

# NHS Lothian Volunteer News

## Meet Sorina - Ward Helper at the RIE

**We asked volunteer Sorina how she was enjoying her role as a Ward Helper in Ward 201 at the Royal Infirmary, and what she does during her shift there:**

"I quite like interacting with people and love making the patients tea and coffee. The ward is a nice friendly environment and all the staff are nice. I normally help with giving out menus and lunches, and look forward to doing the mealtime helper training soon.

I'm familiar with dementia as my grandpa had it. It can be hard to see patients who are sad and who sometimes cry because they want to go home. I understand it can be difficult so I just listen to them and try to have conversations with them.

The volunteering has had a positive impact on my social skills. I'm not always the most social person but going up to people and starting conversations with patients has helped. I also think my listening skills are better because I hear people's stories. One patient stuck out a lot to me. They had been in the ward for a while so I had spoken to them quite a lot over the past few weeks. I was amazed at how much travelling they had done. They had met so many new cultures, which is always so nice to hear about. I love travelling as well so hearing these stories has been quite nice.

I'm taking a break over the summer to visit family in Greece. My family is from Crete and I have lived most of my life there, so I go every summer. During the summer, we spend time in our family village which is called Lentas. It's really small but I love it there as it is beside the sea and it's honestly one of the most beautiful places on Earth!

When I'm not volunteering, I play basketball and I'm in my school basketball team. I really like it as it has helped me grow my social and teamworking skills. I also read books, watch TV series and movies – I find it very relaxing. I also love listening to music as it's a way for me to pick up my mood.

In the future, I'm interested in going into Medicine. I've always enjoyed helping people but my true inspiration is my parents. They're both doctors and I've always looked up to them. I love working with people and helping them feel better any way I can."



Summer 2025

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# Yoga for body, mind and soul

Caroline recently celebrated 1 year of volunteering with NHS Lothian. As a trained yoga instructor, Caroline offers her time to run staff wellbeing sessions at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.



Here's Caroline at a recent 'Recharge' session held in the Postgraduate Education Centre on the 29th April. Sound bowls and simple breathing and movement techniques were used to enable staff to disconnect and relax during their busy shifts.

## Remember! Volunteer Expenses

We never want you to be out of pocket for your volunteering. Remember you can claim your travel expenses (please keep receipts or a record of mileage). It's important you claim at least every 3 months as we cannot backdate further than this. Ask your Voluntary Services Manager (VSM) for a claim form and please speak to us if you need any help completing this. If you are struggling to pay your travel in advance, speak to your VSM about pre-paid bus tickets. You might be able to claim other out of pocket expenses depending on your role, but please speak to your manager about this before purchasing anything.



# Volunteer Milestones

Celebrating 5 volunteers who mark 3, 5 and 10 years' volunteering with NHS Lothian



**Norman** celebrates his 5 years as an NHS Lothian volunteer this summer. He approached us in Summer 2020 to help out as a Covid Response Volunteer at St John's Hospital. Since then, he has turned his hand to being a Welcome Guide volunteer at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and since September 2023, has been a Meaningful Activity Volunteer within the Stress & Distress team where he supports the staff team by engaging with patients who are presenting with distress symptoms - many of whom live with dementia or delirium. Norman has been a natural since day one, truly embodying person-centred care.

Charlotte Reid, Stress & Distress Lead, nominated him for this year's 'Celebrating Success' award and told us: "It's a skill not a lot of people have. Just recently, Norman suggested going for a group walk. He initiates ideas, thinks creatively and is keen to help the team develop. He never oversteps the mark. He really understands the need to help these patients. Even when a patient is distressed, he remains calm and tries to understand what is going on with that person so he can help them."

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**Katie** celebrated her 10 years with NHS Lothian in July. Initially starting out at the Children's Hospital, she volunteered as a Family Support Helper, Welcome Guide and then in the Children's A&E department. She now volunteers twice a week in the A&E department of the Royal Infirmary, where she has been since August 2022. Katie is a firm and friendly presence in the department, always helpful, smiling and is such a cherished part of the team. She brings the right balance of empathy and compassion for what patients are going through, as well as a calm and level-headedness about the pressures the department faces."



**Ivor** joined us in 2020 as a Covid Response Volunteer and he's been a wonderful addition to the Ward 106 team since. He balances volunteering alongside his work and hobbies, and still finds time to support new volunteers to the site. The Senior Charge Nurse, Kim Newton, shared the following about Ivor: "Ivor is very much a part of the 106 team. We look forward to our Fridays with him hearing all about his latest adventures. Ivor's passion for supporting new volunteers onsite is inspiring." Oran Larkin, one of the deputy charge nurses, shared the following: "Ivor is a vital member of the Ward 106 team. He arrives on Fridays being cheery, friendly and full of chat. He has a great sense of humour and is always so positive. Ivor has brought real positivity to Ward 106 and he really enhances the patient's journey."



# Volunteer Milestones



**Ann** is a Book Service volunteer at St John's Hospital and celebrates 3 years with NHS Lothian. The Book Service was set up in 2001 at the hospital. Ann's knowledge of books and library services, combined with her good communication skills with patients, has been vital for the Book Service.

Volunteers Ann, Carron and Anne visit 10 wards each Friday afternoon, offering books and magazines to patients. It's much appreciated by patients who are avid readers and also provides an opportunity to have a wee chat about their favourite books.

Congratulations and thank you Ann!

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**Cath** is a Respite Activity Helper in Sunndach.

Cath celebrates 10 years volunteering with NHS Lothian. She volunteers in Sunndach, a Children's Respite Care Unit based in Livingston.

Cath shared, "It's scary where the 10 years have gone. I have enjoyed every second of volunteering at Sunndach. It has been my honour and pleasure to work with these amazing young people and the staff.

There have been some highs and lows but we have all weathered the lows together. It is fantastic watching these amazing young people progress through life and move onto bigger and better things. The staff are all outstanding and the love and care they give is beyond anything I have ever experienced - the staff are all a credit to their profession. The young people's mums and dads are amazing people who I have got to know over the years and refer to me as "Aunty Cath", as do the staff - this is a true honour.

On my first visit to Sunndach, my husband asked me when I came home, "What was it like, did you enjoy yourself?". My words were, "I enjoyed every second, it is like being at your Aunty's for the weekend, the kids are so loved by everyone at Sunndach. It is fun, laughter, loads of cuddles, but so professional in their care."

Congratulations and thank you Cath!



**Are you celebrating a volunteer milestone? Do you want to be featured next time?**

**Email us:**

**Loth.VolunteerEnquiries@nhs.scot**

Congratulations to all of our volunteers celebrating their milestones this year.

# Abseiling for a cause



Ward 206 Transplant Volunteer Moray took part in the recent Kelpies' Experience with NHS Lothian Charity on the 8 June 2025, with his son. It involved an abseil down the Kelpies - a whole 98 feet! He told us, "We were a bit daunted when we looked up inside and saw all the ropes and special equipment but the safety people made sure we were safe. The freefall descent at the end was a bit eye-watering but we were so glad to have had the chance to take part and fundraise for the Transplant ward through the NHS Lothian Charity. We raised £502! My family and myself personally have a lot to thank the wonderful staff on that ward for." Go Moray!

## Welcome to Sheona

Meet Sheona, our newest member of the Voluntary Services Team. Here are a few words from her about her new role in the team: "I'll be supporting the development and delivery of the Bridge Builders Project, an initiative



originally created in Denmark.

Bridge Builders are medical students who volunteer to accompany people who may need extra support to attend their hospital appointments. I'll be working to ensure the service is safe, effective, and tailored to the needs of those we support including overseeing volunteer recruitment and training - watch this space!"



*Your*  
**VOICE**  
**MATTERS**

# New Volunteering Roles

## Renal Publicity and Events

Over the last few months, we've been working with Support Worker, Sharlene Taylor, from the Renal Young Adult Service to develop a new volunteer role. Set up in May 2023, the service provides support to young adults aged 16-35 living with kidney conditions. They currently meet for monthly support groups at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, have social away-days and are now working on a new art project with Tonic Arts.

Sharlene was keen to develop a role to provide the young people she supports with some skills for the future, and to assist her with publicising the news and events for the service in a more engaging way.

Two volunteers from the service have been recruited to develop a quarterly newsletter to highlight all that the service has going on. Features have included stories from users, a spotlight on their recent bake off competition with kidney-friendly recipes, and signposting users to support services within the NHS and associated charities. It's fairly new so everyone is still finding their feet but a layout and newsletter name is in development, with talks of calling the newsletter the 'Kilted Kidney'.

The volunteers have been so enthusiastic about the newsletter and bring with them some design and events skills, including vital lived-experience of being supported by NHS services. We look forward to seeing the role develop in the next few months.

## Volunteer Voice

Do you want to help shape our Volunteer Service? Join our 'Volunteer Voice' group to have your say!

'Volunteer Voice' aims to gather the experiences and opinions of NHS Lothian volunteers to help inform the steps towards our strategic vision. Members of the group will provide differing viewpoints, ideas, and experience on topics such as new roles, communications, new projects, and surveys.

The group meets once every 4 months on Microsoft Teams for around 2 hours.

**To find out more, email Rachael at: [Rachael.Honeyman@nhs.scot](mailto:Rachael.Honeyman@nhs.scot).**





# Remember!

## Infection Prevention

It is important that you stay well and that you take time to recover from periods of ill health. As a general rule, please do not attend your volunteering if you are unwell, and instead please let your Voluntary Services Manager know.

### Specific illnesses/symptoms

If you have symptoms of a respiratory virus such as a cold, flu or Covid-19, please protect others by staying at home. You can return to your volunteering when you are no longer symptomatic and when you feel better.

If you have chicken pox or shingles, or have been in contact with someone who has, do not attend your volunteering and instead consult your Voluntary Services Manager. They will discuss this with our Occupational Health Service to determine when it is suitable for you to return to your volunteering.

If you have experienced gastrointestinal illness, for example vomiting or diarrhoea, you should only return to your volunteering when you feel well again and when your last symptom of vomiting or diarrhoea was at least 48 hours ago.

Good hand hygiene and following uniform and PPE protocols is essential to keep you, our patients, staff and visitors safe!

Remember - no jewellery, watches, nail varnish or false nails if you are volunteering in a clinical area.

Please take a few moments to remind yourself of the guidance here:

<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/QCdjpj5DCKo44GHU?ref=Link>

## Keeping in touch

If you are currently volunteering and need to stop, please let us know by emailing **Loth.VolunteerEnquiries@nhs.scot** so that we can say thank you, adjust our timetables and find an alternative volunteer.

If you are finishing your volunteering, please complete our **exit questionnaire** and **return your ID badge and uniform** to:

Voluntary Services, Main Mall, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 51 Little France Crescent, EH16 4SA. If you are returning your uniform only, please include a note of your name.

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