



Volunteering at Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS)

Our volunteers are amazing. They help us to deliver our organisational purpose, which is to provide and co-ordinate safe, effective, responsive and patient-centred out-of-hospital emergency, urgent and non-emergency care, so all our patients can have the best possible experience and outcomes.

Volunteers offer their time, care, and energy freely and without financial gain. Their selfless contributions are vital to our services.

During 2024, almost 1,000 YAS volunteers offered over 270,000 hours of their time, supporting YAS services to deliver exceptional patient and community care.

What is volunteering development and why is it important?

Volunteering development is the continuous development of volunteering at YAS. The YAS Volunteer Development Framework, first launched in 2023, sets out our commitment to supporting and enhancing volunteering across our Trust. This is in recognition of the significant benefits volunteering brings to our patients, staff, communities and to volunteers themselves.

The framework identifies how we will achieve our ambitions of having:

- a robust infrastructure to enable, sustain, and enhance current and future volunteering opportunities.
- an organisational culture that values, encourages, promotes, and supports volunteering.
- volunteer programmes that maximise volunteer contribution and represent the diversity of our communities.
- collaborative partnerships with other health and care providers, voluntary, community and third sector organisations to further enhance our care offer through volunteering (partnerships).

Our progress during 2024-25

Infrastructure

We have:

- Achieved Investing in Volunteers reaccreditation for the second time. The accreditation process involved a thorough assessment of our practices with regards to planning for and enabling safe, effective and rewarding volunteering programmes. We are proud to hold this nationally-recognised quality standard and will continue to ensure that the quality of volunteering management across YAS reflects best practice.
- Listened to volunteer feedback regarding the electronic platform for e-learning, which a significant percentage of volunteers felt wasn't user-friendly. As a result, we have worked with existing volunteers to develop and launch a new user-friendly e-learning platform to ensure e-learning for volunteers is accessible.
- The Volunteering Development Steering Group, which offers Trust-wide senior leadership support to volunteering, is firmly embedded in the YAS governance and leadership structure. Volunteering developments, challenges and successes are now regularly reported at senior levels, ensuring that volunteering is both visible and valued at YAS.
- Made good progress in reviewing our YAS Volunteer Policy. This policy explains our commitment to volunteering, the terms of engagement, and outlines expectations,

boundaries, and important issues like safe conduct, safeguarding and reporting. The revised policy will be launched in the coming weeks.

Culture

We have:

- Developed a volunteer reward and recognition framework, which includes the introduction of long service awards recognising every five years of volunteering. The framework sets out the various ways in which YAS volunteers are and should be thanked for their amazing and selfless contributions.
- Celebrated Trust-wide volunteering during National Volunteers' Week 2024 by shining a spotlight on each voluntary programme across YAS.
- Developed a regular health and wellbeing newsletter tailored for YAS volunteers to ensure that our volunteering teams are aware of the health and wellbeing support available as a YAS volunteer.
- Ensured that volunteers are consistently referenced in relevant internal and external communications, such as informative and celebratory case studies involving volunteers, personal and professional development opportunities available to volunteers, and health and wellbeing initiatives.

Contribution and Diversity

We have:

- Continued to develop and establish the Community Engagement Volunteer programme for existing YAS staff and volunteers. This programme now has dedicated support and leadership from within the YAS Community Engagement Team.
- Hugely benefited from Critical Friends Network (CFN) volunteer involvement in producing the YAS Patient Experience and Involvement Framework, which sets out our commitment to ensuring our services are tailored to meet the diverse and evolving needs of our communities. CFN volunteers bring their expertise and lived experiences, ensuring that we include the patient and public voice in our decision-making and service improvements. CFN volunteers will continue to be involved in the delivery of the YAS Patient Experience and Involvement Framework, therefore improving the quality of care for our patients.
- Developed a volunteer demographics report to ensure that we understand and monitor diversity amongst our volunteers and look towards increasing diversity and representing the communities we support.
- Introduced two significant enhancements to our Community First Responder programme - the introduction of blood glucose measuring and nasal cannulas for delivering oxygen therapy. These new initiatives aim to improve the quality of care we provide to our patients, whilst also enhancing the volunteer experience due to the increased care of patients.

Partnerships

We have:

- Worked collaboratively with the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) through YAS volunteers supporting the BIMA Lifesavers programme. This also opens opportunities for building relationships with our Islamic communities.
- Worked collaboratively with the Royal Voluntary Service to provide voluntary welfare support to crews at busy hospital emergency departments.
- Worked and continue to work collaboratively with Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership to develop system-wide youth volunteering through the [Volunteering for Health programme](#).

Next Steps

Key areas of focus in the coming months will include:

- how we recruit volunteers across our activities in a safe and effective way

- analysing the results of the national ambulance volunteering survey – what do our volunteers feel about their volunteering experience at YAS; what do we do well and what could we do better
- supporting volunteer teams to deliver and embed the volunteer reward and recognition framework
- developing Trust-wide promotional materials and campaigns to increase the awareness of volunteering, both across our organisation and across our diverse communities.

During the next 12 months, we plan to further support our volunteers and our organisation by considering how we could support existing and future volunteers wishing to pursue a career in YAS or the wider health and care sector, by developing a volunteer to career pathway. We also plan to evaluate the strength of our volunteering leadership framework that guides, supports and enables volunteering, and how this might be further strengthened.

The National Picture

YAS is supporting the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE) [National Ambulance Volunteering Strategy](#), which aims to offer national leadership and facilitate continuous developments across volunteering in the ambulance sector. The national strategy for 2024-26 focuses on ensuring that ambulance volunteering:

- is diverse, inclusive and helps to reduce health inequalities
- is supported by strong leadership structures and an increased evidence base and profile
- meets the highest standards of recruitment, training and deployment.