# Volunteer Summer Survey 2023 Report

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## Section One: Executive Summary

### 1.1. What is going well?

* The findings indicate a mostly positive volunteering experience where respondents feel recognised by their manager, are comfortable being themselves, and feel like they are making a difference to the lives of others.
* The proportion of respondents who would recommend volunteering with RNIB to others has increased and now follows the trend of previous data after a drop in October 2022.
* Satisfaction measured through a Net Promoter Score has also increased to seven points above target.

### 1.2. What is not going so well?

* Although communication scores are respectable, the verbatim comments demonstrate that this continues to be a consistent issue, with respondents highlighting a lack of updates and slow or no response to emails.
* The proportion of volunteers feeling supported and valued for their time has dropped since October 2022, and awareness of resources and platforms available to support volunteers is low, particularly the Employee and Volunteer Assistance Programme (EVAP).
* The volunteer engagement score continues its downward trend from previous quarters, although this could be due to sample size differences.

### 1.3. Where can RNIB make improvements?

* Improvements need to be made around communication, particularly the consistency of experiences across different teams and managers, communicating in preferred formats and how the RNIB communicates with volunteers.
* Highlighting and communicating the impact of volunteering on customers and RNIB as an organisation will increase satisfaction, value, and recognition amongst volunteers.

## Section Two: Introduction

Volunteers are involved across many different functions throughout RNIB to extend the reach of our services and allow blind and partially sighted people to live equitably. The purpose of this survey is to understand what is working well and invite recommendations to improve our volunteering offer, to inform the future work of the Volunteering team and wider organisation. The data also allows the team to monitor progress against our strategic objectives and vision, such as volunteers feeling recognised and supported.

We listened to feedback from volunteers and volunteer managers and have reduced the number of volunteer experience surveys to two a year to reduce survey fatigue and encourage responses.

## Section Three: Method

### Data collection

The online survey was open for over two weeks from Wednesday 5 July to Sunday 23 July 2023. Volunteers were invited to complete the survey through the Volunteer News on 5 July. The survey link, information, and draft wording were posted internally on Workplace, to encourage volunteer managers and colleagues across the organisation to promote the survey amongst their volunteer networks.

A total of 100 responses were received from the summer survey, 78 of these were complete responses. 95 volunteers provided their responses via the online survey link and five completed it over the phone. The percentages are reported on based on the number of responses received for each question and therefore the sample sizes will differ throughout this report.

## Section Four: Sample

### 4.1. Diversity and equality data

The main demographic characteristics of the survey sample have been shared below. Prefer not to say responses were removed from the analysis.

* The sample is skewed to older volunteers with 53% of respondents aged over 65.
* Majority of respondents are retired (59%), with only 17% of the sample working full-time or part-time. One in ten respondents are unemployed and not able to work.
* The sample is heavily skewed towards White volunteers (91%).
* Majority of respondents were sighted (71%), but 19% were severely sight impaired.

The full data tables for these questions can be found in the appendix.

Blind and partially sighted respondents were given the opportunity to share if their lived experience has contributed or made a difference to their volunteer role. 18 comments were received which spoke to their lived experience leading to greater understanding, empathy, and credibility to support customers in their volunteering role. A few quotes have been shared below.

“Definitely. I understand the inevitable grieving process, the everyday frustrations, the ignorance we can encounter, the isolation…the list is endless. I love being able to give people a safe place to talk where there is understanding and no judgment. Every single client has admitted how isolating and lonely sight loss can be and it’s wonderful to see them gain comfort from one another.”

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#### 4.2. Key volunteering data

* Responses were received from volunteers across several different teams, in particular Sooty (17%), Technology for Life (17%), Transcription (16%) and Community Connection (13%). Eight respondents are unsure of the team they volunteer with.
* 14% of respondents have more than one volunteer role at RNIB.

The full data tables for these questions can be found in the appendix.

### 4.3. Discussion

It is important to note the biases of the survey sample where some groups are under-represented, particularly around age and ethnicity. Caution should therefore be taken when generalising the findings to the whole volunteer population at RNIB.

According to NCVO’s Time Well Spent 2023 research, younger volunteers and those from ethnic minority communities are more likely to report lower satisfaction compared to their counterparts. This sample is heavily skewed towards White volunteers (91%) and therefore the findings may be more positive than if more feedback was received from ethnic minority volunteers.

The sample is also skewed towards older volunteers who have retired. Although NCVO Time Well Spent 2019 data shows that those aged 65 and over are most likely to have volunteered recently, it is important to note that they may have different experiences than younger volunteers, particularly when it comes to the motivations for volunteering.

Due to small sample sizes, comparisons will not be made between teams nor between different demographic groups in this report.

## Section Five: Communication

### 5.1. Results

* 82% of respondents agree RNIB communicates with them in their preferred format.
* 75% of respondents agree their volunteer manager is available to talk to if they need support.
* 71% of respondents are satisfied with the communication they receive from their manager.
* 69% agree they have the opportunity to have their voice heard and to give feedback whilst volunteering.
* 67% of respondents agree RNIB communicates well with volunteers. 18% disagree with this statement.

Respondents were given the opportunity to share any further comments about their communication experiences whilst volunteering. 29 comments were received which centred around not receiving communications in their preferred format, slow response to emails, and a lack of updates when an issue has been raised. There were also a few positive comments around communication, particularly from Transcription volunteers. A few quotes have been shared below.

“I have not felt well supported by my manager. We don't have regular catch ups and I am always the one who initiates contact. I find that my volunteering experience is quite isolating and that volunteers within the team are an afterthought.”

“My team clearly prioritises communication highly.”

“Since the closure of the transcription building with its studios in Ivybridge, communication has been much more difficult and the whole volunteering process much less motivating. I’m thinking of giving up.”

### 5.2. Discussion

The findings indicate that majority of respondents are satisfied with communication experiences around volunteering.

Although three-quarters of respondents say their manager is available to talk to if they need support, the verbatim comments suggest that some volunteer managers are slow to respond to emails or do not provide updates when a volunteer has raised an issue. Furthermore, satisfaction with communication from managers, the availability of managers to talk to if they need support and having the opportunity to have their voice heard and to give feedback whilst volunteering, have all decreased since these questions were last asked in October 2022. It is important to note this could be due to differences in sample sizes. The findings also highlight more could be done to improve the way RNIB communications with volunteers.

### 5.3. Recommendations

* Volunteer managers should provide updates and/or outcomes on issues that their volunteers have raised.
* Gather insight to understand how RNIB could better communicate with volunteers.

## Section Six: Support and wellbeing

### 6.1. Results

* 90% of respondents feel comfortable being themselves whilst volunteering.
* 82% of respondents feel volunteering improves their wellbeing.
* 80% of respondents would recommend volunteering with RNIB to others. 10% disagree with this statement.
* 76% of respondents feel supported in their volunteering role. 11% disagree with this statement.
* 70% of respondents feel a sense of belonging through volunteering with RNIB.

Respondents were asked to state their awareness of the range of resources available to support them as volunteers, both in their roles and in their personal lives.

* 54% of respondents were aware of the Volunteering Hub.
* 34% respondents were aware of RNIB’s Employee and Volunteer Assistance Programme (EVAP).
* 27% of respondents were aware of Keeping in Touch (KIT) for Volunteers sessions.
* 17% respondents were aware of Wellbeing Nibbles for Volunteers.
* 31% of respondents were not aware that any of the above resources were available to them as a volunteer.

Respondents were asked if RNIB could do anything to better support their wellbeing as a volunteer. 33 comments were received which focused on increased contact with managers and team members, more support around systems, more information on the resources and support are available, and reducing essential training requirements.

A few quotes have been shared below.

“Have a pack that shows you how the system works, how to contact staff, where to find information on the website. It's extremely poor. You are left to pretty much depend on yourself.”

“Reduce the requirements to complete training that does not impact on collecting sooty boxes!!”

“Perhaps, for new starters, issue a pack that highlights the support packages as I was totally unaware of these existing. They would no doubt better prepare me and keep me in the loop between my roles.”

“Would like more contact and feedback from manager so I could feel supported.”

#### RNIB staff and volunteer networks

* Only 31% of respondents are aware they can get involved in RNIB networks as a volunteer.
* The barriers preventing respondents from getting involved in these networks include time, accessibility, interest, and confidence with technology such as Zoom.

### 6.2. Discussion

The findings indicate that majority of respondents feel comfortable being themselves whilst volunteering and feel supported in their roles, with measures around support remaining stable from October 2022. The proportion of respondents who would recommend volunteering with RNIB to others increased from 74% to 80% in this timeframe, and now follows the trend of previous data after a drop in October 2022.

Verbatim comments highlight a need to increase the consistency of communication from volunteer managers and awareness of resources available to support volunteers, particularly EVAP, as only a third of respondents were aware they could access the programme. More should also be done to promote RNIB’s staff and volunteer networks, with information such as how to get involved, time commitments and how meetings take place.

### 6.3. Recommendations

* Promote the resources available to support volunteers in their role, particularly EVAP, Keeping in Touch sessions and Wellbeing Nibbles for Volunteers.
* Increase awareness of RNIB staff and volunteer networks.

## Section 7: Recognition

### 7.1. Results

* 86% of respondents feel recognised for the volunteering they do from manager.
* Two-thirds of respondents feel valued for the time and effort they donate to RNIB. 12% disagree with this statement.
* 66% of respondents feel recognised for the volunteering they do from blind and partially sighted customers.
* 66% of respondents feel recognised for the volunteering they do from the RNIB Volunteering team.
* 54% of respondents feel recognised for the volunteering they do from RNIB as an organisation.

Respondents were asked what forms of recognition they would value the most. The top three responses were feedback from customers they have supported (50%), information about the impact their work has had (49%) and verbal thanks from their manager (37%). Training opportunities (28%) and being nominated for an award (27%) were also popular.

### 7.2. Discussion

Whilst majority of respondents feel recognised by their manager for the work they do, more could be done to increase recognition from RNIB as an organisation as this measure saw an eight percent decrease from 62% in April 2022. Feeling valued for the time and effort donated to RNIB also dropped to 67% from 81% in October 2022. Verbal thanks from their manager, understanding the impact of their work and receiving feedback from customers continue to be important for respondents to feel recognised for their contribution.

### 7.3. Recommendations

* Embed volunteering and impact of volunteers in RNIB external communications.
* Showcase the impact of volunteers on our customers and RNIB.

## Section 8: Outcomes of volunteering

### 8.1. Results

* 67% of respondents agree the expectations for their volunteering experience have been met.
* Volunteering with RNIB has increased the understanding of sight loss and the associated barriers for 67% of respondents.
* 61% of respondents have learnt and developed new skills through volunteering at RNIB.
* 51% of respondents have gained confidence through volunteering at RNIB.

#### What does volunteering mean to you?

Respondents were given the opportunity to share what volunteering at RNIB means to them. 53 comments were received which mainly centred around making a difference, giving back to RNIB, using skills, and helping others. Comments also spoke to the feel-good factor of volunteering through gaining a sense of satisfaction and adding value to their lives.

“It keeps me busy and gives me a great deal of self satisfaction. I like to think that I can help other people through my volunteering.”

“It allows me to give something back using my pre-sight loss skills through a visually impaired perspective.”

“Keeps me active and gives value to my life.”

“Pride and support for fellow human beings, community and love.”

“Being able to help people who are partially sight or blind just like myself, it means everything. To be able to have the opportunity to help people and communicate with people online gives me great support. Knowing that I am a ‘See Sport Differently Champion’ makes me feel that I have something to offer people. It makes me feel more involved with the RNIB. It’s amazing to feel part of something, it makes me feel valued within the role.”

### 8.2. Discussion

For two thirds of respondents, volunteering with RNIB has increased understanding of sight loss and the associated barriers. When looking at the personal impact of volunteering, three in five respondents have learnt and developed new skills and over half have gained confidence through volunteering with RNIB.

The findings also highlight the importance of the feel-good factor of volunteering, with respondents saying it gives them a sense of satisfaction, personal achievement and adds value to their lives. Promotional material around volunteering should speak to this feel-good factor, particularly in recruitment campaigns, and quotes should be used to bring this to life.

### 8.3. Recommendations

* Mention the feel-good factor of volunteering and increase the use of quotes in promotional material and volunteer recruitment campaigns.

## Section 9: Overall experience

### 9.1. Results

* 73% of respondents feel they have enough to do, 22% do not have enough to do and 5% have too much to do.
* 81% of respondents feel like they are making a difference in the lives of others by volunteering with RNIB.
* 68% of respondents agree their volunteer manager provides a good volunteering experience.
* 64% of respondents are satisfied with the essential training they are required to complete as part of their volunteering role.
* 63% of respondents agree RNIB is a great organisation to volunteer with.

#### Net Promoter Score

A Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a standardised measure of customer loyalty and satisfaction and will be embedded into all volunteering surveys moving forward. NPS scores are measured with a single question and reported with a number from -100 to +100, with a higher score being desirable. More information on the NPS measure and how to calculate it can be found [here](https://www.hotjar.com/net-promoter-score/).

The Net Promoter Score is +27. This is above the target of +25, and a six-point increase since this was last measured in October 2022.

#### Volunteer Engagement Score

The volunteer engagement score is a key performance indicator that is reported into the organisational scorecard with a target of 80. The engagement score is an average of the percentage of volunteers who agree with four volunteering statements. The four statements are presented below:

* I feel supported in my volunteering role
* RNIB is a great place to volunteer
* I feel like I am making a difference in the lives of others by volunteering at RNIB
* I would recommend volunteering with RNIB to others

The engagement score for volunteers is 75 which is below the target of 80. It is also a three-point decrease from when this was last asked in October 2022.

#### Volunteer comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to share any further comments on their volunteering role or experience with RNIB in a text box. Majority of the 17 comments received were negative, citing dissatisfaction with communication, a lack of support and frustrations with different systems. A few quotes have been shared below to compliment the quantitative data.

“Is there a suggestion scheme for employees? If so maybe useful to consider inclusion of the suggestion scheme for volunteers or a scheme for all colleagues. Small changes can make a big difference.”

“I have gained confidence through volunteering but I don't feel supported in my role so I wouldn't want to recommend it to other people.”

“I feel that the volunteer managers might have too much on their plates to enable them to work effectively. I believe that the RNIB is missing a trick in providing volunteers with a decent website where training materials, relevant to their roles, are available. I'm not sure what's going on inside the organisation in general, but as an outsider I feel it needs a bit of a shake up. If other people's experiences are like my own, then I think they must lose a lot of volunteers and potential volunteers, as my poor experiences began right at the start when poor communication and frustrating mistakes were made when I first applied to RNIB.”

### 9.2. Discussion

The findings indicate a positive volunteer experience where respondents feel like they are making a difference to the lives of others through volunteering. Whilst majority of respondents feel like they have enough to do, one in five do not have enough to do and nearly half of these respondents are Technology for Life volunteers.

Satisfaction measured through a Net Promote Score has increased by six points since October 2022 and sits at seven points above the target of +20. However, the engagement score for volunteers has fallen to five points below the target of 80, largely driven by the 11% decrease in RNIB being a great organisation to volunteer with. Furthermore, only two thirds of respondents agree their volunteer manager provides a good volunteering experience.

### 9.3. Recommendations

* Understand the workload, resource, and expectations of volunteers in the Technology for Life team.
* Gather insight to understand what would make RNIB a better organisation to volunteer with.

## Section Ten: Conclusions

The findings indicate a positive volunteering experience where respondents feel recognised by their manager for their contribution, feel comfortable being themselves, and are making a difference through volunteering.

However, the proportion of volunteers feeling supported, feeling valued for their time and the volunteer engagement score have all decreased since quarter three. The volunteer engagement score has been on a downward trend since April 2022, largely driven by RNIB being a great organisation to volunteer with. These core measures should be monitored and explored further to reduce the risk of dissatisfaction, complaints and attrition, as a large proportion of the verbatim comments were citing negative volunteering experiences.

Although scores are respectable, communication continues to be a consistent issue through our volunteer experience surveys. The latest verbatim comments reveal a mixed experience where there is a lack of updates, no or slow responses to emails, and some respondents do not receive communications in their preferred format.

Supporting volunteer managers to provide a good volunteer experience, particularly through regular communication and demonstration of the impact of contribution, should ensure volunteers feel engaged and valued.

Whilst the survey has provided great insights into the volunteering experience, it is important to remember the biases of the survey sample. Caution should therefore be taken when generalising the findings to all volunteers at RNIB.

## Section Eleven: Final Recommendations

* Promote the resources available to support volunteers in their role, particularly EVAP, Keeping in Touch sessions, and RNIB staff and volunteer networks.
* Gather more insight to further understand communication experiences, particularly how the RNIB communicates with volunteers and how communication experiences vary across different teams and volunteer managers.
* Increase capacity for volunteer manager responsibilities to allow regular communication with volunteers and to demonstrate the impact of their contribution.
* Use the insight to inform recruitment campaigns, promotional material, and volunteer communications. Recruitment campaigns should speak to how people can share their skills and should also speak to the feel-good factor of volunteering.
* Demonstrate the impact of volunteering on customers RNIB as an organisation to ensure volunteers feel valued. Communicating this through team meetings, customer stories and the Volunteer News will feed into a personal sense of achievement.
* Explore ways to make volunteers feel recognised for their contribution from RNIB as an organisation.

## Appendix

### Demographic questions

#### Age

77 volunteers provided their age. The results are shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Response options** | **Percentage** |
| 18-25 | 3% |
| 26-35 | 6% |
| 36-45 | 1% |
| 46-55 | 16% |
| 56-65 | 31% |
| Over 65 | 53% |

#### Working status

78 volunteers provided their working status. The results are shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Response options** | **Percentage** |
| Working full-time | 10% |
| Working part-time | 6% |
| Unemployed and looking for work | 4% |
| Unemployed and not looking for work | 4% |
| Unemployed and not able to work | 10% |
| Retired | 59% |
| Stay at home parent or carer | - |
| Student | 7% |

#### Ethnicity

75 volunteers provided their ethnicity. The results are shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Response options** | **Percentage** |
| White | 91% |
| Black | 3% |
| Asian | 4% |
| Mixed | 1% |
| Other | 1% |

#### Sight Status

77 volunteers provided their sight status. The results are shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Response options** | **Percentage** |
| Visually impaired but not certified | 1% |
| Sight impaired | 7% |
| Severely sight impaired | 20% |
| Sighted | 71% |
| Other | 1% |

#### Team

All 100 respondents provided the team they volunteered with. The results are shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Response options** | **Percentage** |
| Campaigns | 2% |
| Community Connection | 11% |
| Connect Radio | 1% |
| Fundraising (Sooty Box team) | 17% |
| Governance, HR, Legal Rights and Volunteering | 2% |
| Reading Services | 2% |
| Sight Loss Advice Service | - |
| Specialist Support (Counselling, Employment, and Living Well with Sight Loss) | 4% |
| Talk & Support | 7% |
| Technology for Life | 17% |
| Transcription | 16% |
| Other | 13% |
| I don’t know what team I volunteer in | 8% |

Document ends.