS Scotland.
- Carried out focussed work on identifying strategic risks to volunteering.
- Contributed to the refreshed strategic vision for the NHS Scotland Volunteering Programme.
- Influenced the revisions to the NHS Scotland Volunteer Out of Pocket Expenses Guidance and made recommendations to all NHS boards on the level of reimbursement for mileage rates for volunteers.

“The Advisory Board would like to extend its thanks to Sandie Dickson and Claire Stevens who stepped down from the board after many years of commitment to supporting and guiding volunteering across NHS Scotland.”

*Tom Steele, Chair*

## Looking forward to 2024-25

Priorities for the coming year are:

- Progressing the Volunteer Management System Project.
- Building evidence through the Volunteer Experience Survey and piloting NHS staff Experiences of Volunteers survey.
- Scoping the training and education needs of volunteers and staff who engage and manage volunteers.
- Considering how we can embed Quality Improvement approaches and methods in Volunteering.



Cath Kearns, Judy McMurray, Dorothy McHattie,  
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