

Mental Health Volunteers with Volunteer to Career Evaluation report

Introduction

Volunteers make a unique contribution to health and social care services, particularly when they bring lived experience and an ability to connect with people on a personal level.

In Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), volunteers with lived experience of mental health challenges are supporting patients across community and hospital settings, providing encouragement, meaningful activities and the reassurance that recovery is possible.

Working in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Helpforce supported the evaluation of this innovative volunteering programme through its Insight & Impact service.

The findings showed positive outcomes for patients, staff and volunteers, including improved patient experiences, benefits to staff working lives, and opportunities for volunteers to build confidence, skills and a sense of purpose. The evaluation also highlighted the value of lived experience, empathy and human connection in supporting wellbeing and recovery.

The project is also linked to Helpforce's Volunteer to Career (VtC) pathway, which supports volunteers interested in exploring health and care careers. By combining volunteering with structured career development, the programme helps people gain experience, develop confidence and skills, and consider progression into employment within the sector.

These case studies demonstrate the value of lived experience volunteering in improving wellbeing, supporting recovery and strengthening health and social care services.

We hope these case studies inspire ideas and conversations about the role that volunteering can play in health and social care. If you would like to learn more about Helpforce Cymru, discuss a volunteering initiative, or explore opportunities within your own organisation, please get in touch with Lynne Connolly at lconnolly@wcva.cymru.



Evaluation report



Case studies