

NHS Lothian Volunteer Experience Survey 2022

'I would recommend it to anyone. I've found it a really positive experience.'

Female, 51-65, Unemployed

Key Findings and learning

- 83.8% (139) rated their overall volunteering experience as excellent or very good. This up by 10.7% increase on previous surveys.
- 73.5% (122) reported that communication and support was excellent or very good. This up 9.6% improvement on previous surveys
- 69.1% (118) respondents rated the recruitment and induction process excellent or very good. This is down by 1.5% on previous surveys.
- 74% (122) volunteers reported the welcome on site was excellent or very good. This is up by 3.5% in previous surveys.
- The opportunity to shadow other volunteers was valued highly. This commonly implemented induction practice should be offered to all new volunteers.
- The optional events programme had significant impact on how valued the volunteers felt and should be continued, broadening as appropriate with consideration being given to more evening/weekend events to improve access. In addition, consideration should be given to other ways of connecting volunteers for peer to peer communication.
- The under utilisation of volunteers continues to be the most common negative for volunteers. The Voluntary Services Team will continue to work with senior and frontline colleagues to raise awareness about how to maximise the impact of volunteers.
- Occasional inaccessibility of support from placement staff or the Voluntary Services Team requires further investigation and mitigation.

Methodology

During Volunteers' Week, 1-7 June 2022, the Voluntary Services Team launched its annual Volunteer Experience Survey. The survey remained open until the 1st of August 2022.

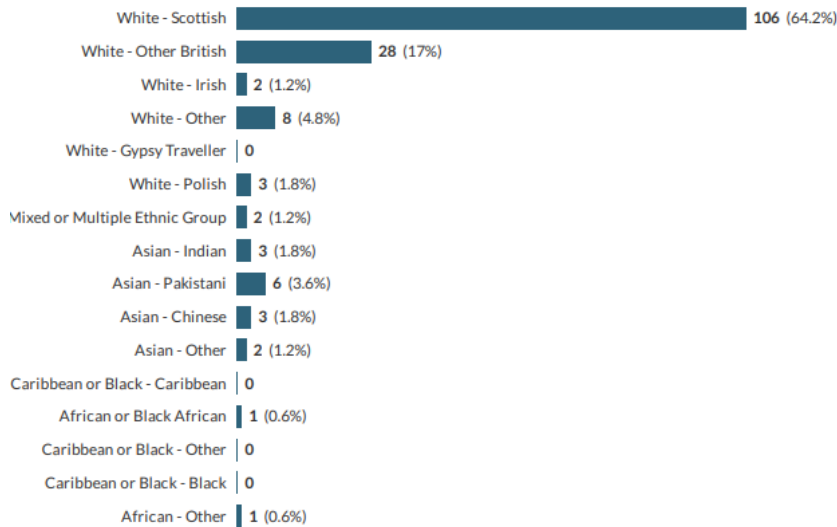
An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to the active volunteer mailing list on the 1st of June this was a total of 498 individuals. A reminder and link to the survey was included in the Volunteers' Week newsletter and to the members of the Voluntary Services team email signatures for 6 weeks. A second invitation was sent to the active mailing list at the end of June as a reminder to encourage participation.

Respondents

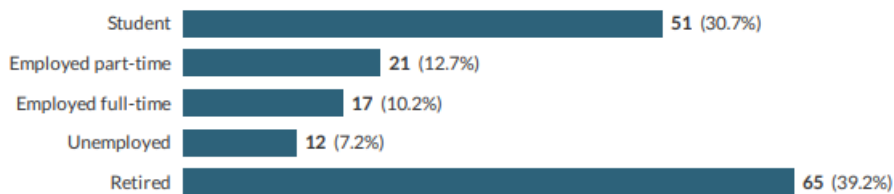
166 volunteers responded to the invitation to participate in the survey. 146 reported they were actively volunteering at the time of completing the survey and 17 reported they were inactive at the time of completing the survey. This equates to just over a third of active volunteers responding to the survey.

18% (31) of respondents identified as male, 80.7% (134) identified as female, and 0.65 (1) identified as non-binary. 36% (59) respondents were aged 16-21, 26.8% (44) of respondents were aged between 51-65. 22% (36) were aged 65+ and 15.2% (25) between 22-50.

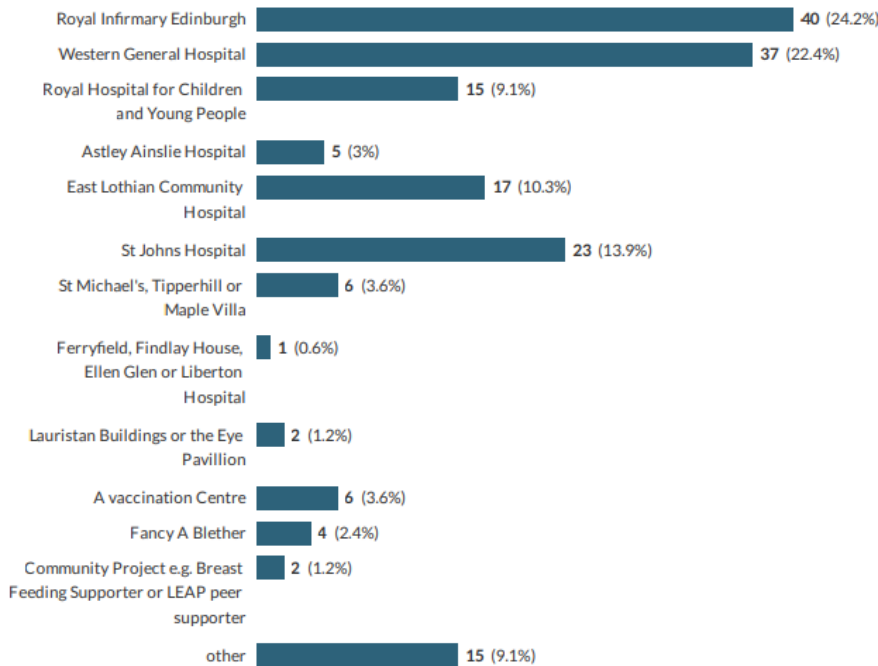
89% (147) indicated they were white, with 10.8% (18) indicated a non-white ethnicity.



Our largest group of respondents indicated their economic status was retired, closely followed by students.



Volunteers from across all of the sites supported and projects led by volunteers participated in the survey.



The respondents' locations/projects and the demographics of respondents were broadly representative of the whole of the NHS Lothian Volunteer Team at the time the survey was conducted. However, volunteers aged 16-21 were slightly underrepresented amongst the respondents.

Overall volunteer experience

83.8% (139) rated their overall volunteering experience as excellent or very good. 11.4% (19) rated their experience as good and only 1.2% (2) rated their experience as poor. Those reporting a poor expressed concern about there not being enough to do or the fact the staff in their area of work were not very friendly, both noted that their interactions with patients was what kept them coming back.

Those reporting their overall experience was excellent, frequently made reference to interaction to patients, finding their role rewarding, feeling like they are making a difference, there was occasion reference people being friendly, learning and being supported.

'I really enjoy working as a ward helper as I find it rewarding, helping others.' Female, 41-50, Employed Part-time.

'Everyone is welcoming, and I feel that the things I am doing around the ward are helping people.' Female, 16-21, Student.

'I have been supported the whole way through and feel comfortable in the ward and talking to the staff.' Male, 16-21, Student.

'I enjoy being involved in helping patients and love helping out the nurses where it's needed and chatting to patients, I can see, and I'm talked about the difference it makes.' Female, 16-21, Student.

Recruitment and induction process

69.1% (118) respondents rated the recruitment and induction process excellent or very good. A further 18.1% (30) rated it good while 2.4% (4) reported the recruitment and induction process as poor. Those reporting it was poor indicated that the length of time from initial application to volunteering was too long, participated in the fast track covid response induction or had technical issues with the online induction sessions.

Those reporting it was excellent made the following comments.

'It was very clear what I needed to do and when and the whole process was very quick.' Female, 16-21, Student.

'I received 3 weeks of virtual training and everything was a great process. Always received my updates.' Female, 51-65, Retired.

'The 3 sessions which I done with the volunteering manager was really good i.e. interactive and everything was explained really well.' Female, 16-21, Student.

'Communication is first class with plenty of opportunities to ask questions.' Male, 65+, retired

'Training was on-line and very convenient. The training was relevant and professionally delivered.'
Female, 65+, Retired.

'I was part of the summer program, which was very well done and gave me the right amount of support.' Female, 16-21, Student

Welcome on site

74% (122) volunteers reported the welcome on site was excellent or very good. A further 17% (12) reported it was good. 2.4% (4) reported that the welcome was poor or very poor. Two of those commenting on their welcome was not positive were volunteering at vaccination centres and two were in hospital-based roles all four commented on the lack of information and guidance provided on their first volunteering sessions.

Those reporting an excellent welcome on site frequently made reference to the support provided by Voluntary Services Manager, the Nursing staff and the value of shadowing an experienced volunteer and made the following comments.

'Another volunteer had been asked to volunteer alongside me to help show me the ropes. I appreciated her being asked and I also appreciated her giving up more of her own time.' Female, 41-50, Retired.

'I was made to feel valued and welcome. I was provided with the information I needed to perform the role.' Male, 51-56. Employed Fulltime.

'Despite the fact that the ward sometimes struggles with staffing levels, everyone always finds the time and the will to smile to me and make me feel welcome and people actually thank me.' Female, 31-40, Student.

'The unit charge nurse was expecting me and welcomed me on arrival. She explained exactly what she was looking for from a volunteer and seemed genuinely grateful to have a volunteer.' Male, 65+, Retired.

'(Voluntary Services Manager) ensured that I was aware of where everything was situated and that I had met people on the ward prior to commencing my own volunteering. I found shadowing an existing volunteer to be extremely helpful.' Female, 16-21, Student.

Communication and support

Volunteers were asked about communication and support once they had begun placement. 73.5% (122) reported that communication and support was excellent or very good. 19.9% (33) reported it was good while 3% (5) reported it was poor. Those commenting the support and communication was poor referred to several different things, inability to get hold of a Voluntary Services Manager, an unwelcoming atmosphere at the vaccine centre and also a lack of updates in ward spaces.

Several volunteers made reference to the possibility of ways of linking volunteers to each other for peer to peer conversations or coordination out with the Voluntary Services Team.

'The Volunteers would benefit from a portal/WhatsApp group where similar roles could communicate without going through Vol Mgrs. Sometimes time is off the essence & Mgrs are unavailable Eg last minute unavailability of volunteer. Also would be good from just keeping a communication channel open, where we could express ourselves' Female, 51-65, Retired.

Those rating comms and support as excellent made reference to regular email updates and the speed and efficiency with which queries are responded too there was also references to support from ward/service staff, but these were less frequent.

'Whenever I have had a question or had something that I needed a response from, the person/people were available and responded quickly.' Female, 65+, Retired.

'Staff in the ward (nurses etc.) are so extremely welcoming and helpful, always around to give advice and answer questions' Female, 16-21, Student.

'There are regular email updates and I feel I can get in touch if I need to.' Female, 16-21, Student.

NHS Lothian's optional training and events programme

31.3% (52) of respondents reported that they have attended a social event in the optional programme of those who have attended 67.2% reported a positive experience (excellent, very good or good).

45.2% (75) of respondents reported that they have attended an event in the optional training/learning event. 79.2% (72) of those attending reported a positive experience (excellent, very good, or good). Only one participant indicated their experience had been poor in either branch of the optional programme.

Those not attending reported being aware of the events. Having other commitments was the main reason for not attending, although a small number of people 5 indicated they did not know these events happened and one person felt the virtual nature of the events was not for them.

'I do really value all the online training I've participated in. Have enjoyed them all and feel they are always very helpful, relevant and informative.' Female, 51-65, retired

'It was interesting to see other volunteers and hear of their experiences' female, 41-50, unemployed.

'The training courses have been both educational and enjoyable.' Male, 41-50, Employed.

Least and most favourite parts of volunteering experience

We asked volunteers about their least and favourite parts of volunteering with NHS Lothian

When asked about what they liked least about their volunteering experience 20 participants did not answer, a further 25.9% (43) provided an answer to say there was nothing they liked least. Of those providing a response

- 23 indicated insufficient tasks/activity
- 12 noted attitudes or lack of awareness of staff as an issue
- 4 noted attitudes of the public as an issue
- 9 noted a lack of communication or miscommunication
- 8 noted wanted to do more to help the patients or staff
- 8 noted the challenges of seeing people in pain, being very poorly or patients passing away.
- 4 noted the lack of challenge or the repetitive nature of tasks
- 4 noted isolations either from other volunteers or from staff as their least favourite things.
- other volunteers noted a variety of practical things e.g. temperature (too hot or too cold), commutes, or walking on site

113 people who chose to respond to the question what do you like the most about volunteering and 85.8% (97) made reference to meeting, spending time and helping/making a difference to people most commonly patients but in third of cases staff were also mentioned. Those who did not mention people as their favourite part of volunteering referenced feeling useful, being busy and gaining experience in healthcare setting. These themes were also commonly found alongside the comments about people.

'The connection I have with new people, and the ability to improve my communication skills. The opportunity to brighten someone's day a bit, The experience working in a hospital.' Male, 16-21, Student.

'It has been great to get out and do something for the community and I love social interaction.' Male, 51-65, Retired.

'Working as part of a team. Feeling valued. Being busy. Feeling that I'm a real help to staff.' Female, 51-65, Retired.