

Innovation & Development Fund

Guidance & Application Process



Background and Purpose

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Volunteering for Health Partnership is part of the national Volunteering for Health programme investing in volunteering infrastructure within health and care systems.

Our vision is to create a thriving volunteering culture that supports the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System to deliver high-quality health and care for our local population.

Volunteering for Health enables and celebrates opportunities for the VCSE and public sectors to share skills, knowledge and expertise for the benefit of local people and communities. Through this programme we aim to make volunteering a recognised enabler of service transformation and delivery across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Volunteering for Health Partnership is inviting NHS organisations across our Integrated Care System to apply for funding of up to £30,000 for volunteering projects. The **Innovation and Development Fund** has been established to support NHS partners to test, develop and implement projects that contribute directly to the objectives of the Volunteering for Health Programme.

Projects must be completed by **30 April 2027**.

Available Funding

- Applications of up to **£30,000** are invited.
- Projects should commence as soon as possible following approval and be completed by **30 April 2027**.
- Organisations may submit more than one proposal, although funding is likely to be restricted to one project per organisation.

Innovation & Development Fund

Guidance & Application Process



Who Can Apply?

Applications are invited from:

- NHS Trusts / NHS Foundation Trusts
- Primary Care organisations
- Other NHS statutory partners within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS

Programme Priorities

Projects must support at least one of the four Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Volunteering for Health priorities.

Priority 1: Increasing the Volume and Diversity of Volunteering Opportunities

We want to deliver a step change in both the number and variety of volunteering opportunities available across health and care settings.

Projects may include:

- Developing and implementing new volunteer roles
- Expanding volunteer involvement at operational or strategic levels
- Creating opportunities for people with lived experience to influence services
- Improving access to volunteering for under-represented communities

Projects should enable volunteers to play a greater role in improving patient and staff experience and health outcomes.

Priority 2: Improving the Volunteer Experience

We want volunteers across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to have a positive, and rewarding experience in our health and care system.

Innovation & Development Fund

Guidance & Application Process



Projects may include:

- Improving recruitment and onboarding processes
- Volunteer support and retention initiatives
- Volunteer management improvements
- Supporting staffing teams to explore and embed a volunteer-rich environment
- Development of transferable approaches across NHS organisations

Projects should help address current variation in volunteering practice and ensure volunteers feel valued and well supported.

Priority 3: Giving Back – Supporting Staff Volunteering

We want to create opportunities for health and care staff to volunteer within local communities and VCSE organisations.

Projects may include:

- Protected Staff Volunteering initiatives
- Workforce wellbeing initiatives linked to volunteering
- Staff trustee development programmes
- Cross-sector skills exchange models

Projects should strengthen relationships between health and care organisations and the local VCSE sector whilst supporting workforce wellbeing and development.

Priority 4: Strategic Leadership and System Learning

We want volunteering to become a routinely considered component of service delivery, transformation and workforce development.

Projects may include:

Innovation & Development Fund

Guidance & Application Process



- Organisational approaches to volunteering infrastructure
- Leadership development
- Organisational culture change initiatives
- Evaluation frameworks and developing evidence of impact

Projects should contribute to a stronger strategic recognition of the role volunteering can play in delivering health priorities.

Applicants should clearly explain how their project will contribute to one or more priorities.

What We Will Fund

Examples include:

- Development of new volunteering models
- Volunteer-led service improvement projects
- Volunteer pathway development
- Inclusive volunteering programmes
- Volunteer management innovations
- Staff volunteering initiatives
- Development and testing of new volunteering infrastructure
- Cross-organisational volunteering approaches
- Evaluation and learning activities

What We Will Not Fund

Funding cannot be used for:

- Existing core volunteering activity
- Activities already funded through organisational budgets
- Retrospective costs
- Activities that do not clearly contribute to the Volunteering for Health priorities

Innovation & Development Fund

Guidance & Application Process



Collaboration Requirement

Successful applicants will be expected to:

- Work collaboratively with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Volunteering for Health Lead / Partnership throughout project development and delivery.
- Encourage organisational participation in programme-wide activity.
- Contribute case studies, learning reports and examples of good practice.
- Support wider system learning and replication where appropriate.

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed against:

1. Alignment with Volunteering for Health priorities
2. Expected impact
3. Deliverability
4. Collaboration
5. Value for money

Criteria	Weighting
Contribution to one or more VfH priorities	30%
Potential impact on patients, communities, volunteers or workforce	30%
Innovation and scalability	20%
Contribution to system learning and collaboration	10%
Value for money	10%

Innovation & Development Fund

Guidance & Application Process



Award

Successful applicants will receive:

- Funding agreement/MOU
- Monitoring template
- Reporting and payment schedule

Monitoring

Monitoring will be light touch and will include a **mid-point update** by 31 January 2027 including:

- Progress against milestones
- Spend to date
- Risks and mitigations

Final report by 30 May 2027 including:

- Outputs delivered
- Outcomes achieved
- Case study
- Impact and learning
- Plans for sustainability

Apply: [Volunteering for Health Innovation & Development Fund – Fill out form](#)

Closing date 30th September 2026.