Encouraging Greater Youth Volunteering in Health and Care
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Youth-focused

By working alongside young people everyday, we get to know what makes them tick what excites them, worries them and winds them up, new trends, technology and language, what content they are engaging with, when, where and why.

Multi-discipline

Insight and effectiveness-driven, we create strategies to suit the audience and client objectives, from apps to ads, content strategies and games to events, social media and schools outreach.
We measure social impact with equal importance as profit, and through effective work, improve the lives of hundreds of young people every year.
What We Do: Youth-Centred Design

Youth-centred design

Livity’s approach to designing anything for young people is a bespoke, adaptable take on the International Standard of Human Centred Design specifically tailored to young people, and applicable not just to digital UX but all communications, experiences and engagement touch points.

We call it “Youth-Centred Design” and have developed and refined our methodologies over 13 years of working directly with young people every day in mutually beneficial, respectful, and trusted collaborative contexts to create campaigns and experiences that really work.

It begins from a baseline of deep ethnographic youth insight, supplemented by existing available, client-derived or actively acquired national data, and involves representative groups of young people across every stage of the process from peer-led research, topic immersion, ideation and participatory development, right through to creative execution, co-design and testing, and peer-to-peer amplification and distribution.

These processes ensure that everything we create protects and prioritises the youth user needs and context over any other demands or pressures on any given project. Within these processes, we also work hard to allow individual artistic vision, gut instinct and experimentation to happen alongside the rigour, to enable moments of breakthrough innovation and strike the right balance of logic and magic.
Aims and Objectives
Aims and Objectives

Details of the brief

The Department of Health (in partnership with Step Up To Serve) wishes to encourage the health and social care sector to offer more quality opportunities for youth action and volunteering.

Seeking to build on existing good practice, there is clearly an opportunity to replicate models of success in other areas of the sector. This may be within traditional caring roles, but further opportunities also exist across the wider sector of health and care providers, as well as in faculties that are not concerned with primary care.

A wide and deep range of benefits are acknowledged, including equipping young people with skills and experiences to gain future employment, and providers benefitting from new perspectives and the energy triggered by engagement with young people.

Evidence suggests that attracting young people to participate in such schemes can be challenging. The evaluation of the National Citizen Service suggests that the key motivations for young people taking up opportunities centre around: whether it will help them get a job, it being easy to do, fun, social interactions and clear recognition of contribution and effort.
Two audiences:

**Young people**
How to encourage individuals to be motivated to seek out opportunities and actively take part
Understand the elements which engage this audience on a larger scale
Understand and therefore navigate the barriers to involvement
Ensure flexibility to account for varying interest levels

**Host organisations**
Explore appetite to deliver schemes
Identify common barriers, and explore possible solutions
Utilise learnings from successful adult schemes
Awareness of varying interest levels
Aims and Objectives

**STAGE 1**
Define

• Kick off meeting, to define project plan

**STAGE 2**
Discover

• Desk research, reviewing existing literature
  • 8x in-depth expert and stakeholder interviews
  • 6x peer-led discussions
  • Analysis of findings

**STAGE 3**
Design

• 3x co-creation workshops

**STAGE 4**
Debrief

• Final de-brief document, including insights and co-created recommendations
Recruitment

Who took part?
- 10 individual stakeholder interviewees
- 6 peer-led discussions, featuring 36 participants in total
- 3 workshops, with 18 participants in total

*all England-wide

Recruitment criteria:
- Range of age groups (16-24 years)
- Regional representation across England
- Even gender balance
- Varying socio-economic backgrounds
- Varied occupation classification, including those not in education, employment or training
- Combination of volunteers, and non-volunteers
- Mix of backgrounds, ethnicity and cultural experiences
- Diversity of attitudes, motivators and behaviour
A taste of who we spoke to

Anita
17 yrs old
Birmingham

Status:
• NEET
• Not heavily involved within local community

Katie
21 yrs old
Brighton

Status:
• Currently studying and soon to graduate
• Unsure of what she wants to do once she graduates

Michael
19 yrs old
Middlesbrough

Status:
• Unemployed and looking for work within Middlesbrough
• Also volunteering within the local community

Griff
24 yrs old
London

Status:
• Medical student
• Ambitious about career and seeking opportunities to maximise progress
Our Methodology
Our Methodology – Desk Research

Desk research

During this period of discovery, the team immersed themselves in existing literature on the topic to better understand the landscape, the challenges and opportunities described to date, and to gain an insight into which organisations and stakeholders could add value to our work.

This reading gave us a real depth of understanding, and uncovered a number of themes that went on to underpin the structure of our peer-led huddles and stakeholder interviews.

From this initial exploratory research it became apparent that engagement and activity around a youth audience specifically was at an embryonic stage within the sector, highlighting the value of the work that Step Up To Serve have initiated. It also indicated that there could be particular value in embracing the diversity of audiences within the ‘youth’ segment as a whole.

The following documents were considered (amongst others):

Demos:
- ‘The state of the service nation: youth social action in the UK’ (2013)
- ‘Service generation: a step-change in youth social action’ (2013)

British Youth Council:
- ‘Recognise and respect us: overcoming barriers to youth volunteering’ (2009)

Ipsos MORI / National Citizen Service:
- ‘National Citizen Service 2013 evaluation’ (2014)

The King’s Fund:
- ‘Evaluation of King’s College Hospital Volunteering service’ (2014)

Volunteering England:
- ‘Student volunteers: a national profile’ (2008)

National Youth Agency:
- ‘Young people’s volunteering and skills development’ (2007)

Nesta:
- ‘People Helping People: Peer support that changes lives’ (2013)
- ‘By Us, For Us: The power of co-design and co-delivery’ (2013)
Stakeholder Interviews
Stakeholder Interviews: introduction

We identified a range of individuals who were well placed to help inform our research. A range of organisations were already working in the sector and we wanted to learn from their experiences. We needed to be sure we fully understood the landscape, the perspectives of those already operating within it, and any issues and opportunities, from the perspectives of both young people and host organisations. We also wanted to learn from those working in the volunteering sector more broadly, outside of health and care, and particularly focused on engaging young people.

We conducted nine in depth interviews with the following stakeholders:

- Justin Davis Smith, Executive Director, NCVO
- Jenny Manley, Volunteer Manager, Birmingham Women’s NHS Foundation Trust
- Lisa Weaks, Third Sector Manager, The King’s Fund
- Tina Barton, Director, Wot Box Participation
- Katherine Joel, Volunteer Manager, King’s College
- Carol Rawlings, Volunteer Manager, NASVM
- Kat Minett, Global Partnerships Manager, RockCorps
- Roxanne Ohene, Campaign Director, Step Up To Serve
- Vicki Sellick, Director of the Innovation Lab, Nesta
Stakeholder Interviews: methodology

The discussions covered a range of topics, examining barriers and possible solutions, and exploring a range of themes including the following:

• Gaining an understanding of the knowledge of those within the sector: which programmes do people know about, and which are less well known
• Understanding the benefits for those hosting volunteers within the sector
• Individual opinions and perceptions about peers delivering within the sector
• Exploration of the King’s College Hospital scheme, and what makes it so effective
• Broadening our knowledge of other schemes across the UK
• Areas for improvement across the sector, and how to make current schemes more effective
• Challenges in recruiting young people to current schemes, and barriers that prevent young people applying to volunteer
• Examining the perceived or real difficulties when working with young people
• Understanding the drivers behind volunteering for both participants and host organisations
• Exploring diversity, and which groups of young people are currently under-represented within the sector
• Challenges and strategies for retaining volunteering as a distinct entity to work experience, unpaid placements, internships etc.
Stakeholder Interviews: impact

These conversations reinforced and deepened our understanding from the period of desk research, and highlighted experiences and specific details that gave us richer insight through which to develop the frameworks for conversations with young people.

We witnessed a significant contrast between individuals at a senior level and those delivering on the frontline. Variance in roles, day to day responsibilities and experiences meant that individuals were differently informed about the opportunity and possible challenges. As a consequence there is a noticeable disconnect between the ambition and the reality on the ground. Across the health and care sector, the perceived challenges of working with young people should not be underestimated, and while there was a universal appreciation that working with young people could offer significant benefits, further investigation often revealed some reservations and nervousness about the reality of what this meant.

Perceptible regional differences also suggested there could be a benefit to scoping opportunities at a local level, thereby embedding them within the community responsible for their ongoing maintenance.

Conversations about the topic of volunteering with those from sectors other than health and care, suggested that there could be a huge benefit to learning from others who have developed and utilised volunteering for entirely different purposes. Although barriers and challenges may be specific to the health and care sector, we uncovered some inspiring insights and creative ideas in the approaches taken by youth-focused organisations such as RockCorp and GoodGym.
Peer-led Huddles
Peer-led Huddles: introduction

Six young people from our UK-wide network convened groups of their friends (36 in total) in peer-led discussions around the topic of volunteering and health and care.

Sessions were hosted by a range of young people selected to include a contrasting set of 16-24 year olds, including those in a range of education, employment and training situations, both volunteers and non-volunteers, living in a variety of locations across England: Middlesbrough, Brighton, Bristol, London, Birmingham, Surrey.

These peer-led discussion groups were held in informal locations chosen by the young facilitators, and structured to ensure the conversations were firmly situated within young people’s worlds.
Peer-led Huddles: methodology

A discussion framework was provided, accompanied by a fuller brief from the Livity Insights team, to enable youth facilitators to feel confident to lead conversations over a 90 minute session.

Topics covered conversational themes and interactive tasks, including:

- A storytelling exercise about participants’ experiences with the NHS to familiarise them with the topic, but also to unearth the areas which resonate, and retain focus
- A similar exercise exploring participation in volunteering, both traditional and more unconventional
- A creative exercise to collectively imagine a campaign to attract young people to volunteer/take more social action

Sessions were audio recorded and shared with the Livity Insights team following completion of the session. Worksheets and exercises were completed during the sessions themselves and the contents fed into our analysis.
Peer-led Huddles: impact

These sessions offered unfiltered youth insight, delivered in a raw and uninterrupted format.

Within this structure, young people felt comfortable amongst their friends, and relaxed into the topics of discussion, using colloquial language, and expressions and interactions that reflected their social and cultural context.

The peer-led research model also provides real benefit to young facilitators, providing a means for them to gain valuable professional skills applicable for CVs and future employment. Convening sessions of young people involves organisational and charismatic skills, in order to motivate participants and create a relaxed and productive atmosphere. Within the sessions there is a real skill in facilitating these conversations successfully, and whilst maintaining the natural flow, maintaining a structure and keeping people on topic.

“I believe this is the kind of thing that all young people should be included in”

Mariam, 19, Brighton

“I felt my opinions matter and will make a difference in future. It was the kind of session which can produce fruitful results especially if done on a large scale. Such workshops have the potential to bring together a large community of people from different backgrounds in order to solve a real issue.”

Monique, 22, London
Workshops
Workshops: introduction

Insights from peer-led huddles were grouped and analysed by the Insights team to develop the framework for our co-creation workshop sessions. Insights were clustered according to a range of categories: barriers, opportunities, supply and demand, innovations and surprises.

The clustering and analysis process enabled us to coherently review data and establish a set of directions, innovation and development ideas that could be further explored during the workshops themselves.

Whereas the peer-led huddles better lent themselves to informal conversations around the topic, and provide a chance for genuine honesty and insights gleaned from an open, largely unstructured environment, the workshops afforded greater opportunity for focused and facilitated collective creativity, problem solving, and Youth-Centred Design.

Workshops were attended by a mixture of individuals who had taken part in the huddles, and those who had not, hosted in Birmingham, London and Brighton.
The co-creation workshop agenda included a range of creative exercises designed to bring participants closer and foster an environment of learning and collaboration. Although idea-orientated, the structure allowed for new insights to be unearthed, and existing perspectives to be both challenged and validated. Creative exercises included:

- Listing and grouping the benefits of volunteering from a young person’s perspective, exploring the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Writing the script for an advert about volunteering, that focused on these benefits and brought them to life in youth-focused language
- Exploring which organisations best gave credibility to the experience of volunteering, and the skills gained
Workshops: methodology

Examining what type of peer support is required to facilitate and ensure successful volunteering, using a range of contrasting personas from across the medical profession

Creatively examining ways to build a network of volunteers, to provide support and motivation; brainstorming ways to aid socialisation and establish a sense that volunteering within the sector is something to promote and share amongst your friends.

Name: Megan Parker
Age: 36
Volunteer role: Volunteer Manager
Occupation: Staff Nurse
Length of service: 10 years

Name: Ben Williams
Age: 27
Volunteer role: Volunteer Manager
Occupation: Youth worker at local Community Hub
Length of service: 6 years

Name: Margaret Hodge
Age: 66
Volunteer role: Volunteer Manager
Occupation: Retired teacher
Length of service: 10 years
Workshops: impact

Co-creation workshops allowed us to brainstorm effectively with young people and build on the opinions and ideas shared during earlier research sessions.

Often, something said in passing can spark a thought that when developed further through group collaboration can grow into a more coherent recommendation or creative idea for further development.

The workshop structure allows us to gain an understanding of prevalent opinions, alongside those which might be one-off, or more personal to the individual. Although structured, we retain an element of fluidity, in order to flex the agenda to take account of areas that are more or less interesting and creatively fruitful.

For young people, these sessions provide an opportunity for creative collaboration and to express their opinions, but also come together to solve problems, providing a tangible sense of progress for them.

Most participants reflect that being able to share their thoughts is rewarding, and also that the creative exercises often unlock an interest or skills that they did not realise they had.
Key Findings
What we learned about being a young person today
Many young people feel a little lost in society, and seek stability

- 16.2% of young people 16-24 are classed as NEET.*
- 25% of young people have been victims of crime within the last year.**
- Among teenagers, rates of depression have increased by 70% in last 25 years.***

For some, the future feels precarious and uncertain. They are aware that a number of things previous generations took for granted, will be less available to them, such as jobs, cars, their own home.

“Amongst young people our age, there’s a bit of an existential crisis going on…a lot of young people feel lost in society and perhaps volunteering can give them a sense of direction.”  (Male, 23, Brighton)

As a result, young people can feel disengaged but are often aware that they need to be proactive in order to change this situation.

They are ambitious and actively seek new opportunities

There is an eagerness to meet new people and an understanding that with this comes opportunity and benefit.

“If I hadn’t made all that effort to connect with people and get out of my comfort zone and find people different to me, I wouldn’t be able to connect to people like I can now.” (Female, 18, Surrey)

Whilst there is a huge spectrum of engagement levels, there is an acceptance that opportunities should be sought out. And a sense of community in how these are shared and promoted within networks.

Young people are looking to be challenged and aren’t selfish with their time, taking part in a multitude of activities in pursuit of broadening their skillsets for their future.
They are creators of their own destiny

Alongside seeking out opportunities, there is an appetite to create their own. Record numbers of young people are starting their own businesses post-recession*, with more than 55% of young people aged 16-25 wishing to do so. As a result, the steepest increase in numbers of young entrepreneurs is in the under 35 age group.

These ambitions demonstrate that from a much earlier age, young people are thinking longer term about their future and how they can capitalise on the offers around them.

This attitudinal shift also indicates the opportunity afforded by including young people within the decision making and development stages, allowing them to shape the opportunities they wish to be involved in.

“From a design perspective, [programmes] never have young people on board as part of the process. Young people need to be part of the process and be involved. It has to be by young people, for young people.” (Male, 22, Brighton)

Some aspire to become change makers on a larger scale

As well as on an individual level, they are keen to secure a future for those around them, re-engaging with their communities and becoming empowered in the process.

“Adults think we are generally more stupid than we look...I do think that people volunteer to counter that stereotype of young people...they do want to show that we are trying to make a change...we know that we are the future of this country...we do eventually have to take over...I think people do it to get themselves ready for what adulthood will eventually be like.” (Female, 19, Surrey)

There is a belief that change can happen, and that they can be responsible for initiating it on a larger scale.

“Young people can play a key role in managing problems and devising solutions.” (Male, 22, Bristol)
Young people are nervous about the future, but excited and optimistic about what it holds.
Young people’s perceptions of the NHS
Young people feel protective over the health and care sector, and sympathetic to its issues

There is an understanding about the difficulties the NHS in particular faces, and an appreciation for the service provided, often for people in severe times of need.

Despite areas of frustration, the broader context in which these sit is always front of mind.

“Individual staff were amazing given the amount of things they had to deal with, they do an amazing job of managing this and making the experience as smooth as possible for you. For specialist treatment, they work around you and your needs.” (Male, 22, Bristol)
“Which of these words do you most associate with the NHS?”
There are common areas of frustration

Despite being empathetic, there are common areas of frustration shared by a number of the people we spoke to.

Lengthy waiting times, haphazard aftercare and the hospital environments themselves, are often delivered below a standard felt to be expected and these contribute to feelings of frustration.

“The environment is like nasty seats, overcrowded, feels like a bus stop, feels tacky, don’t like being there.” (Male, 19, Bristol)

These issues result in a lack of reassurance about the overall quality, and in some cases are believed to be to the detriment of the medical treatment initially received.

“It’s the best institution but it’s been tainted.” (Male, 22, Brighton)
The most important aspect of health care for young people is interaction with staff

There is a real affinity towards staff and they are often cited as the best part of the service.

“Staff have always been the best bit about the A&E. They’re nice, calm, non-judgmental, accommodating…talk to you about daily things.” (Male, 22, Bristol)

Young people view the NHS as distinctly separate from the government; it lives and breathes as its own entity, often using language which evokes a sense of humanity about it.
But the stretch can make the experience less than human at times

There is a sense that the ambition is there, however the pressures of the situation result in a lower level of human interaction.

“It feels like the people working there are very overstretched, that's what makes them cranky…” (Male, 19, Birmingham)

“…receptionists shout at you in front of people when you have a high fever and you just want to cry.” (Female, 22, Bristol)

Talking about these instances, the young people we spoke to seemed deflated, not angry about it, but there was a sense of powerlessness about how this could be changed.
Often attitudes are shaped by media and public opinion as much as experience

Throughout the sessions, individual examples of interactions with the health and care sector were shared, and many talked of personal experiences, as patients themselves, or with friends or family.

However these were also shaped by broader media coverage, often inflammatory, which was particularly apparent for those who did not have direct experiences themselves.

Public opinion was either qualified or disqualified when individuals have an opportunity to interact with the NHS directly.

• “Don’t cut other areas to fund NHS” – BBC News, February 2015
• “A&E crisis exposed” – The Telegraph, January 2015
• “Poll shows support for raising taxes to support the NHS” – Guardian, July 2014
Young people’s perceptions of volunteering
Despite positive sentiment, volunteering still carries a degree of ‘baggage’

Volunteering is seen as a positive activity, but loaded with perceived hassle and inconvenience.

“Everyone knows that volunteering is a good, beneficial thing, but regardless of the personal benefit or the people that you’re doing it for there are stigmas attached to it.” (Male, 21, Birmingham)

It is sometimes referred to as one more thing to try and incorporate during what is already quite a turbulent period of many people’s lives.

“There’s too much going on, you’re still trying to sort life out…things seem like the end of the world when you’re at college so they might not think that they have enough time.” (Female, 22, London)

There’s mixed feelings about whether volunteering is an opportunity or barrier to earning a living, including challenges around securing Job Seeker’s Allowance.

“If you’re taking the time when you could be earning money, you’re taking time out of life to do it.” (Female, 19, Birmingham)

“It’d be on your CV, if you’re unemployed it’s good to say you decided to volunteer which shows initiative.” (Male, 22, Brighton)
The language and associations of volunteering can seem tired

“The first rule of volunteering: Don’t mention volunteering” (Brighton group, 18-24s)

The young people we spoke to didn’t identify with the terms ‘volunteering’ or ‘social action’. They felt alienated by both for different reasons.

Volunteering felt traditional, and out of date. Often this contributed to people talking about volunteering being something that ‘other people do, not people like me’. It could feel elitist, or available for those with the luxury of time and without the pressure to find paid work.

‘Social action’ was less understood but not widely adopted. There was a sense that this phrase was used by people in authority and government, and there was a disconnect between the types of activities people perceived to be classed as volunteering, and the term ‘social action’.

“Remove it from school. Distance it from institutions.” (Male, 23, Brighton)
Many young people are simply unaware of the opportunities available

There is a lack of knowledge about options and routes into volunteering.

“How do you even get into volunteering?!” (Male, 22, London)  
“I don’t know anyone who does volunteering, where do you go? (Male, 19, Brighton)

The perception is that volunteering is exclusive and removed, and that you’d need to go out of your way to seek out these opportunities to get involved.

“It’s not advertised in a way that I would see it?” (Female, 23, Bristol)  
“If information was more available and visible, then people might think that would be a cool thing to do. I think it’d be easy to recruit people.” (Female, 19, Birmingham)

Often it is a chance encounter or association with something already in their life that allows them to make the leap to get involved, but it is often felt like that, a leap, rather than a natural small step.

“A lot of people aren’t involved in anything where volunteering come up. All mine has been through skateboarding, a chance to give back and get involved in that way. People might not see the opportunities to get involved unless you have a hobby or a sport.” (Male, 22, Brighton)
The rewards of volunteering differ depending on the individual

It is clear that many young people see a pay-off as central to the volunteering experience: time served in exchange for skills gained.

At present this is about specific career-related skills, for those pursuing medical roles in the future, or those building up their CV.

“I volunteered to occupy my free time but also gain experience to help me get a job.” (Female, 20, Brighton)

For others, volunteering is about altruism and giving back.

“I think there is an reactionary, moral incentive. If there’s something going on with your family or friends personally, it’s a shared experience helping people through what you’ve gone through.” (Male, 19, Surrey)

As in many contexts, young people seek sociable, shared experience.

“I personally volunteer at a local care home, it’s quite easy and accessible but I think where your interests lie, you should find what’s best suited to you...I personally like talking to people. It’s something I genuinely wanted to do.” (Female, 21, Birmingham)
Young people conceptualise the value of volunteering as ‘give to get’

Commitment for reward is a concept embedded into other volunteering initiatives (such as Rock Corps, Spice Time Credits) often communicated as a cost-benefit equation, and has been adopted as a prevalent model.

Young people understand that volunteering is about a combination of altruism and benefit – giving time and energy to gain skills, experience or material goods.

Often there is an assumption that this exchange should where possible take the shape of monetary value, but increasingly there’s an agreement that there are less tangible benefits which carry greater weight long term.

“Life experience is just as valuable as money.” (Male, 19, London)
“Which of these words do you most associate with volunteering?”
Reflections always centred on the positive, resulting in people imploring others to get involved.

“I volunteer at an old people’s home, I just love old people! I really like listening to stories. I work in documentaries so it’s cool to be able to listen to people, it ties in with my passions.” (Female, 22, Brighton)

“It molds you, volunteering at a youth centre… I hung around with everyone that went to the youth club. It can bring people together.” (Male, 23, Brighton)

“Volunteering opens up a lens that shows there’s more beyond secondary school, many people don’t think beyond where they are now, it counteracts the narrow path you’re shown at school. Reality check.” (Male, 24, London)

These case studies when shared with peer groups acted as a positive catalyst, encouraging others to see how they could have similar experiences.

“I could share a little of my time and reap the benefits.” (Female, 19, London)
What we learned about the sector
The health and care volunteering community talks to itself

There is a highly engaged volunteering community that feels well connected internally but perhaps less externally.

Throughout our research we witnessed a number of common reference points and name-checked individuals, contributing to a sense of circular conversations, often limited in their external touch points.

In a number of instances, there were a number of references to the same case studies and papers. Often these were well regarded, and commonly known, with less attention and focus paid to smaller scale examples who may be delivering successful work simply hidden from view.

In order to widen and grow volunteering within the NHS, a more outward perspective will be critical.
There is some nervousness about getting young people involved

There is an instinctive feeling of burden attached to young people's involvement, which contributes to a sense of nervousness and at times negativity.

The narrative from the sector is very much about hassle (extensive time resources, excessive safeguards and increased levels of admin). There are seemingly a number of immediate barriers to effective delivery, although these appear are perceived rather than actual.

There's a concern that young people getting involved will result in them being exposed to heavy topics that require an emotional strength or potentially boring tasks that require patience, skills they feel they do not possess. Many feel the need for greater structure and assurance in order to feel confident to take on young volunteers.

There are a number of perceptions about young people that act as a barrier for greater involvement
There’s a lack of diversity amongst young people volunteers within the sector

There are a high number of initiatives catering for young people who are looking to enter the medical profession. These initiatives are often established and successful, but understandably, only attract a particular cohort of participants.

During our work, there was often a default assumption that this is who we were talking about when discussing young volunteers, and demonstrated a lack of other examples to consider. Although successful and can be replicated more broadly, they overlook numbers of other types of young people.

In order to attract and sustain new individuals into the volunteering agenda, communication will need to become more open-minded in who is being considered, and develop more ‘personas’ for these example volunteers.

The sector can acknowledge the opportunity that this emergent volunteer pool presents without needing to compare them with traditional models/profiles.
There’s conversation and appetite within the sector…

Key pillars within the sector recognise the scope of the opportunity afforded by increasing the engagement of new volunteer groups. There’s a sense of collaboration and enthusiasm with the discussions around rethinking approaches, but this has yet to be formalised or delivered at scale.

The risk here is that the ideas have not been tested, and a need to maintain this enthusiasm whilst bringing others into the fold to share it.

Piloting programmes in various locations and at different levels now will help highlighting areas for refinement ahead of replicating on a larger scale.
...but the conversation also needs to be taken outside

These conversations are commonly being had by a number of key partners within the sector, however their audience is frequently one another.

As a result, it’s hard for some parts of the sector to feel included and therefore able to envisage being able to develop and manage a volunteering scheme.

There is a collective concern that this could become a cycle that reduces opportunity for change, and therefore there’s a need to include external voices, and those new to the sector.

Inviting new people into the conversation, particularly those at a grassroots level, will help inform the discussion, provide greater numbers of real world examples, grow a sense of collective responsibility.
The same case studies are used time and time again

The Kings College Hospital Fund has become the benchmark and is often cited as a success story within the sector. There is an acceptance that there are things to be learnt from their methods, but also a defensiveness that innovations taking place elsewhere not being championed.

Arguably, there is also a sense that this example has created a benchmark that at times was perceived as too high and leaves some feeling that it’s unattainable.

A number of small scale case studies could be promoted across the sector. Pilot programmes will also grow the numbers of examples to talk about and highlight local achievements.
There’s a sense of duty on both sides

Both young people and volunteering providers allude to a sense of duty and obligation when discussing their roles.

The narrative therefore tends to focus on things being removed (e.g. time being taken away) rather than the opportunities available, and gained through the process.

“Really rewarding for anyone with moral incentives, it just feels good to have a good influence on young people - that’s just wicked” (Male, 22, Surrey)

There’s a need to change the dialogue and move towards a position of positive references
There’s an appetite to engage young people through new technology

There’s lots of enthusiasm for new forms of engagement and delivery within the sector but there’s nervousness around implementation.

There’s an agreement that methods of communication need to be updated, to exist within a young person’s world, but exactly how to achieve this successfully is unclear.

Harnessing the power of digital will act as a hook to engage those that wouldn’t ordinarily consider volunteering
Understanding the opportunity
Embrace the opportunity that high numbers of individuals could offer, both for the current and new schemes.

Young people represent a huge untapped resource for the health and care volunteering community

The majority of young volunteers in the health sector are seeking a career in medicine. This is a tiny minority of the potential community of young volunteers.

The schemes available to them exist successfully and should continue to do so, instead there’s a vast number who could be engaged in new schemes which can sit alongside those that exist already.

This will ensure that the new cohort are free to become engaged in initiatives which work for them, without being tethered to the pre-existing schemes which work for their career-medic peers.
Young people have a unique and powerful value to add to the health care experience, and esoteric skills to offer

Some of the greatest benefits young people can offer do not require significant skills or close management, but instead rely on skills that come naturally, such as creativity, sociability and humour.

All of these provide real value for patients, and contribute positively to care environments and the recovery process.

Nurtured, they can foster a real connection between the volunteer and the health/care provider.

“…sometimes people are just passionate about things and want to pass it on to others in the community.” (Male, 23, Brighton)

Find opportunities to let these develop, and come to the surface, such as art classes in care homes, helping develop memory books etc.
Conventional volunteering tasks can seem mundane, but provide staff with indispensible support

Understandably there’s significant nervousness about involving young people in tasks which could be interpreted as admin. There’s also a worry that people will simply find these boring and it'll put them off staying involved.

However often the key tasks volunteers are able to support with are ones which are crucial for staff and patients and enable a genuine sense of appreciation. Establishing routes to involvement which feel relevant and necessary, ensures all involved can see the real benefit.

Equally a number of tasks are those which are not a core requirement of main staff, but recognised as areas which when delivered, can drastically improve overall patient wellbeing, and perceptions of the sector. For example patient surveys, chaperoning patients, providing bedside company.

Champion these tasks as a route for people to offer support, in a way that they can tangibly see the results.
These seemingly simple tasks also provide volunteers with invaluable experience and skills acquisition

Aside from specific skill sets, volunteering provides the opportunity to develop a broad array of general life skills, which position young people well for future opportunities, and position volunteering as a starting point for future professional development.

These include time management, interacting with others within a professional capacity, conducting yourself in a suitable manner within a professional environment, basic IT, administration, communication and working well alone, or within a team. There is a growing number of brands and organisations promoting routes for young people to gain and develop these, such as Barclays’ LifeSkills.

Often these skills are actively sought for future paid employment opportunities as they can be difficult to demonstrate during the early stages of someone’s professional journey. With greater competition for jobs, this is exacerbated.

These seemingly basic skills should not be overlooked and instead should be promoted as a reason to get involved, capitalising on a number of other youth initiatives actively nurturing these.
The health and care sector offers a range of opportunities and careers beyond medicine and care

The health and care sector provides an indirect route into variety of alternative sectors. Commonly these are less over-subscribed and therefore can allow someone to get their foot in the door. For example, hospital radio offers real experience of a aspirational career area that is often hard for young people to gain experience in.

These opportunities also cover a variety of areas within the health and care sector which may otherwise be overlooked (e.g. horticulture).

Through this, there’s also an opportunity to source ambassadors who could champion these unexpected routes. “Beyonce does charity work, young people probably wouldn’t even think about role models.” (Female, 22, London)

Explore case studies of these opportunities, and develop success stories which can be referred to. Opportunity to obtain ambassadors and endorsers who’ve been successful through these routes.
Capitalising on these opportunities requires us all to think differently about young people and volunteering

In order to innovate and grow the capacity for youth volunteering in health and care we need to rethink perceptions of young people, their abilities and their place within the volunteering space:

- Being more open-minded about the types of young people who might become involved (beyond medical careerists and conventional ‘do-gooders’)
- Considering volunteer roles and tasks differently, to incorporate skills-sharing and creativity as much as administration and practical support
- Rethinking levels of commitment and engagement to include shorter bursts of activity and less regular commitment
- Defaulting less to difficult or negative perceptions of young people, and narratives of duty and inconvenience
If we can think differently and innovate in order to capitalise on this opportunity, the effects could be transformative

**Key Findings – Understanding the opportunity**

**YOUNG PEOPLE**
- Key life skills
- New contacts
- Fresh perspective
- Sense of community

**PATIENTS**
- Companionship
- Renewed vigour
- Creative outlet
- Community connection

**THE SECTOR**
- Fresh thinking
- Sustainable support
- Greater diversity
- Social cohesion
Recommendations
Rethink the language around volunteering and social action

Some of the difficulties with encouraging new groups of young people to consider volunteering, are due to feelings of apprehension about the language and terminology used. The terminology feels either academic, and stuffy, or suggests political activism, bringing with it baggage which puts people off from the start. This in turn could be holding back development as a whole and keeps the sector wedded to outdated structures.

‘Volunteering’ was often deemed worthy and a bit boring, underselling the activities you could get involved in. The phrase, “first rule of volunteering: don’t talk about volunteering” was expressed by one of the groups and resonated with the others. ‘Social action’ felt like an industry term, with limited meaning outside of the industry, particularly for young people. It feels political, and slightly loaded which is not accommodating for those new to the sector.

There’s a need for terminology based on accurate depictions of the huge array of activity which you could take part in. “Can we focus instead on benefits and the types of activity rather than categorising the practice?” (Female, 22, Surrey)

With work having taken place around this area in general, it seems there is a need for this to become an ongoing conversation. Some new terms suggested: “Give Back” “Sharing is Caring” “Dare2Care” “Work together, learn together”.

Recommendations
Co-design each volunteering engagement on a personal level

Young people increasingly like to play an active part in defining their role in the situations they are taking part in. This embeds a youth-centred approach across all aspects of delivery, echoing one of the core principles of Step Up To Serve’s work.

They seek opportunities which respond to their needs and aspirations, rather than requiring them to fit into a pre-established model.

This approach is being adopted by consumer-focused brands, and should be adopted where possible within the volunteering sector too.

With this in mind, co-design is needed on an individual level to develop a package which appeals and fits the needs of each individual who is considering incorporating volunteering into their regular routine.
Ensure that young voices and leaders are ‘part of the furniture’

The individuals who young volunteers interact with on a day to day basis (in their roles as volunteers) are crucial to maintaining their involvement and growing their connection to the volunteering opportunity.

Peer mentors and youth workers consistently tested well with our audience as individuals who they believed they could develop a relevant and engaging rapport with; and who would motivate them to remain involved. These individuals are also best placed to have an understanding of challenges they might face, and therefore methods to navigate around these.

There’s currently a disconnect between typical volunteer managers and many of the young people taking up volunteering roles. Although there is an appreciation for differing experiences, and approaches, combining this alongside relatable managers on a daily basis will result in a robust management structure.
Think differently about recruitment and routes in and out of volunteering

Embedding opportunities directly within young people’s worlds brings the opportunity to them, rather than relying on them to seek them out.

Feedback suggests that currently there is a sense of distance which increases the barriers to involvement.

Routes to involvement are currently well established for medical students and could grow on a peer to peer basis. Triggering participation by new cohorts could then utilise the same method and catalyze a growth of a more diverse audience.

Working with a variety of partners will also ground specific areas of volunteering (e.g. horticulture) within credible foundations and increase the numbers of opportunities for young people to hear about opportunities. Utilising passion points will in turn, also broaden entry points and strengthen the offer overall.

“Targeting people who already have a hobby and showing them that they can get involved and volunteer through them. Using the interests they already have.” (Female, London, 22)
Allow people to start from scratch

The ambition is for all organisations and establishments to feel able to start somewhere.

Care should be taken not to alienate those who have no scheme in place currently, and would therefore be looking for a small and simple way to get started.

Just as the encouragement should be for young people to get involved in the way that feels comfortable and manageable for them, the same should be applied to the host organisations.

In turn this then offers the opportunity to promote and champion all efforts to get started, increasing relatable and local examples the community can get behind and support.
Recommendations

Investigate partnerships and validation through brands and organisations relevant to young people

This can be taken out of the traditional health space, with partnership opportunities explored with a whole variety of new and atypical brands and organisations.

With the view to attracting a new cohort of young people, it will be crucial to consider the types of partners who resonate with a more diverse audience. Brands such as Google and LinkedIn tested well with the people we spoke to, moving away from a number of more traditional volunteering partners (such as Duke of Edinburgh), often associated with institutions considered less relevant by young people today.

The growth of digital badges, such as Mozilla Open Badges, also offers an opportunity to harness the skills gained in direct routes to demonstrating skills which can help participants secure future employment.
Build recognition and reward into programme design

In addition to partnerships, there’s an appetite across a number of sectors for young people to be able to track and monitor their own success and growth in skills.

Based on the duties they’re performing, they have an opportunity to recognise specific skills, and reflect on their learning journey. Often these skills are overlooked, or taken for granted by the young people themselves, missing opportunities to emphasise them in job applications.

The idea of gamifying the process was something which there was significant appetite for amongst the groups we spoke to, in particular the opportunity to co-create a scoring structure based on the number of hours participated and the skills gained as a result.
Foster a language and culture of value rather than duty

Often discussions around the topic focus on a sense of duty and obligation, with both volunteers and managers defaulting to negative language around duty and time being spent.

As a result, the structure of exchange is often positioned on something of monetary value which prevents initiatives becoming truly sustainable, and arguably regressive in their approach.

Instead, ensuring that value is intrinsically embedded will avoid defaulting to transactional exchange and initiate a longer term journey towards positive associated language and reference points. Institutional recognition of that value will broaden that on a national scale, and take us through a period of change, demonstrating that volunteering will support and not hinder.

We all need to commit to a culture of value and celebration in order to unlock the transformative potential of young people in health and care volunteering.
Build sociability and sharing into the volunteering experience

Many volunteering tasks are solitary in nature, and as a result can be lonely or indeed alienating for the young people taking part.

Young people are often looking for shared experiences and new connections, to grow their social spheres, and therefore tying back into existing communities and social structures will offer a route for them to promote and talk about their experiences, also providing an additional sense of support.

Utilising digital networks will also play to their strengths as digital natives.

“Young people are used to interacting with people less, sat in front of screens, they’re not used to interacting with people face to face” (Male, 19, Surrey)
Rethink the rules of engagement and commitment

We want to encourage an environment where people feel able to contribute to a varying degree.

In many instances, the current structures rely on significant levels of commitment up front, or with participants needing to adhere to certain expectations in order to take part.

Instead, multiplying the entry points, and allowing people to start small will in all likelihood result in their involvement growing over time, developing volunteering habits which will become habits for a lifetime.
Further Opportunities
1. Communicating with young people

Based on the learnings from this study, there’s an opportunity to continue working with the audience to co-design more effective methods to engage young people with volunteering opportunities, specifically looking at:

- Naming
- Language
- Tonality
- Visual language
- Content and categorisation (benefits first)
2. How and where to reach young people

Develop principles for how and where we should be communicating to young people in order to increase engagement, diversify participation, and optimise resources, such as:

- **Channels**: exploring how opportunities can be embedded into young people’s worlds
- **Partners**: looking at non-traditional associations, brands and passion points that could make the offering resonate more strongly, and increase the numbers of young people who hear about opportunities
- **Routes to involvement**: considering how we use channels and partners to reduce barriers and increase participation
3. Working with young people and programme design

We need to engage host organisations and equip them with skills to work more effectively with young people on a regular basis.

This should also look at how we can encourage stakeholders to embrace collaborative creativity, and how young people can be involved in programme design to optimise the offering:

- **Engagement techniques**: how ongoing methods can increase participation, such as gamification
- **Skills recognition**: how rewards and skills gained are packaged and positioned
- **Connections and support**: how we enable young people to gain peer support and use digital to share and promote their experiences
Thank you