

May 2026

Volunteering for Health

Hertfordshire & West Essex - Programme Update



Getting on the Same Page: Lunch & Learn Success

Great to see such a strong turnout for last week's Lunch & Learn. There were plenty of thoughtful questions, shared perspectives, and a clear appetite to work together. Sessions like this help us stay open, aligned, and moving in the same direction. Thank you to everyone who joined, contributed, and continues to be part of the conversation.



Coming Together: ICS-wide Meeting This June

Every quarter we hold an ICS-wide steering group meeting for our key stakeholders, an important part of our process in ensuring we're staying on track, hearing from our partners and working together to deliver on our goals. We're really pleased to be able to welcome Ed Knowles, the new Director of Neighbourhoods in Hertfordshire, to our next meeting in June.

Building Momentum Across Volunteering for Health



Katie Edwards Programme Lead

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April has been a positive month for the Volunteering for Health programme, with strong progress across our key priorities and growing momentum across the system.

We've made good headway on the development of a volunteer passport. Gethyn Williams met with our Programme Coordinators to explore how passporting could be tested through the pilots. These conversations were rich and practical and will directly inform the design brief currently in development.

Our Lunch and Learn was another highlight, bringing together colleagues from across the system to hear more about the programme. It sparked thoughtful discussion and great questions, and we're looking forward to continuing to build this wider engagement.

I also had the opportunity to attend a London-based conference hosted by Renaisi, exploring what it takes to sustain place-based systems change. You can [read their research findings here](#), but some key takeaways that particularly resonated were:

- Sustained change depends on **long-term investment in relationships**, not just programmes or structures
- **Local leadership and shared ownership** are critical to embedding change beyond initial funding cycles
- **Flexibility and adaptability** are essential: systems need space to learn and evolve over time
- Evidence of impact must be meaningful to **local contexts**, not just driven by national metrics.

At the monthly national programme learning day, we focused on long-term sustainability, including the importance of building strong relationships with local authority partners. I also presented details of our West Essex pilot, introducing a new Neighbourhood Connector volunteer role, supporting discharge at Princess Alexandra Hospital and in community settings, in partnership with WECAN and Rainbow Services. The model was well received, with strong interest from across the programme.

Alongside this, I presented at the national programme's Strategic Action Group with leaders from NHS Charities Together, NHS England and CW+. Conversations focused how partnerships can strengthen how we articulate the social and economic impact of volunteering, and the wider role of volunteering within the emerging neighbourhood health framework and the NHS 10 Year Plan.

Looking ahead, we're excited to be attending the VCFSE Alliance conference on 12 May: do come and say hello if you are also there!

Regional Progress

Programme Coordinators are working closely with NHS and charity managers in their areas, building relationships to pilot new and different ways of working.



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Testing more inclusive pathways into volunteering, we continue to develop a pilot in partnership with Herts Mind Network, supporting individuals in recovery from severe mental illness. We have now identified a parallel pilot for adults with learning disabilities and neurodivergence and are currently finalising details and project partners.



Brogan
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Two focus groups held last month, with students from North Herts College. Valuable insight and understanding gained on our work so far in making volunteering more accessible for young people, also providing a steer on what comes next for us in East and North Herts.



Teresa
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Progress this month has included developing a simpler registration route for those interested in volunteering in health roles within the community as well as at Watford General Hospital. Volunteer data has also been mapped across organisations to better understand demand and gaps. Planning is underway for a Volunteer Forum on 6th June, alongside continued work on developing data sharing and consent processes between partner organisations.



Nikki
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We were excited to launch our pilot at Princess Alexandra Hospital in April, supporting people leaving hospital to know where they can access support in the community to help them stay well at home. Interviews are underway for this new Neighbourhood Connector volunteer role, with training to begin in the coming weeks.



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