



Volunteering Strategy

January 2023
- May 2024



The ambulance sector recognises and welcomes the significant benefits volunteering brings to patients, staff, organisations, and volunteers themselves. Ambulance volunteers have given their time in clinical and non-clinical volunteering opportunities for over two decades; they enhance the care we offer to patients and families, support our staff and act as positive ambassadors for the ambulance service. Volunteers choose to offer their time for the benefit of communities and enhance, rather than replace the work of our staff.



Our Mission

To publish and implement a national strategy for volunteering, ensuring clinical and non-clinical volunteering opportunities support the ambulance sector to meet the needs of our patients, promote the wellbeing of our staff and reinforce the sector's role as an anchor organisation in our communities and with our partners.



Our Vision

To champion and deliver ongoing inclusive volunteering opportunities across the UK NHS ambulance sector to benefit our patients, our people and the wider NHS and social care system.

This is the first national ambulance volunteering strategy and demonstrates our commitment to supporting and enhancing volunteering opportunities in the ambulance sector and healthcare more widely. We will monitor delivery of this strategy and update it in early 2024 to reflect our long-term commitment to maximising the contribution of volunteering for health.



Providers of Choice

Ambulance service volunteers will be seen as reliable, skilled individuals who represent and are representative of their communities and offer high quality, professional services to patients, staff, and communities.



Organisations of Choice

Volunteers will view ambulance services as inclusive organisations that they would be proud of and wish to volunteer for.



Partners of Choice

Systems and partners will view ambulance service volunteers as key contributors to the collaborative delivery of services.



Principles

Measures of success with timeframes:
By these timeframes we will have:

Short term by end March 2023

Medium term by end September 2023

Longer term by end March 2024

We will learn from shared good practice in the NHS, creating greater efficiency and consistency in volunteering across the UK ambulance sector.

- Short term**
1. Recruited and established a national steering group of volunteers and staff to oversee delivery of our strategy.
 2. Established and maintained a register of volunteering risks and issues with mitigating actions and escalation to AAACE Strategic Delivery Oversight Group and NHS England Voluntary Partnerships team as appropriate.
 3. Maintained a progress log for strategy workstreams to evidence planned and implemented actions.
 4. Delivered greater consistency and efficiency for our largest volunteer population, community first responder services, through the work of the National Ambulance Service Responder Managers' Group.
 5. Maintained other national specialist volunteering network groups, meeting at least quarterly to share learning and good practice.

We will optimise the use of data and systems to enable volunteer skills and contribution to be evidenced and their potential further explored.

- Medium term**
1. Delivered insight and impact training for volunteer leaders to support them in data analysis and evaluation of volunteer programmes and pilots.
 2. Piloted a national volunteering dashboard and agreed proposed datasets and reporting options.
- Longer term**
3. Developed a repository of evaluated ambulance sector volunteer initiatives / pilots and shared them for learning across trusts.

We will scope the offer to volunteers and set out how we will support and value them so that they report having positive volunteering experiences in the ambulance sector.

- Medium term**
1. Developed minimum standard volunteer role descriptions for each of our current volunteering opportunities.
 2. Produced a volunteer one to one/ personal development/ wellbeing template.
 3. Developed and piloted an annual volunteering survey to understand the experience of our volunteers and responded to findings with a subsequent 'you said, we did' update demonstrating how volunteer voices have been heard.
- Longer term**
4. Reviewed current practice and agreed a minimum volunteer induction module.
 5. Formalised volunteer to career opportunities within the ambulance sector learning from the wider NHS learning and programmes.
 6. Scoped volunteering opportunities for staff such as staff volunteer responders, network leads and welfare.

We will review funding models and describe future financing options for volunteering activity. We recognise that volunteering is not free, there are associated costs and investment is required for a positive volunteering experience with maximum impact for patients, staff and organisations.

- Short term**
1. Completed a stocktake of current volunteering funding arrangements.
 2. Ensured all our volunteers can be reimbursed for any reasonable expenses incurred through volunteering activity in line with national guidance on volunteering for NHS providers so that no one is prevented from volunteering because they cannot afford to.
- Medium term**
3. Produced a future sustainable funding options paper.

We will produce a template for a volunteering leadership infrastructure based on good practice, aligned with national NHS volunteering guidance and standards, and in consultation with our volunteers.

- Short term**
1. Completed a stocktake of current staffing structures for volunteer services in each trust.
- Medium term**
2. Proposed a template for optimum volunteer leadership infrastructure including recommended staff to volunteer management ratios.

We will ensure ambulance sector policies, procedures and governance processes consider and reference volunteers as valuable members of ambulance service teams and we will produce a good practice volunteering & policy framework for the ambulance sector.

- Medium term**
1. Completed a stocktake and review of policies for volunteering activity.
 2. Reviewed the ambulance sector approach against the NHS England volunteering policy framework.
- Longer term**
3. Created a good practice volunteering policy framework.
 4. Produced a good practice quality assurance framework.

We will develop accessible and inclusive volunteer friendly recruitment processes which will support us to bring volunteers on board swiftly and safely.

- Short term**
1. Set out the optimum process for the recruitment and onboarding of volunteers and proposed target timeframes, based on a review of current practice and links with the NHS volunteering recruitment portal.
- Medium term**
2. Created a bank of recruitment materials for use by all AAACE members supporting greater consistency and improving volunteer mobility.
 3. Conducted an equality impact assessment in relation to our volunteer recruitment processes.
 4. Scoped the feasibility of an ambulance sector volunteer passport to improve volunteer mobility between services.

We will work to attract volunteers from diverse backgrounds so that our communities are represented in our volunteering activity.

- Medium term**
1. Included demographic information about our volunteers in the volunteering dashboard pilot.
 2. Analysed and published a summary of characteristics of our volunteer base locally and nationally.
 3. Worked with members' equality, diversity and inclusion leads to create an EDI plan for volunteering to include engaging with, identifying, and addressing barriers for under-represented communities or groups.

We will support ambulance services to continually develop their culture to accept, value and develop volunteers as part of the overall delivery of high quality services.

- Medium term**
1. Raised awareness and promoted better understanding of our volunteer roles amongst our staff.
 2. Completed a learning needs analysis for volunteering.
 3. Agreed the use of standardised, nationally recognised qualifications where possible and appropriate to increase accredited professional and personal development for ambulance volunteers.

We will scope inclusive volunteering opportunities ensuring we showcase careers in the ambulance service and create a pipeline for our future workforce.

- Medium term**
1. Worked with the NHS Cadets programme and universities to support wider volunteering opportunities for young people.
 2. Worked with the Prince's Trust to showcase volunteering and careers in the ambulance service.
 3. Scoped how volunteers can transition to careers in the ambulance or healthcare sector.

We will develop a national volunteering communications and engagement strategy which will include how we celebrate and recognise our volunteers.

- Short term**
1. Hosted an ambulance volunteering page on the AAACE website.
 2. Produced quarterly national newsletters for volunteers and volunteer leaders.
 3. Produced a national volunteering communications strategy to share positive volunteering stories and promote the role of ambulance volunteering.
 4. Produced a national volunteer reward and recognition framework to celebrate ambulance sector volunteers.

We will work in partnership with other voluntary, community and third sector organisations to secure agreements which will reduce duplication, competition, and overlap.

- Short term**
1. Collated a list of existing partnerships with copies of any formalised agreements.
 2. Developed a set of principles for partnership working.
- Medium term**
3. Explored strategic, national partnerships with voluntary, community and third sector organisations and signed at least three partnership agreements.

We will work in partnership with other health and social care organisations to signpost volunteers to opportunities which best suit their skill set and motivation.

- Short term**
1. Developed a volunteering page on the AAACE website where we will display information about ambulance sector volunteering opportunities.
 2. Contributed to the NHS England voluntary partnerships team's work on a shared recruitment platform for health and social care volunteering.
- Medium term**
3. Worked with the NHS volunteer responder platform to pilot at least one ambulance sector micro-volunteering opportunity.

We will understand and build on the contribution our volunteers make to community engagement, education, and resilience. They are members of the communities in which they volunteer, and we recognise the knowledge and understanding they can share about population health in those communities.

- Medium term**
1. Worked with the AAACE National Lead for Public Health to identify links and opportunities to support the ambulance health inequalities consensus commitments.
- Longer term**
2. Captured data to evidence volunteer community engagement activity.

We will work with our public health partners to ensure the potential our volunteers have to reduce health inequalities is realised.

- Medium term**
1. Conducted and promoted the use of health inequalities impact assessment for volunteering programmes.
- Longer term**
2. Empowered and supported volunteers to proactively reduce health inequalities through innovation and quality improvement.
 3. Explored opportunities to broaden the provision of health inequalities training, education and support for all volunteers.

We will consolidate the role of our volunteers in emergency resilience and response to major incidents.

- Medium term**
1. Agreed a national approach to the deployment of volunteers in the event of a no notice major incident or emergency.
- Longer term**
2. Developed a volunteer skills matrix tool so trusts can capture additional skills of volunteers for emergency response situations.
 3. Developed an optional emergency response awareness training module for volunteers.
 4. Agreed a national approach to the integration of volunteers in major incident exercises and drills.

