

NHS and Care Volunteer Responders

About the programme

Volunteer Responders is a flexible volunteering programme supporting adult social care and the NHS in England. This programme is built on a digital platform and links an available pool of volunteers to local live tasks through the GoodSAM app. It's a quick and simple process to book a volunteer and you can sign up as a referrer in moments.

Local authorities have always been able to refer people in receipt of a care package to the programme. The positive impact the volunteers had on the wellbeing of the people supported has now been extended and Volunteer Responders are available to help adult social care providers across all eligible residential and domiciliary settings. The programme makes it easier for people to volunteer and simpler for care providers to access support.

Volunteers can provide telephone companionship with friendly Check In and Chat calls and help to transport medicine and equipment from NHS sites to people at home. They can also pick up prescriptions and collect shopping in some parts of the country.

Volunteers will not undertake any staff duties, but will complement the existing workforce, allowing care and health staff to focus on providing quality care to those who need it most.

The programme was launched following adult social care and charity sector engagement and is evolving all the time.

We are working with health and care services to develop and deliver new volunteer activities which complement existing schemes.

Services

Check In and Chat (available): Telephone support to people who need a chat and some encouragement to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Check In and Chat Plus (available): Regular telephone calls for more vulnerable people - 3 calls a week over a 6-week period from the same volunteer.

Pick-Up and Deliver (available): Volunteers to transport medication or small items of medical equipment to people's homes from NHS sites and equipment between sites.

Community Response (available in some areas): Collection and delivery of essential shopping and prescriptions to people at home.

Additional activities will be developed over the coming months and all will be shaped with feedback from the sector.

Assurance

Volunteer Responders have had the appropriate checks and receive the required guidance and support for these activities. They are co-ordinated centrally and deployed locally. Their expenses are paid by the programme.

Volunteering runs 7 days a week and has wrap-around support and assurance. There is a helpline, safeguarding and problem-solving team available between 8am – 8pm every day.

Benefits of the programme

Supports the workforce:

- Provides a free pool of available volunteers that can be accessed quickly and easily.
- Volunteers will help improve the quality of people's experience of care, complementing the roles and responsibilities of the workforce. Their presence will free up staff to support people with more complex needs to live independently.
- Volunteers will not be asked to provide personal care or undertake roles that paid staff would do. They do not replace the existing highly valued health and care staff.
- [Recent research](#) in care homes has shown that care staff, supported by volunteers, report greater job satisfaction and reduced stress levels.

Enhances sector provision:

- Provides a safety net of short-term support – up to six weeks bursts.
- Many people already volunteer in health and care and Volunteer Responders has been designed to increase capacity not to replace volunteering programmes.
- The programme includes a network of Regional Relationship Managers [Contacts | NHS Volunteer Responders](#) to support engagement with local health and care systems – including local voluntary organisations. They will ensure the programme can respond to emerging needs and is not duplicating or replacing existing, successful volunteering programmes.

Aids staff and volunteer recruitment:

- Volunteer Responders attracts newcomers into volunteering for the first time because of its flexibility. It acts as a stepping stone to ongoing volunteering participation
- The flexibility also makes it a great offer to potential volunteers who want to manage their volunteering around busy work and social commitments. And it means they can support other organisations and charities at the same time.
- The programme will create a helpful pool of individuals with experience of health and care which will support recruitment.
 - The support the Volunteer Responders provide enhances existing sector provision in local areas.

Feedback

Samantha Aylott, Specialist Advisor for Adult Social Care at Essex County Council

“It’s immensely helpful to be able to offer people emotional wellbeing support and the opportunity to have a friendly phone call as part of their care package. Having someone to chat to can mean a lot to the adults we work with; it’s about knowing someone cares and is interested in them.”

“I would recommend the programme to other social care providers, it’s quick and easy to use.”

Referrals

Find out more or make a referral by visiting nhscarevolunteerresponders.org