



Prisoners · Families · Communities
A Fresh Start Together

Our Vision for Volunteering

2023 - 2026

About the Prison Advice & Care Trust (Pact)

Pact is a pioneering national charity that supports prisoners, people with convictions, and their children and families. We provide caring and life changing services at every stage of the criminal justice process: in court, in prison, on release, and in the community.

Pact's vision is of a society that understands justice as a process of restoration and healing, that uses prisons sparingly and as places of learning and rehabilitation, and that values the innate dignity and worth of every human being. We work for the common good of Society, taking a public health-based approach. We work at the intersection of criminal justice, child and family welfare, mental health, wellbeing provision and health and social care.

Our volunteers and staff offer support in courts, prisons, probation services, and communities across England and Wales. We are a diverse, inclusive, modern, and collaborative charity. We build effective partnerships and sustainable solutions based on our well-established understanding of the systems in which we work and on our historic values and ethos developed through our 120+ years of service delivery.



Introduction

Pact was founded more than 120 years ago by volunteers. True to our roots, they continue to play a key role in helping us provide our services in courts, prisons and communities across England and Wales.

In 2021, we reviewed our Routes to Change strategy in light of the global pandemic. We identified the importance of a dedicated vision for volunteering in maximising the impact of our work and helping the criminal justice system to build back better.

We believe that volunteers should feel valued and supported to build their skills, discover new opportunities and take care of their health and wellbeing. This includes those with lived experience of the justice system, who we know can play a crucial role in helping us to improve services and advocate for prisoners and their families.

Volunteering for Pact should be sustainable, meaningful and impactful, whatever the role involves. Our Vision for Volunteering will enable us to focus our energy and resources over the next three years, ensuring both new and existing volunteers receive support to carry out their roles effectively and be involved in the charity's growth and development.

We are incredibly grateful for our volunteers' time, passion, energy, and commitment to helping us deliver meaningful and effective services for our service users.

Our vision is of a society in which justice is understood as a process of restoration and healing, in which prisons are used sparingly and as places of learning and rehabilitation, and in which the innate dignity and worth of every human being is valued.

Our mission is to support prisoners and their families to make a fresh start, and to minimise the harm that can be caused by imprisonment on people who have committed offences, on families and on communities.

Our work is underpinned by our values:
Believe, Listen, Respect, Co-operate, Learn, Excel,
Involve, Connect, Create



Making a difference

From mentoring to befriending, supporting people in court to working with children and families in prison visitors' centres, our volunteers make a huge difference to those using our services.

Our volunteers have told us that the best thing about being a Pact volunteer is:

"The fulfilment of knowing I can help those who need it and support families and friends experiencing upset going through the court system."

"Making a small difference in their day and lightening their mood when they need it."

"Helping those who are in a vulnerable and emotional position and being surrounded by other volunteers and colleagues who together make a good team and I know will support me if required."

"Making a small difference in a family's day and lightening their mood when they need it."

The best evidence of the value of volunteers comes from our service users themselves:

"With the support of the Pact volunteer, I was given the help I needed to improve my mental health. I was supported to start working on issues which I had bottled up for a number of years".

"Overall, my time with my Pact volunteer was invaluable to me. The greatest thing it helped me with was gaining the confidence to continue my life. The support that my volunteer gave to me was unbelievable. It helped build my confidence up so I could then find employment."



Where we were

Volunteers have been a valued part of Pact for more than 120 years. Over time we have seen the consistency of our volunteer practice improve and our opportunities grow around our service users' needs.

In more recent years, and with the support of Charles Hayward Foundation through the "Reasons to Care" project, we have made significant achievements in improving Pact's approach to volunteering in the following ways:

- Recruited and established a national lead for volunteering
- Improved how we recruit and manage volunteers
- Developed training and toolkits to support managers
- Implemented a volunteer management system bringing all our volunteer information into one place
- Improved communication with volunteers, including our monthly workforce newsletter, Pact News
- Improved our volunteer training, including providing access to our learning platform, Pact Academy
- Recognised volunteers through our annual Volunteer Awards

What we have learnt

We regularly speak to our volunteers, staff, and service users about their Pact experience and what they want for our future. We do this through surveys, exit questionnaires, supervision sessions and focus groups.

What we do well

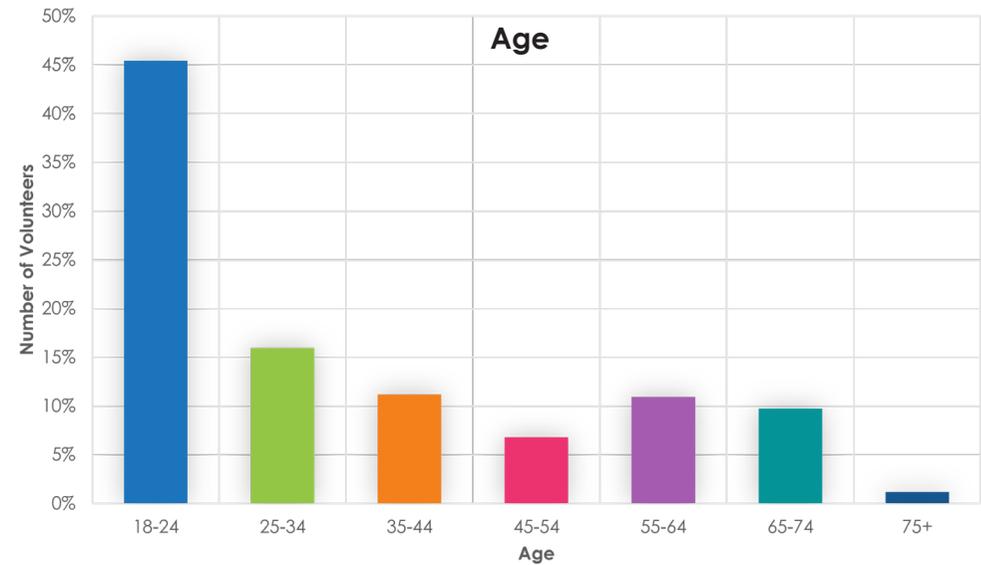
- We offer a variety of innovative roles based in prisons, the community and from home
- We offer high-quality training, support and supervision
- We recognise and appreciate our volunteers
- We have an effective system to help us understand our volunteers' unique backgrounds

What we can improve

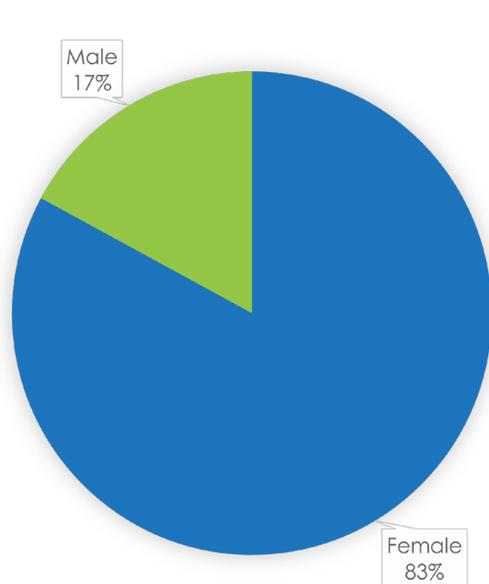
- We rely too heavily on online recruitment to attract new volunteers
- We can do more to ensure our volunteer cohort reflects the communities we serve
- We can do more to train and develop our volunteer managers
- We can retain our volunteers for longer

Our Volunteers

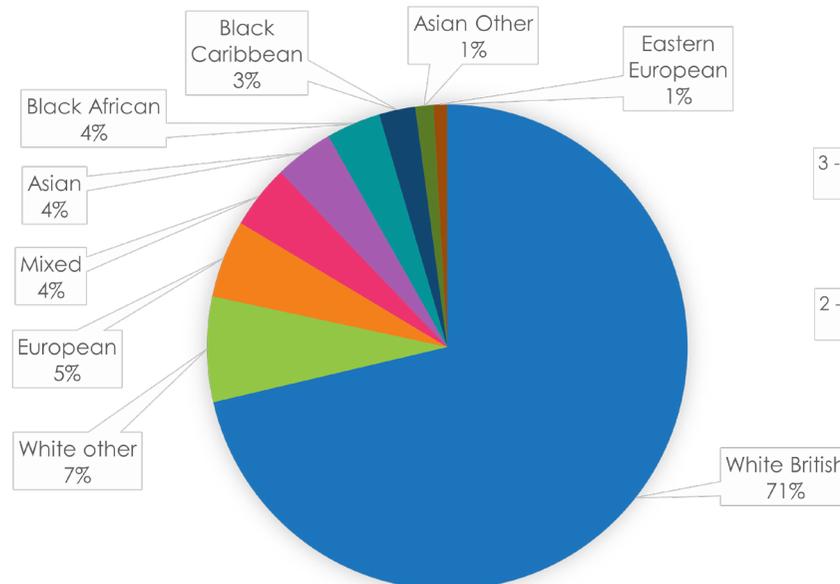
In 2019 we launched our first volunteer experience survey. We have continued with the survey each year since, as it gives us great insight into understanding our volunteers and their Pact experience. It helps us know what we are doing well and make informed decisions about what we need to improve.



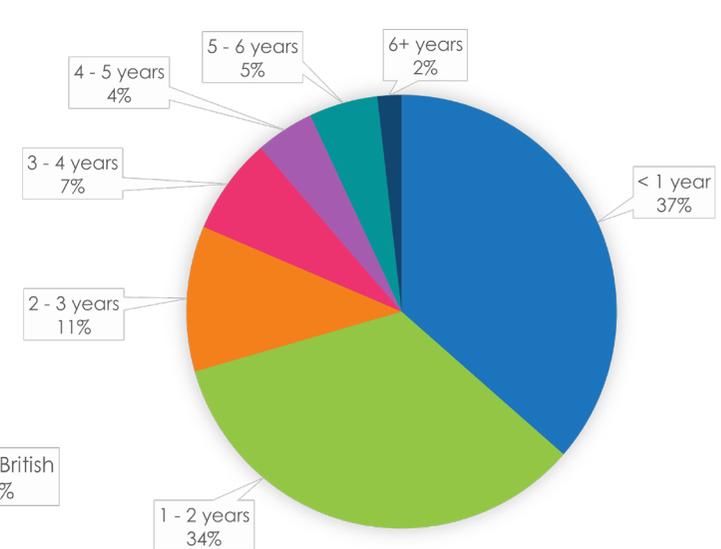
Gender



Ethnicity



Length of service





I volunteer
because...

I want to help others
get off the path I
used to be on!

What's next?

From our research and conversations with staff, volunteers, and service users, we have identified our key volunteering priorities to help us continue improving the volunteer experience and the support we offer to prisoners, people with convictions and their families.

Over the next three years, our volunteering priorities will focus on the following four themes:



Recruiting volunteers by building bridges, relationships and partnerships within local communities



Recruiting and supporting more volunteers with lived experience of the prison system



Involving volunteers in shaping their experience and the charity's work



Delivering a high-quality volunteering experience

1. Recruiting volunteers by building bridges, relationships and partnerships within local communities

Why is it needed?

Building local connections where our services are delivered enables us to recruit volunteers passionate about serving their communities. In turn, this will help us grow and strengthen our volunteering workforce to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve and make volunteering accessible and welcoming to everyone.

What will we do?

We will forge links with:

- Local volunteer centres
- Places and communities of worship
- Colleges and universities
- Employers and local businesses

How will we do it?

- Broaden our recruitment activity to diversify the age, gender, ethnicity, and locality of our volunteers
- Inspire working people to get involved with flexible and accessible opportunities that suit their time commitments, motivations, interests, skills and experience
- Engage with the local community around a prison or service and identify key stakeholders for each location.
- Forge and build relationships with local churches, mosques and other places of worship to engage new volunteers motivated by faith and a genuine desire to serve their local communities
- Build relationships with colleges and universities to expand our student placement programme

“I am very glad to be furthering my experience on a journey of spiritual awakening and self-discovery by reconnecting with my community.”

2. Recruiting and supporting more volunteers with lived experience of the prison system

Why is it needed?

We believe we will improve services if they are informed, delivered, and shaped by people who have lived experience of the criminal justice system, whether as prisoners or as family members. What better way to achieve this than engaging people in prisons, reformed former prisoners, and their families as volunteers with Pact?

What will we do?

- Develop more opportunities for prisoners to volunteer in our services, such as refreshment services, peer mentoring and representing Pact as Ambassadors
- Ensure a high-quality experience with clear progression and opportunities for prisoner volunteers to grow, develop, and gain recognised qualifications
- Ensure consistency in the recruitment, management and support of Pact Peer Workers
- Attract people who have lived experience of a family member or friend in prison and want to support others going through a similar experience

How will we do it?

- Recruit a national post to develop how Pact engages with prisoner volunteers / Pact Peer Workers
- Review our volunteer recruitment approach to ensure it is accessible and not off-putting for people with lived experience
- Develop a national programme to recruit, support and recognise prisoner volunteers
- Develop learning and training opportunities that meet the needs of our prisoner volunteers and their roles, complementing their existing skills and supporting their rehabilitation
- Encourage people with experience of having a family member or friend involved in the criminal justice system to volunteer across our services

“Volunteering for Pact reminded me that making a mistake isn’t the end of the world, but something I can learn from and turn into a positive.”

3. Involving volunteers in shaping their experience and charity's work

Why is it needed?

We will expand on how we involve volunteers in shaping their experience and ensuring their voice is heard. We want volunteers to feel connected and part of Pact. It is important that we understand the needs of our volunteers and their motivations for volunteering to ensure they get the best out of the experience.

What will we do?

- Make Pact a meaningful place to volunteer
- Ensure volunteer voices are embedded in the design of volunteering initiatives, driving how they are involved

How will we do it?

- Create a culture that engages, encourages and supports volunteer involvement across the organisation
- Involve volunteers in shaping their experience by creating a national volunteer forum.
- Adopt a localised approach to volunteer involvement with the right systems and resources in place
- Support staff to effectively involve volunteers in their service and team
- Conduct annual volunteer surveys, establish volunteer forums, and have volunteer representatives in working groups and expert panels

“Volunteering with Pact has been so interesting and rewarding. I’ve been very fortunate to learn from some brilliant colleagues, many of whom I now consider friends.”

4. Delivering a high-quality volunteering experience

Why is it needed?

By delivering a high-quality volunteering experience, everyone wins. Volunteers enhance what we offer our service users. With volunteers, we can support more people, and we have more time to listen and more time to care.

By delivering a high-quality volunteering experience, our volunteers receive an engaging, worthwhile opportunity where they know they are making a difference and commit to a longer-term role with us.

What will we do?

We will focus on continually improving our approach to volunteering by going for the “Investing in Volunteers” accreditation. This is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management and will give volunteers confidence in our ability to provide an outstanding volunteer experience.

How will we do it?

- Effectively support staff in managing volunteers through training and promoting a coordinated and collaborative approach to best practice
- Review, revise, and implement clear policies, procedures, and guidance to support volunteers in carrying out their roles and responsibilities safely and effectively
- Review and develop volunteer induction and training for each role
- Invest in a new volunteer management system that enables us to engage and manage volunteers more effectively. Introduce an impact measurement system to assess and understand our volunteers’ contribution
- Further develop a recognition programme to celebrate the valuable contribution of our volunteers

“The pact team supports volunteers in exploring different roles and is keen on building people’s capacities by providing them with opportunities to take on more responsibilities. This is truly helpful in equipping volunteers with good transferable skills.”

Achieving our vision

- We will develop annual plans to set out specific and measurable activities that contribute to delivering our Vision for Volunteering.
- We will continue to innovate and develop new volunteering roles in response to organisational priorities and new service needs, as well as adapt to other significant changes in the voluntary sector.
- We will continuously monitor, review, and evaluate our work to measure our success against the Vision, which we hope will be demonstrated by achieving the "Investing in Volunteers" quality standard.

“Volunteering with Pact is not just about making a difference to the people we work with, it’s also about discovering the best version of yourselves in the process.”

Moving Forward

We now have a clear view of our approach to volunteering for the next three years.

We are committed to achieving this Vision and, in doing so, embedding volunteering within Pact’s overall vision, values, culture and aims. By doing so, we can achieve better outcomes and experiences for our service users.

We look forward to working with our service users, staff and volunteers to take volunteering at Pact to a new level.

“The future of volunteering with Pact is brimming with possibility, and I can’t wait to see the impact our staff and volunteers can create together to grow our services even further.”



John Teller
Routes to Change
Volunteering Award
Presented of the House of Lords
You make the difference
John Teller
Lord Kensington
July 2014

Amy Ashall
Routes to Change
Volunteering Award
Presented of the House of Lords
You make the difference
Amy Ashall
Lord Kensington
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Leona Fernandez
Routes to Change
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The HMP Gwent Team
Routes to Change
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Darren Byrne
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Get in touch

Speak to our volunteering team: volunteering@prisonadvice.org.uk

Visit our website: www.prisonadvice.org.uk

Email us: info@prisonadvice.org.uk

Call the Prisoners' Families Helpline: 0808 808 2003 (Mon-Fri 9am – 8pm, Sat & Sun 10am -3pm)

Pact is a registered charity - number: 219278. Company registration number: 356443.
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