



## **Reward and Recognition for Ambulance Service Volunteers**

**March 2024**

### **Introduction.**

The National Ambulance Service Volunteering strategy was launched in 2023. A workstream from the strategy was focused around developing a national toolkit for a Reward and Recognition for ambulance service volunteers.

Volunteers donate many hours of their time in many different roles serving their local ambulance services, communities, and patients. This can be in diverse roles such as community first responders, chaplains, volunteer car drivers, support volunteers and public engagement volunteers. As such volunteers should be recognised and appropriately thanked for their time, commitment, and dedication.

Volunteers also bring with them a host of skills, knowledge and understanding from their own employment and life experiences that can often be tapped into to support ambulance services.

Work has been completed by a task and finish group of ambulance service leads to design and offer a toolkit that all ambulance services can use to guide them and assist in delivering reward and recognition to a national standard.

This collaborative work has allowed the group to pull together current ambulance services' reward and recognition products, with a view to provide a national framework.

The purpose of this document is to set out that national framework and allow ambulance trusts to choose aspects of the framework that would suit their requirements best.

### **Benefits of Reward and Recognition**

- Making volunteers feel appreciated, engaged and part of an organisation.
- Increased retention of volunteers.
- Increased volunteer satisfaction and motivation can lead to increased contribution and activity.
- Building and developing a "Brand" to encourage volunteering "Wanting to be part of the volunteering experience".
- Increased visibility of volunteering in your trust, as recognition can involve senior colleagues and teams from other areas.

### **Giving gifts**

There needs to be recognition that any reward and recognition can in some cases be deemed as contractual, especially if reward and recognition is of a monetary nature.

Volunteers often respond best to small acts of day-to-day appreciation and any lavish gifts can make them feel uncomfortable. Expensive gifts should be avoided, as should regular

gifts or rewards which may set up an expectation. Instead opt for inexpensive gifts such as t-shirts, mugs or badges.

Whatever you do, please check your organisation's policy on giving and receiving gifts and be mindful of your legal and financial relationship with volunteers.

Finally, it is important not to give gifts that could appreciate in value and lead to financial gain such as money or vouchers, as this could affect volunteers' benefit claims or tax.

All the products documented within this framework avoid this and are based on non-monetary reward and recognition.

Below are the key themes that make up this framework to guide and support trusts in how they can implement 'Reward and Recognition'.

#### Reward and Recognition

1 Year Service Award	Recognising the contribution a volunteer has given in their first 12 months breaking down hours or miles they have offered to make them feel valued. This can be through an email or letter.
5 Year service award	All trusts are encouraged to recognise their volunteers every five years where possible. A certificate to recognise the volunteer's commitment to the ambulance service. It may be presented at an awards ceremony or other suitable event.
10 Year service award	A certificate to recognise the volunteer's commitment to the ambulance service. It may be presented at an awards ceremony or other suitable event.
15 Year service award	A certificate to recognise the volunteer's commitment to the ambulance service. It may be presented at an awards ceremony or other suitable event. It may also include some form of other recognition such as a plaque due to length of service.
20 year service award	A certificate to recognise the volunteer's commitment to the ambulance service. It may be presented at an awards ceremony or other suitable event. It may also include some form of other recognition such as a plaque due to length of service.
25 year service award	A certificate to recognise the volunteer's commitment to the ambulance service. It may be presented at an awards ceremony or other suitable event. It may also include some form of other recognition such as a plaque due to length of service.
National Volunteers Week first Monday in June	National Volunteers' week is held in June every year and each Trust can recognise volunteers through several ways such as social media, local radio, internal communications, tea party etc. This is also a good opportunity to involve wider stakeholders and partners.
International Volunteer's Day	This is mandated by the UN General Assembly annually on December 5 <sup>th</sup> of each year. It tends to be less high profile in the UK compared to National Volunteers Week but is still a good opportunity to thank and showcase volunteers.
Christmas or other appropriate religious or secular festivals	Recognising volunteers through seasonal cards, social media, and internal communications. This can also be a good time to reflect back and highlight some of the

	outstanding contributions made during the year. It can also be a good opportunity to celebrate and encourage diversity and inclusion, by focussing on other religious and cultural groups.
Trust Awards Evenings	Volunteers attending Trust Awards Evenings for example to recognise long service, outstanding commitment with hours, patient care, etc.
Chief Executive Award	For recognition. This could be for outstanding service, hours, patient care episode etc
Blue Light Card and NHS Discounts	Ambulance Service volunteers can access the Blue Light Discount card and NHS discounts website whilst volunteering for an NHS organisation.
Social Media and/or promotional videos	Thanking volunteers through social media platforms, developing videos to show what they deliver, internal communication channels. This could also extend to radio or businesses for awards.
Thank you Letters	Thank you letters to volunteers for patient care episodes, supporting staff, donating time to other areas of trust business.
When to say thanks	<p>There are lots of opportunities to say a little “thank you” to volunteers. They don’t always need big gestures. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On the anniversary of the volunteer joining</li> <li>- On their birthday</li> <li>- When a project involving them has good media coverage</li> <li>- When a project involving them goes live or when it finishes</li> <li>- When you publish your annual report or in other promotional materials such as trust newsletters.</li> </ul>
Volunteer Conference	An opportunity to bring trust volunteers together to say thank you and make them feel valued and supported.
Continued Professional Development	Clinical updates or other skills based training, leadership development for leading teams, or development away days.
Representation	Offering volunteers opportunities to share their views and contribute to service design is a great way to recognise their skills and unique perspective. Consider asking volunteers to join forums or consult them in the design, planning and review of services.
National Awards	<p>Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to volunteering</p> <p>Health Service Journal (HSJ) Awards.</p> <p>British Empire Medal (BEM) – awarded for a ‘hands-on’ service to the local community. This could be a long-term charitable or voluntary activity, or innovative work of a relatively short duration (3 to 4 years) that has made a significant difference.</p>

	<p>The King's Award for Voluntary Service – awarded groups get a certificate signed by the King and a domed glass crystal.</p>
External Awards	<p>For example, BBC Make a Difference Awards, Helpforce and local High Sherriff or Council awards. This gives you an opportunity to recognise volunteers within their local communities and raise the profile of volunteering within the Ambulance Service.</p>
Elizabeth Emblem	<p>In March 2024, the Government announced the introduction of The Elizabeth Emblem. This commemorative emblem is awarded as a mark of recognition to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the course of undertaking eligible public service. This is applicable to ambulance volunteers who lost their lives in the line of duty.</p> <p>There is also the possibility of adding deceased volunteer names to the role of honour read out by the Ambulance Staff Charity at their annual memorial at the National Arboretum in September each year. Family members are invited to attend the memorial.</p>
National Student Volunteering Week	<p>Falls in February every year and is an opportunity to recognise students who carry out volunteering within trusts and the impact it can have on their CV or future careers.</p>