

Volunteering News

February 2024

February 2024

Newsletter Highlights



Our year in review 2023!

Below are just a few snippets of the incredible activities you have been involved with in 2023! Thank you to each and every one of you who has contributed to making this possible.

Festive Get-Togethers

Lauriston Buildings

Befriending in St John's

Egle's Story

Meaningful May

Getting to know Amy

John's Story

Befriending Fridays

Blue Light Card

Learning Opportunities

87,000 Volunteer Hours

1,287 Volunteers engaged in 1,583 Volunteer Placements

81 Volunteers supported the Summer Programme

78 Optional Training Sessions

Volunteers are involved across 19 NHS Lothian Sites

286 Volunteers attended the Optional Training

400 Volunteers active across RIE/WGH

21 Young People completed the Summer Programme

8 New volunteering roles created



Festive Get-Togethers

Midlothian Community Hospital volunteers and their community colleagues got together for a Festive Get-Together on Friday 1st December. Despite the challenging weather in Midlothian (deep snow!), several volunteers made it along and were rewarded with party food and paper hats! Huge thanks to Voluntary Services Manager, Susan Rose, for stepping in for a Covid-struck Ross Lamb.



More Christmas Get-Togethers were enjoyed by volunteers at the Astley Ainslie Hospital, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, St John's Hospital and East Lothian Community Hospital. It was a great opportunity for volunteers to spend time with each other and chat about their volunteering experience. And of course not forgetting the Voluntary Services Team who enjoyed a night out for some Italian food!



St Thomas of Aquin's Pupils Become Welcome Guides at Lauriston Buildings

We were delighted to work with ProjectScotland to offer senior pupils at St Thomas of Aquin's the opportunity to volunteer as Welcome Guides at Lauriston Buildings. This volunteering has formed part of a wider initiative within the school which aims to provide senior pupils with the opportunity to participate in different volunteering opportunities, enabling them to get involved in their community, widen their perspectives, and develop skills and experience in new areas which will better equip them for life after school.

Ten senior pupils in S5 and S6 took part in the first cohort of Welcome Guides. The majority of these pupils had no previous volunteering experience and none had any knowledge of NHS volunteering. Pupils attended two initial training sessions to prepare them for the role, which also provided information on the volunteering structure within the NHS and its importance within health and social care settings. After the training, pupils volunteered in pairs on one assigned morning or afternoon per week, completing a minimum of five volunteering sessions between August and December 2023. Through this they were able to develop their skills and experience in areas of problem solving, teamwork, and communication with patients, staff and each other.

Flip Kulakiewicz, Youth Engagement Manager at Volunteering Matters:

“As a charity that aims to support young people with their next steps in life and connect them to volunteering opportunities, it can be challenging to source volunteering opportunities within health and social care settings for young people under the age of 18. This has been a really valuable opportunity for pupils to increase their awareness of the NHS and the many people who rely on its service and they have been unanimous in telling us how rewarding and interesting this experience has been for them.”

Pupils who were involved in the volunteering expressed satisfaction with their volunteering experience, with over half saying they would like to continue to volunteer with the NHS in the future.

“I’m a lot more confident now. I can go up to people and speak to them without hesitation.”

“I am applying for medicine and even though it is not the same as shadowing a doctor, it’s useful and interesting to talk to different people in the hospital setting.”



“I don’t usually communicate with people much, this has been good for me to practice that.”

“I’ve enjoyed having the break from school to do this, and it has definitely made me think about different work opportunities within this area that I didn’t know about before.”

“It’s been good for college applications and generally good experience overall.”

Befriending within St John's Hospital

Recently, a request came in from a patient's mother to see if any volunteers could support her son who had been in St John's Hospital for nearly 2 years. Volunteers Stuart and Ed offered their support; going in to talk to the patient about their joint love of cars, motorbikes, and current events. They also got the patient involved in playing games and doing quizzes. This regular interaction had such an impact on the patient's recovery - encouraging him to get out of his hospital bed each day, getting dressed and venturing out of the ward to visit the café, canteen and gardens. He also started exercising, and after 2 years, he has now moved to another facility. Both Stuart and Ed have now moved on to support two other patients in a befriending role in the Stroke Unit where they will hopefully make the same impact.

"I felt privileged to be able to meet with the patient and play a tiny part in them being able to move on with their life. The staff are just so busy they simply do not have the time to spend, and I think this is a great example of where, as a volunteer, you can make a difference and help".

Stuart Wilson, Welcome Guide Volunteer



"I became involved a little later than Stuart, who had started the visits, and we were able with Claire's help to make suggestions and share ideas on how to engage with the patient. So by trial and error, and some bumps in the road, we managed to build a relationship with the patient. A slow improvement and change was then seen in him getting out of the ward to wander round the hospital. The feedback from family and the ward team was that we were making an impact so that encouraged us to keep going. All in all, it has been enjoyable and great to see a visible improvement in things.

I know it can be a little clichéd to say I have gotten as much out of the visits as the patient but in this case, it is true and if anyone is thinking they might struggle with this type of thing then I would say, yes you will but the struggle is worth it".

Ed Thompson, Welcome Guide Volunteer



"Thank you so much to Stuart and Ed, I really liked talking to them about cars and music festivals etc and for me there was a light bulb moment which made me think of my future".

Patient

"Thank you for arranging for the volunteers to come in and support my son in Ward 18. It is hard to believe that he had made so much progress in the last few months and I am sure that Stuart and Ed have played a big part in this. They have both been so kind to him. I was so reluctant to do this, but it has made such a big difference as he had no contact with anyone visiting apart from myself in 2 years, thank you so very much."

Patient's Mother

"The consensus from all staff was that the volunteers had made an impact on the patient's recovery and had been the main route back to social integration for him. Stuart and Ed have encouraged him to re-socialise by building that bridge between the protective cover of the ward and the communal areas in the hospital, which can be such a difficult step. This is a situation where teams have all played a part in turning around a very negative situation into one of hope for the patient's future quality of life".

Val Crawford, Charge Nurse, Ward 18

Egle's Story



"I started off in the Summer Programme in 2022 and I think I did need that experience to see how others did their volunteering, to pick up skills and also be reassured that I could do what they were doing. There was more support and at that time, I really wasn't sure what I wanted to gain from volunteering or what direction I wanted my future career to take.

I feel the volunteering has given me a sense of direction. I knew I wanted to do healthcare, but wasn't sure what. I'm now certain Medicine is for me. The volunteering has given me that sense of purpose, of improving and gaining skills for interviews and my future career but I also feel I have grown a lot as a person."

"This experience has been amazing. I basically go in and talk to elderly patients who are on their own. I've grown to be comfortable in the silence, to listen, to watch body language and then respond. Older people talk about loss, and that was new to me. I learned how to listen to that, validate their feelings and then let them talk more about it in a way that felt comfortable for them."



Egle volunteered with us as a Meaningful Activity Volunteer in Ward 202, Medicine of the Elderly, at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

They now have four Medicine interviews lined up with universities in Scotland and is finishing off their last year of school.

Egle on the closing day of the Summer Programme, being presented with their certificate by Deputy Nurse Director, Fiona Ireland.

Meaningful May 2024

Following the successful delivery of the Youth Volunteering Summer Programme 2023, we are delighted to launch the Meaningful May Volunteering Programme 2024!

With a similar format to the Summer Programme, the aim of 'Meaningful May' is to give young people aged 16-25 the opportunity to try some of the varied and fulfilling volunteering opportunities we have across NHS Lothian. We hope to reach young people who haven't considered volunteering before, and who would benefit from the opportunity to build their confidence and communication skills. As well as developing a better understanding about what it's like to be in a healthcare environment, we hope the experience will widen their understanding of available routes into a career within the NHS.

This 4-week supported volunteering programme will be delivered in collaboration with our Workforce Development team, who will run employability activities for the applicants. They'll get a chance to better reflect on their volunteering experiences, and learn how to showcase that experience to future employers and education providers.

Just as our fantastic experienced volunteers were central to the success of the Summer Programme, the intention for 'Meaningful May' is that applicants be matched to experienced volunteers when on placement. This meaningful pairing will help young people to get the most out of the opportunity, to develop their skills and learn from the people who know the wards best.

We are working closely with *Developing the Young Workforce and Skills Development Scotland* to circulate this opportunity in schools, and will be spreading the word with other charitable organisations and volunteer centres over the coming weeks.

Check out this video to find out more about getting involved this year!
<https://vimeo.com/915489537/fe2c62098a>

**"I really enjoyed my time with my experienced volunteers.
I have learned a lot through them."
Summer Programme Volunteer 2023**

**"It was a great pleasure (and satisfaction to me) to have had a really
nice group of young people to work alongside.
All were delightful to work with, took instructions really well and I
hope had a good experience working on the ward."
Alison, Orthopaedic Ward Volunteer, RIE**

**If you would like to be
involved in
'Meaningful May', please
contact Caitlin Nisbet on
07929 079000**

Getting to Know Amy

Amy is a Ward Helper in the Glenlee Ward at the Midlothian Community Hospital and has been volunteering with us since July 2023. Read on to find out a little more about Amy's volunteering journey so far!

“After spending most of my childhood and teen years in hospital, I know how hard the nurses work. Due to my disabilities, I unfortunately wouldn't be able to train as a nurse, so to give something back to the NHS, I can give my time.”

When describing a typical day volunteering, Amy told us: “Every day is different, and I get to spend time with different patients. I enjoy the busy times (10am-12pm and 1pm-2pm) where we do a variety of activities from one-to-one chats, games, crafts, helping the patients to make things ready for baking, and anything else that the staff need assistance with to free them up to do their nursing work.”



“Knowing that you can make a difference to people's lives whilst they are away from their homes. Being in hospital can be quite lonely sometimes so it is nice to go and chat and do activities with people.”

We asked Amy about the impact her volunteering has on patients and she told us: “I have a really sunny disposition and I'm always cheery, which can help cheer up the patients and help them feel less lonely and isolated.”

It's brilliant to hear about the impact Amy's volunteering makes to the patients in Midlothian Community Hospital, thank you for all that you do Amy!

We asked Amy for some final words of encouragement to anyone thinking about volunteering with us and she said:

“I would encourage anyone with a few spare hours to give it a go – if it isn't for them, they have nothing to lose. I actually told a member of the public who was interested in NHS volunteering how to go about applying!”

Join our Volunteer Reference Group

Are you interested in helping NHS Lothian shape its Volunteering offer?
Do you have ideas about how we can make what we do even better?
Do you want to represent the views of your fellow volunteers?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then joining our Volunteering Reference Group might be for you!

If you'd like to find out more about this opportunity and how you can get involved, email Rachael at: Rachael.Honeyman@nhs.scot

John's Story

In 2018, John collapsed and was taken to hospital, where he was diagnosed with severe cirrhosis of the liver.

This was the beginning of a profound journey for John, who found out he needed life-saving surgery. Since then, he has gone on to become a Scottish liver health advocate and Peer Supporter.

Prior to this, John described himself as a 'social drinker', with no idea that his alcohol consumption levels may have been making him ill. John was a member of the Merchant Navy for almost 3 decades and states that he drank almost every day but wasn't aware of the risks to his health.



“In my younger days I drank a lot socially but it was a huge shock to me when the consultant told me that the liver damage was because of alcohol. I had never considered myself to be an alcoholic or to have had any problems with alcohol.”

After a series of tests, John was told that the damage to his liver was so severe that he required a liver transplant and that he needed to stop drinking completely.

“After I was placed on the transplant list I was referred to a recovery programme in Falkirk. It was really hard to go because I was really ill but I managed to go and I stopped drinking.”

After 11 long months of declining health and waiting, John was given the call that a liver was available, and was taken to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh for his liver transplant procedure to take place. John says that he saw marked improvements in his health as soon as he'd had the transplant, and that his life and health was forever changed from that point.

Keeping in touch

If you are currently volunteering and need to stop, please let us know by emailing

Volunteer.Enquiries@nhslothian.scot so that we can say thank you, adjust our timetables and find an alternative volunteer.

If you are finishing your volunteering, then please complete our exit questionnaire and return your ID badge and uniform to Corporate Nursing, NHS Lothian, Waverley Gate, 2-4 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EG.

Exit Survey:

<https://forms.office.com/e/dUDsNM9TQu>

If you have taken a break from volunteering and have not been volunteering for a while, please contact your Voluntary Services Manager to discuss your return prior to returning to your role. If you do not know who to contact or have any other queries please contact volunteer.enquiries@nhslothian.scot

Fit for the Future—NHS Lothian's Volunteering Strategy 2023-2028 is supported by the NHS Lothian Charity, and the Pears Foundation.

John's Story continued

About a month after the transplant, John was given the shocking news that his old liver had been cancerous – the doctors had found five tumours after removing his liver.

“The doctors told me I wouldn't have lived another six months if the cancerous liver hadn't been removed. I didn't know I had cancer. I was really lucky to be given the transplant when I did. I decided then that I was going to help the community and three months after the transplant, I was asked to give peer support with the transplant ward.”

John has since made it his mission to use his experience to help others. Through the recovery course that he attended, he was offered the opportunity to be trained in peer support and to enroll in an HNC in Community Work. He has also taken part in a counselling training course.

“I love volunteering. I've been a support worker for individuals in recovery, worked with individuals waiting for a transplant like I was, and I've started up an alcohol liver group which still runs every month with the British Liver Trust.”

We spoke to John about what changes he'd like to see in Scotland to protect people from the damage that alcohol can cause. He had some suggestions:

- Make liver function testing and screening more available. He'd like to see liver function tests being carried out more routinely by medical professionals placed to do so in Scotland.
- Implement Fibro-scanning, a type of imaging to look for damage, and use it more widely throughout Scotland

John felt that if these measures were used more routinely, they may have picked up his liver damage earlier, as well as helping the people he provides peer support to.

He also acknowledged the need to be more open and supportive with others:

“Stigma stops people from getting help. It's a terrible thing. There is a lot of stigma around liver disease and alcohol harms. People in Scotland need to be more open about the health problems that alcohol can cause. Some people aren't even aware about the tests available to them to check on their liver health. People also aren't always aware how important your liver health is to your life. I want to make people more aware of this and prevent people from getting to the stage where their liver is damaged.”

John has now been sober for over five years and is devoting his time to using his personal experience to help others. John continues to raise awareness of liver disease by working with organisations like the British Liver Trust and provides peer support at the transplant unit in the RIE.

Volunteer Support across Midlothian

Have you spotted our #BefriendingFriday campaign on X (Formerly Twitter) and Facebook?

We've been focusing on one of our befriending volunteers or a different client from our waiting list each week. You can search #BefriendingFriday to find their stories. Please help by sharing the posts on your own social media, or if you think you'd like to get involved with befriending or want find out more about it, get in touch with Susan on **07811 710975** or susan.rose@nhs.scot

Don't Forget!

Take part in our annual Impact Survey now!

Survey closes 5pm on Monday 11 March 2024 - **Take Part Now**

Our volunteering programme is Accredited with the YMCA.

Complete a Skills Stack workbook now!

[Induction Skills Stack](#)

[Volunteering in a Healthcare Setting Skill Stack](#)

Do you have a Young Scot Card?

Speak to your Voluntary Services Manager to claim Young Scot Points for your Volunteering.

NHS Volunteers are now eligible for a Blue Light Card

Blue Light Card is the UK's largest discount service for those working in the NHS, emergency services, social care sector and armed forces. It provides members with thousands of amazing discounts online and on the high street. Membership costs £4.99 and will give access to a wide variety of discounts.

You can find out more here:

[BlueLightCard.co.uk](https://www.bluelightcard.co.uk)

You will need your NHS Lothian ID badge to apply.



Upcoming learning opportunities

Our Learning and Development Programme welcomes all NHS Lothian Volunteers and is designed to offer you learning opportunities in a variety of topics that we hope will be both relevant for you in your roles and in your personal lives.

To attend a session, simply click on the dates below at the time of the event and the session will open on Microsoft Teams.

Please note, the Carer Awareness session can be accessed at any time.

Mealtime Helper

Tuesday 12 March, 5.30pm - 6.30pm

Wednesday 17 April, 5pm - 6pm

Small Talk and Communication

Monday 18 March, 4.30pm - 6pm

Dementia Awareness

Tuesday 26 March, 4.30pm - 6pm

Thursday 16 May, 4.30pm - 6pm

Mental Health Awareness

Tuesday 23 April, 4.30pm - 6pm

Bereavement Awareness

Tuesday 7 May, 6pm - 7.30pm

Carer Awareness

E-Learning Course

In the near future, we'll be sprucing up the programme as we discover new ways to bring this content to you. Our mission? To make this programme as accessible and relevant for each of you as possible. **Got ideas that you'd like us to consider? Let us know by emailing Ross.Lamb@nhs.scot**