

Impact Report

2023

1. Better Planet

2. Better Communities

4. Better Operations

3. Better Opportunities



vita
health group
Part of Spire Healthcare

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Ishmael Beckford

EDI and Sustainability Director

Foreword

Vita Health Group (VHG), part of Spire Healthcare, is a leading independent UK healthcare provider dedicated to making people better. The organisation provides integrated physical and mental health services to employers/insurers, the NHS, and private patients. VHG has over 30 years of experience delivering best-in-class physical and mental health services, with unique expertise in holistic, person-centred care.

We are pleased to share our first Impact Report, as part of our ongoing commitment to transparently demonstrate our organisational impact to our stakeholders.

This report illustrates – and I trust provides assurance – on the wide range of activities undertaken by VHG in 2023, to deliver on our value-driven ambitions.

As VHG continues to grow, the opportunities to impact our people, patients, customers, and wider society also increase. We recognise our responsibility to ensure that impact is a positive one, by keeping sustainability in its broadest sense in full focus.

Success for us goes beyond delivering excellent care. It includes going above and beyond minimum requirements in order to address some key societal challenges at a local and global level. These challenges include (but are not limited to): sustainability, health inequalities, diversity and inclusion, and wider economic development. As an organisation, we have not shied away from these challenges – addressing them to the best of our ability is central to our strategic intent.

The report **highlights** key areas of our activity **covering**:



BETTER PLANET

Action we are taking to mitigate our climate impact and align with industry net-zero targets.



BETTER COMMUNITIES

Action we are taking to promote health and wellbeing in communities, particularly those at risk of inequality.



BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

Action we are taking to develop workforce capacity and competency, both inside and outside of Vita Health Group.



BETTER OPERATIONS

Action we are taking to ensure that how we operate is ethical and mindful of social justice.

We are focusing on these areas not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because they are integral to delivering on our values as an organisation. All this activity is framed within the context of social value and, where feasible, aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I would like to thank all colleagues, service users, customers, and wider stakeholders who have contributed or participated in any of the activities outlined in this report. There has been a huge amount of effort to ensure VHG maximises its positive impact on society. As an organisation, we are wholly committed to continuing on the journey to improve further.

Year at a glance



Better Communities

We are keen to provide patients with equitable access to our services, even in the hard-to-reach areas. In 2023, we launched a **VHG Mental Health Bus Tour** to provide access to the service to those isolated from transport links and services.

We are **striving to overcome the stigma around mental health among older adults** and actively engaging them in our service development plans.



Better Planet

Our ambition is to reach net-zero emissions by 2050*, a goal which is supported by our intensity targets, where in 2023 we made a **36% emission reduction** per £M turnover from our baseline year.

We centralised our sustainability ambition and established a **Sustainability Working Group**, attended by representatives from across the company, and led by our newly appointed Sustainability and Social Value Manager.



Better Opportunities

Our focus on providing better opportunities for people isn't only centred on our colleagues, but externally too. In 2023, we've **delivered 12,104 employment support sessions** across all VHG services, supporting people to remain in, return to, or find work.

To support our people in learning new skills and exploring their interests, we offer a total of **366 e-learning modules** for our people, including **23 EDI-related training modules**.



Better Operations

VHG continues to recognise the importance of **increasing and maintaining a diverse workforce**, to ensure we are representative of the populations we serve.

We continue to work to improve the experience of our disabled colleagues and reduce the barriers they face in accessing opportunities, which was highlighted by our **promotion to Disability Confident Leader** status in 2023.

*VHG's net-zero target is currently under review to better align with our parent company, Spire Healthcare, after the organisation's acquisition in late 2023. Reporting year Jan-Dec 2023.

Our sustainable ambition

We are committed to Making People Better. Our purpose is underpinned by our values of leadership, being people-centred, and customer-focused, with an emphasis on quality and integrity. We have extended our purpose to encompass the environment and are committed to delivering and developing our business in a sustainable way.

VHG recognises sustainability as an essential part of facing current and future global challenges, including those related to the environment. To be a truly sustainable company, we are considering all intersections of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic. Where our actions related to any of these go beyond compliance and deliver positive benefits to those outside of the business, it is known as creating 'Social Value'.

Our ambition is focused on embedding sustainability and social value into our business-as-usual practices and processes, to create a positive impact on the environment, as well as lasting social value and economic viability. To align our operations with this view, our Sustainability & Social Value Strategy is divided into four themes, with each having a dedicated focus. This report will provide insight into the work VHG has undertaken to create a positive impact for the year which ended 31st December, in addition to our future approach.

Our sustainability ambition is guided by the United Nations SDGs, to ensure our actions are linked with, and contributing directly to, the global sustainability agenda. We have chosen to prioritise the SDGs where we can make the most significant impact and use these to focus our actions. We have continued to work on the remaining SDGs where applicable.

Sustainability & Social Value Strategy

Sustainability & Social Value at VHG is our holistic approach to making a positive contribution to the environment, society, and economy by making people better. it is how we deliver on our purpose.

Making people better



BETTER PLANET

Taking climate action

- Managing waste sustainability
- Energy efficiency
- Carbon management
- Restoring our climate through decarbonisation

Alignment to UN SDGs



BETTER COMMUNITIES

Promoting resilient, healthy populations

- Supporting communities to build resilience
- Supporting communities to reduce health inequality

Alignment to UN SDGs



BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting people to reach their potential

- Equal opportunities
- Providing upskilling and training
- Developing life skills

Alignment to UN SDGs



BETTER OPERATIONS

Delivering a generative operating model

- Working with the third sector as key partners
- Promoting diversity in the workplace
- Safef wellbeing
- Responsible supply chain

Alignment to UN SDGs



Social Value – the journey of good business

Good business is about more than profit.

Social value is the social, economic, and environmental contribution we make to communities in which we work, above and beyond the services we're contracted to deliver. There are a wide range of actions we can undertake to deliver social value. This might include awarding contracts to local suppliers, donating to public realm projects, staff volunteering, hiring apprentices, or offering work experience or job opportunities to those who face barriers to the workplace.



2023 marked a pivotal year in our social value journey. We kick-started an ambitious three-year plan to build on the great work we already do and drive it forward with the intent to become the **Social Value Leader in Healthcare by 2026**: challenging ourselves to deliver the best possible outcomes for our people, communities, and the planet.

A core component of our three-year plan is a partnership with established social value thought leader, Social Value Portal.

Social Value Portal is helping us by:

- Providing three years of expert consultancy to establish our Social Value Strategy, internal procedures, processes, and governance (including data collection, monitoring, and measuring) providing firm-wide training and resources, and ultimately developing our detailed roadmap to becoming the Social Value Leader in Healthcare by 2026.
- Providing us with a digital platform to centralise all social value data in one location, making tracking progress at both the contract and firm-wide levels simple and effective. The platform further provides smart data analytics, capitalising on intelligence for more informed and impactful decisions; and simplified reporting with a detailed document ready for our commissioners and clients in “one-click”.
- Conducting independent audits of our social value data and delivery to ensure it is accurate and transparent.

What have we achieved so far?

- ✓ We've established a Social Value Working Group comprising stakeholders from across the organisation.
- ✓ Participated in a full-day workshop run by the Social Value Portal (attended by the Social Value Working Group) to lay the foundations of our strategy and prioritise for 2024.
- ✓ Hired a dedicated Social Value Coordinator, who joined our team in January 2024, and who will play an important role in centralising our Social Value efforts moving forward.
- ✓ Raised awareness of Social Value across the wider Spire Healthcare Group by sharing knowledge on lessons learned and opportunities to align with senior leaders across the group.

What's next?

We're at the start of our journey, so you can expect to see our social value activities accelerate at pace over the next year. By the end of 2024, we aim to have:

- ✓ Defined data capture templates with clear data recording responsibilities across departments.
- ✓ Uploaded a minimum of five contracts on the Social Value Portal – providing complete social value monitoring, measuring, and reporting.
- ✓ Conducted a retrospective audit of key contracts to identify social value already delivered but not captured with data monitoring/reporting.
- ✓ Established a clear process and pipeline for communicating and actioning social value from bid through to mobilisation and live contract.
- ✓ Embedded sustainability (of people, communities and the planet) in every VHG policy.
- ✓ Formed a sustainability training module.

This is only the beginning, and our ambitions will be bigger and bolder year-on-year. Everyone at VHG is crucial to delivering social value, and everyone can make an impact. We're excited to see what we achieve together in 2024 and beyond.

VHG's existing Social Value Initiatives in 2023





1. Better Planet

VHG is serious about taking positive climate action, and is committed to reaching net-zero emissions by no later than 2050*.

In 2023 VHG recruited a dedicated sustainability and social value manager, who oversees the development and implementation of our sustainability strategy – now enhanced to include social value. An internal Sustainability Working Group (SWG) was established, formed of Sustainability Champions representing colleagues across the business. During the reporting period, the SWG began working on various projects, including the development of the Sustainability Strategy, preparing for our first Impact Report, and engaging colleagues with our Volunteering Support Scheme. The Group launched VHG's new Sustainability Newsletter focusing on topics of interest, including sustainable consumption and food, energy efficiency and waste management – there are plans to produce many more.

We completed our first Energy Saving Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) in December 2023. ESOS Phase 3 was the first time VHG fit the qualifying criteria for this mandatory assessment. The assessment identified a total of 68,684.17 kWh of energy savings across the business. In collaboration with the facilities department, the sustainability team has confirmed our action plan for reducing our energy following the ESOS findings recommendations. These are aligned with our net-zero goal, which will be put into practice in 2024.

*VHG's net-zero target is currently under review to better align with our parent company, Spire Healthcare, after the organisation's acquisition in late 2023.

Reducing our footprint

Table 1: VHG market-based carbon emissions in carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) for the reporting period January-December 2023

VHG 2023 Carbon emissions				
Scope	Emission Source	2021 (tCO ₂ e)	2022 (tCO ₂ e)	2023 (tCO ₂ e)
1	Natural gas	71.66	13.65	22.97
	Company vehicles	–	1.67	–
	Refrigerants	–	2.4	–
Scope 1 Total		71.66	17.72	22.97
2	Electricity	42.63	106.92	16.14
Scope 2 Total		42.63	106.2	16.14
3.1	Non-controlled site water	–	–	4.09
	Water	0.86	0.26	2.16
	Paper	1.3	0.37	0.37
3.2	Computing	206.39	263.14	418.30
3.3	Scopes 1 and 2 WTT	84.93	17.89	10.26
	Transmission & distribution (Non-controlled Sites)	–	–	4.42
	Transmission & distribution	2.66	11.72	3.08
3.5	Non-controlled site waste	–	–	98.99
	Waste	47.288	53.13	25.53
	Non-controlled site wastewater	–	–	4.66
	Wastewater	–	0.48	2.43
3.6	Grey fleet (employee-owned vehicles)	13.91	102.58	132.85
	Hotel stays	–	19.36	35.72
	Business travel	3.22	17.59	50.23
	Company vehicle off-site charging	–	0.16	–
3.7	Home-working	217.13	82.13	194.12
	Commuting	154.56	210.72	67.80
3.8	Non-controlled site gas	67.25	–	–
	Non-controlled site electricity	59.14	83.5	82.96
Scope 3 Total		858.66	863.03	1,137.99
All	Tonnes of CO ₂ e	972.96	986.95	1,177.10
	Tonnes of CO ₂ e per employee	1.05	0.84	0.86
	Tonnes of CO ₂ e per £ million turnover	19.77	17.09	12.64

Since the start of our carbon reporting and reduction journey in 2021, VHG has grown exponentially. Now with a 109% increase in revenue growth and 47% more people, it's natural to see an increase in carbon footprint (Table 1). To make our data more robust and reflective of our operational impact, we introduced five more emission categories in 2023. Compared to 2021 when the global pandemic reduced activity, 2023 reflects our business-as-usual operations. 'Business travel' and 'hotel stays' categories have increased in 2023, however, we are proud to see the decrease in electricity emissions, which was achieved by switching to renewable energy providers and focusing on energy efficiencies of our appliances. Further progressing on the energy agenda, we will continue to focus on reductions in 2024: Introducing an energy policy, internal training on energy efficiency, and working with landlords to better understand our usage are just some of the examples of the action to come.



CO₂e
Assessed
Organisation



CO₂e
Reduced
Organisation

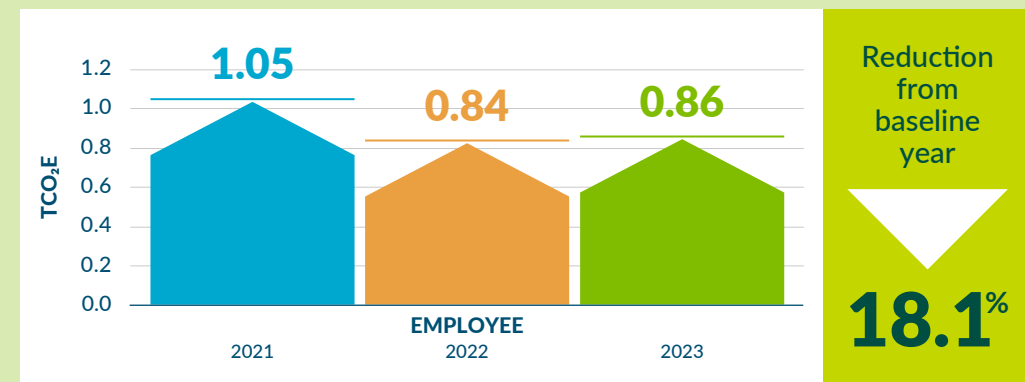
VHG, in conjunction with Carbon Footprint Ltd, has successfully assessed our 2023's carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. Supplementing our reduction journey, we have outlined intensity metrics and supporting targets to reach the net-zero target by 2050:

- 🌱 A 50% reduction in emissions per £M turnover/employee by 2030.
- 🌱 A 90% reduction in emissions per £M turnover/employee by 2045.

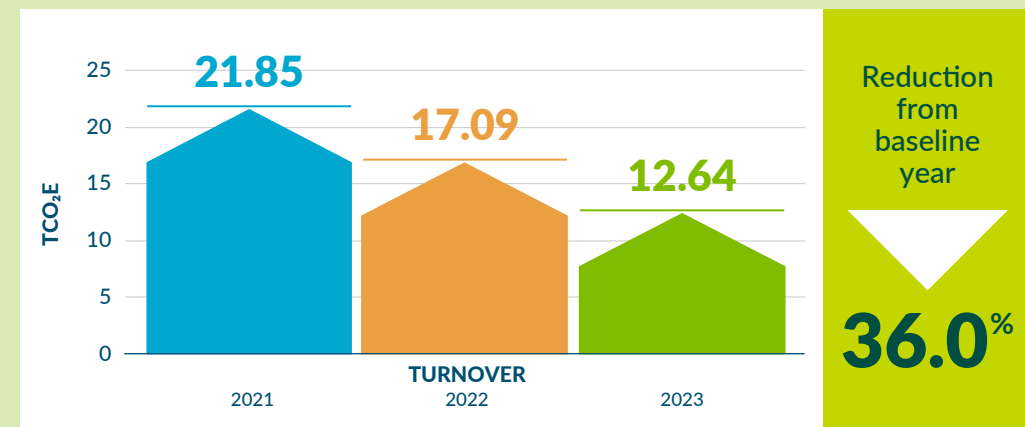
*Revenue growth from our baseline year is based on draft financial statements with the data available as of April 2024.

2023 saw a 2.5% increase in tonnes of CO₂e per employee (Graph 1) compared to 2022, which is reflective of our preparation for new service launches across the UK in 2024. When looking at the change from our baseline year (2021), the metric reduced by 18.1%. Our second intensity metric – tonnes of CO₂e per £M turnover (Graph 2), decreased by 26% from the previous year, and by 36% from the baseline year, continuing a trend in reduction at VHG.

Graph 1: Intensity metric showing tonnes of CO₂e per employee



Graph 2: Intensity metric showing tonnes of CO₂e per £ million turnover



Looking ahead

In 2024 we are taking a dual approach to our emissions reduction agenda. Firstly, we will introduce mandatory sustainability training, focusing on the global challenge of climate change. Secondly, we are doubling our efforts on energy reduction, waste management, and improving the sustainability of our business travel. These aims will be underpinned by the development of new policies and practices which will be implemented as business as usual, all supporting the relevant United Nations SDGs.

United Nations SDG	VHG actions for 2024
4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	Introducing mandatory sustainability training for all employees
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	- Switching our energy supply to renewable energy providers - Developing energy policy Introducing energy efficiency training
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 	- Managing our waste more efficiently at the sites we control - Focusing on sustainable procurement
13 CLIMATE ACTION 	Reducing our carbon footprint

CASE STUDY: City Farm Project

The Bristol City Farms offers a host of charitable services including courses, groups and support at its community venues across Bristol, and South Gloucestershire, bringing value to their local communities and environments. Our Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Talking Therapies team has a partnership with Windmill Hill City Farm in this area, to fund places on its social and educational courses. Some of our patients are given the option to be referred to the City Farm, to benefit their recovery from anxiety and/or depression. This is an example of where we are investing in support for our patients based on the wider determinants of mental health, including social and learning opportunities.

In December 2023, the BNSSG Talking Therapies service (TTS) formed an additional partnership with Hartcliffe City Farm. The partnership offers our BNSSG Talking Therapies colleagues the opportunity to use their annual VHG corporate volunteering day in a collective effort, where they join existing community growing and development projects at the City Farm. Our colleagues work alongside the City Farm's community volunteers to weed, dig, plant, and harvest, plus many more activities that keep the market garden running and produce quality fruit and vegetables. The produce, in turn, is used for volunteer and community meals, to generate income via the farm's charity (Heart of BS13) shop. This also helps to feed the farm's various livestock. The City Farm even has an innovative closed-loop community compost system, ensuring nothing goes to waste. Seeing the efforts of our VHG volunteers being ploughed back into a BNSSG community and the local environment is very rewarding.



In the latest 2019 Office for National Statistics National Index of Multiple Deprivation data set, the area of Hartcliff was identified as one of the most deprived areas in Bristol. Our volunteering at the City Farm project, which provides social and educational opportunities, community support, and which generates sustainable value from the land, is clearly a great investment of our time and resources. Not to mention the many health and wellbeing benefits for our colleagues that come with taking time away from their desks and appointments, getting outdoors and active, and making a positive contribution. Notably, VHG colleagues are also getting closer to the community that they work in. We're looking forward to continuing the partnership and seeing the results of our efforts at the end of 2024.



2. Better Communities

Accessing patients in hard-to-reach areas

At VHG we are constantly seeking to improve access to, and the experience of, our services for the patients we treat. We know that, amongst the communities we serve, some are facing greater health risks and disparities in their ability to access appropriate healthcare. Many of these communities may also be underrepresented in our services. This is something we make a continuous priority to change, both as an integral part of our social and contractual responsibilities as a business and part of our identity as an organisation committed to promoting equal opportunities.

To help this work, we have recently restructured our business directorate with the intention of improving the delivery of community and system-linked developments to our services. The director of performance, planning and insight will deliver operational priorities, focussing on optimising access to our services for all communities. On the ground, our work to improve access to our services is a collaboration between our clinical and operational managers, marketing team, and a dedicated outreach team known as Partnership Liaison.

Community outreach

Partnership Liaison Officers (PLOs) have been appointed across all of our NHS Talking Therapies services and are being introduced for our musculoskeletal services too. Our PLOs promote access to our services and support the delivery of effective pathways of care for our patients. To do this, PLOs have a digital and on-the-ground presence, both within VHG and outside, to link our system partners and communities.



The PLO role facilitates conversations and education to raise awareness about our services. Our PLOs are equally positioned to bring feedback inward and enable us to understand and respond to community needs. They are key to us reaching patients in less-represented locations and communities, and work to represent their views in our service-level and company-wide planning and workstreams.

The PLOs connect to our communities and health systems in a variety of ways. These include education and training workshops for professionals, organisations and the public about our services, distribution of information materials throughout the community, being present at community venues and events, and developing partnerships and ongoing conversations with other organisations and our patients.

CASE STUDY: VHG Mental Health Bus Tour

Communities across Leicestershire and Rutland can be rural and isolated from transport links and services. Others in more urbanised areas may be less integrated with local infrastructure than others. These barriers leave many people in the area, who may be in need, less likely to receive information about mental health services. To better connect some of these communities, our Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) PLO team, supported by marketing and local managers, completed a bus tour of the region for two weeks in the summer of 2023.

The team took information and resources about the NHS LLR Talking Therapies service to areas where we see fewer referrals than we would expect. The aim was to increase the visibility of the service, which is particularly important given the estimated mental health needs in the community. The tour reached approximately 2,000 residents in the LLR region, secured over 1,000 visits to the website, reached over 60,000 impressions on a digital campaign and achieved coverage across five news and community platforms, including one live radio interview.

We saw a **13% increase in referrals** in the following month.



Expanding our clinical pathways

Our VHG clinical pathways are continuously evolving, aiming to best support patients from varying backgrounds and with differing needs. We support team training and operating approaches to help build rapport with our patients and embed good practice and understanding for a range of reasonable adjustments. Our therapies are delivered both remotely and across a range of community-embedded locations to help maximise the reach of our resources across local populations.



We also diversify pathways into and within our services, to encourage better access and experience. We use our community connections to better facilitate conversations and referrals into our services. There will be more focus on this area in the next reporting period, for example, in LLR Talking Therapies, we are piloting a collaboration with the Centre Project on a music project called Percussion Discussion and are also working with holistic

community arts venues to facilitate art therapy groups. Both projects will aim to start conversations about mental health and wellbeing in environments which may be more welcoming for some people in the community. They also facilitate signposting to our Talking Therapies services and other available mental health and psychological support.



CASE STUDY: Improving access to talking therapies for older adults



Our NHS Talking Therapies team in Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) recognised that two of their three counties had higher than average levels of older people (65+ years) living in the community (national average 18%, North Somerset 25%, South Gloucestershire 19%), but much lower levels of referrals from this demographic across the patch (5%). However, when older adults receive support in Talking Therapies, their outcomes are typically about 20% higher than the general population (Age UK Positive Practice Guide, 2024). Older people are also much less likely to drop out during their time in our service, with around 74% completing treatment compared to 68% in the general population (NHS England data).

Older adults who have completed treatment report that they feel much more able to enjoy life and focus on the things that matter to them, no longer being held back by anxieties or low moods that they may have lived with for a long time. However, there is still a stigma amongst older people around mental health and opening up or even seeking support, and thus they often under-report their symptoms (Sadness and Worry in Older Adults, 2020). Coupled with this, doctors are significantly less likely to diagnose an older person with mental health needs and will often put their mental state down to age.

This means that bringing older people into our service requires an innovative approach, which is where BNSSG decided to focus their 2023/24 Service Development Improvement Plan (SDIP). Through a series of measures, some of which are outlined below, the service saw a 20% increase in referrals from this demographic compared to other age groups in the same period, whilst maintaining high recovery rates (67.5% average across 65+ groups, compared to 52% average for under 65's).

Older Adults Panel



LIVED EXPERIENCE

A group of older people who have had previous experience of our service.



EXPERTS IN THEMSELVES

Whilst not claiming to represent all older people, they are able to describe their experiences of service provisions.



FEEDBACK

Various opportunities to comment on these experiences, through surveys, 1:1's, focus groups and events.



AUTHENTIC

Future service improvements will be designed alongside the panel, helping to make sure we are addressing what matters.

SDIP interventions included:

- 🌱 Delivering an older adult's event. Attendees were service users, interested public and relevant professionals. We've seen a great response and used this event to sign off our SDIP ideas as well as generate new ones.
- 🌱 Establishing an Older Adults Panel made up of previous service users that we can use to sign off on ideas and service developments, as well as run consultations and focus groups with.
- 🌱 Developing toolkits for colleagues, service users and partner organisations to use around engagement with older adults and how to make adaptations for this age group.
- 🌱 Introducing Older Adults Clinical Champions to support our colleagues with training around how to access patients in this age group and how to encourage them to share their feelings.
- 🌱 Creating new, and strengthening existing partnerships, and improving referral pathways with key statutory and community sector providers, such as Citizens Advice, Age UK, Sirona, Village Agents and Parish Councils.
- 🌱 Making marketing and promotional material relevant to the communities we are trying to reach, signed off by Older Adults Panel members.
- 🌱 Focusing on diversifying our workforce by looking at ways we can make clinical roles more appealing to a wider group of adults, including rewording the job description and advertising in more appropriate ways.
- 🌱 Working with local libraries to provide technical support for older people who have access to a digital device, such as a phone or tablet, but are unable to use it to attend appointments.

- 🌱 Working with groups like SARI, Dhek Bhal and Nilaari to make sure older adults from a diverse range of backgrounds feel comfortable accessing our support.
- 🌱 Working with GPs to make sure they understand the benefits our service can provide to an older demographic, and what signs to look out for that those people may be struggling - also known as the GP Education Programme

Whilst we have seen a significant increase in older adult referrals in BNSSG as a result of this work, we know that there is more to do. We are continuing our SDIP work into 2024, whilst also building on the close relationships we have built with our local community and service providers.



Older Adults and Wellbeing Event at BNSSG

Healthy Living Healthy Minds – a population health initiative

Healthy Living Healthy Minds (HLHM) is our innovative wellbeing course delivered in conjunction with some of our Talking Therapies Services (TTS). It provides people with the tools and support to make positive lifestyle changes for better physical and mental health. Initial data analysis has shown that HLHM has produced notable clinical improvements for those with step-2 depression (69% recovery) and anxiety (55% recovery).

The course comprises of a range of wellbeing webinars covering topics such as physical activity for mental health, food and mood, improving motivation, and how to change habits to live a healthier lifestyle. Health and wellbeing coaches also design and deliver weekly exercise sessions, alongside providing regular 1:1 telephone support sessions for up to a 12 week period, to help participants stay on track with their health goals.

While the course is available to service users at any point in their journey, referral commonly occurs at the point of TTS assessment, making HLHM a unique and impactful “waiting well” solution. Not only does it help to maintain engagement, but it also produces clinical improvement for some participants before they’ve even entered treatment.

An independent study conducted by the University of Bristol reported that the course reduces the demand for interventions among some people, indicating it could play a beneficial role in relieving service pressures while ensuring people achieve the positive change they need.

What participants say

“Very supportive, inspiring. Listened without judging. Signposted me to other agencies who could provide appropriate support.”

“I appreciate Ellie for listening to me and helping set goals I wanted to achieve... I want to thank her so much for holding me accountable without making me feel ashamed, her empathy meant the world to me. I still have goals to work on but this service really gave me tools to help me keep pushing forward.”

“After engaging [in HLHM], service users did not always need their full course of therapy, meaning therapy could be reserved for those with more persistent issues.”

University of Bristol

“My coach was wonderful, she was knowledgeable, kind and understanding.”

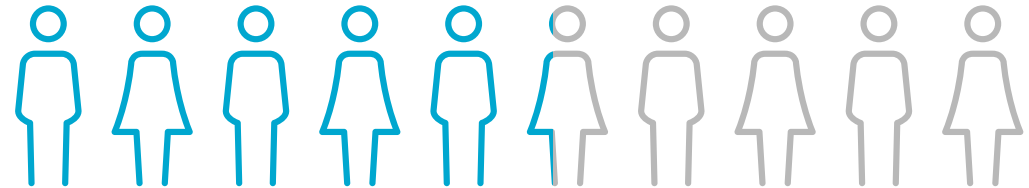
What does the future look like?

HLHM launched in our Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) service in 2021, but its success has led to its replication in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR) TTS and in Nottingham & Nottinghamshire TTS in March 2024. We now have a team including one service lead, two team leads, and nine health and wellbeing coaches. In its first year, HLHM averaged 63 new referrals per month in BNSSG alone.

Some changes occurred to the BNSSG and LLR regions to deliver HLHM as a webinar-only course shortly after its first year, however this led to a drop in average referrals to six total per month across both regions, with limited data showing positive outcomes. As a result, we are working towards bringing back the 1:1 telephone support and exercise classes to the HLHM programme in both regions. We therefore launched HLHM in Nottingham in March 2024 in the original format as described above.

We also piloted an exercise-led Step 2 treatment intervention “Get Active for Low Mood” closely modelled on the HLHM course, and updated NHS and NICE guidelines, applying physical activity, educational webinars, and optional 1:1 support to address and improve mild-moderate low mood.

53% recovery rate overall including patients who dropped out



67% recovery rate rate for those who fully completed the course



Results from this pilot are based on a sample size of 113 patients, with a 53% recovery rate overall including patients who dropped out before completion, and a 67% recovery rate for those who fully completed the course. We have since launched five regular courses shared across BNSSG and LLR. If it is as successful as initial outcomes indicate, this could mark a new and creative approach to delivering mental health care: capitalising on the benefits of holistic, multidimension wellbeing to combat moderate depression.

An independent study conducted by the University of Bristol reported that the course reduces the demand for interventions among some people, indicating it could play a beneficial role in relieving service pressures while ensuring people achieve the positive change they need.



3. Better Opportunities

Developing our talent

People are at the centre of everything we do here at VHG. To support our people in learning new skills and exploring their interests, we offer a variety of training and development opportunities. We have a total of 366 e-learning modules accessible to everyone, ranging from clinical, compliance and legal training to modules in equality and diversity and personal wellbeing. A staggering 25,615 hours were dedicated to training for our people in 2023.

THRIVE mentoring programme

We understand that more than just e-learning is needed for our people to thrive. That's why we designed a one-of-a-kind THRIVE mentoring programme. Inspired by feedback from the VHG employee survey, born out of the passion of the chief executive and members of the executive management team, and made possible by the dedication of the senior management community, the THRIVE mentoring programme is making a real difference to colleagues at VHG.

THRIVE is built around a series of 1:1 mentoring conversations but with a hugely unique team approach. Instead of mentors and mentees linking together on an individual basis, our THRIVE programme works in small teams of mentors and mentees, changing pairings every 3-4 months.

We make sure that everyone has equitable access to the opportunities we provide. We are proud that the THRIVE programme is empowering our female colleagues to build their network, develop workplace skills, and boost their confidence to take the next step in their careers. The first two cohorts included predominantly those who identify as female. Feedback has shown the benefits and value of the programme:

 89% of cohort one participants were female.

 74% of cohort two participants were female.

"Since having my first set of [mentoring] sessions, the programme gave me the confidence and drive to move forward, to the point [that] I have since had the courage to apply for another role internally... I am so excited for the opportunity and I'm not sure if I would have had the confidence if it wasn't for the mentorship programme."

THRIVE mentee feedback

What are the benefits of participating in the THRIVE programme?

- THRIVE helps to develop connections across the organisation, keeping the feel of a close-knit team across a much larger, geographically dispersed organisation.
- Enriches learning opportunities and personal development.
- Promotes VHG's diverse culture, working in line with our values.
- Embraces equality, diversity and inclusion through linking individuals from all levels of the company. THRIVE offers the opportunity to learn and develop from different perspectives, skills, talents, experiences and contributions.
- Builds confidence in individual colleagues.

We want to ensure that everybody can 'thrive' within the organisation and taking part in the programme supports this

"THRIVE has been a really positive experience for me over the last 12 months and helped with my confidence in making decisions and thinking about my professional and personal development. Listening to a variety of perspectives with the organisation has been helpful when carrying out my own role and giving me additional knowledge when communicating with my team and others."

THRIVE mentee feedback

THRIVE is making a meaningful difference to mentees:

- 80% of mentees** said they had been able to use a different approach to tackle challenges they face.
- 80% of mentees** felt the programme had increased their confidence.
- 70% of mentees** reported that they had developed relationships across the organisation and spent focused time on their development.

AND to mentors:

- Over 94% of mentors** said they had developed their relationships across VHG, gaining valuable perspectives.
- 90% of mentors** had more of an appreciation of the difference that they were able to make to others and had developed their own mentoring skills/ tool kit.

As part of our ongoing commitment to talent development, we recognise the need to focus in two areas. Therefore Learning and Development (L&D) priorities for 2024-25 will also include:

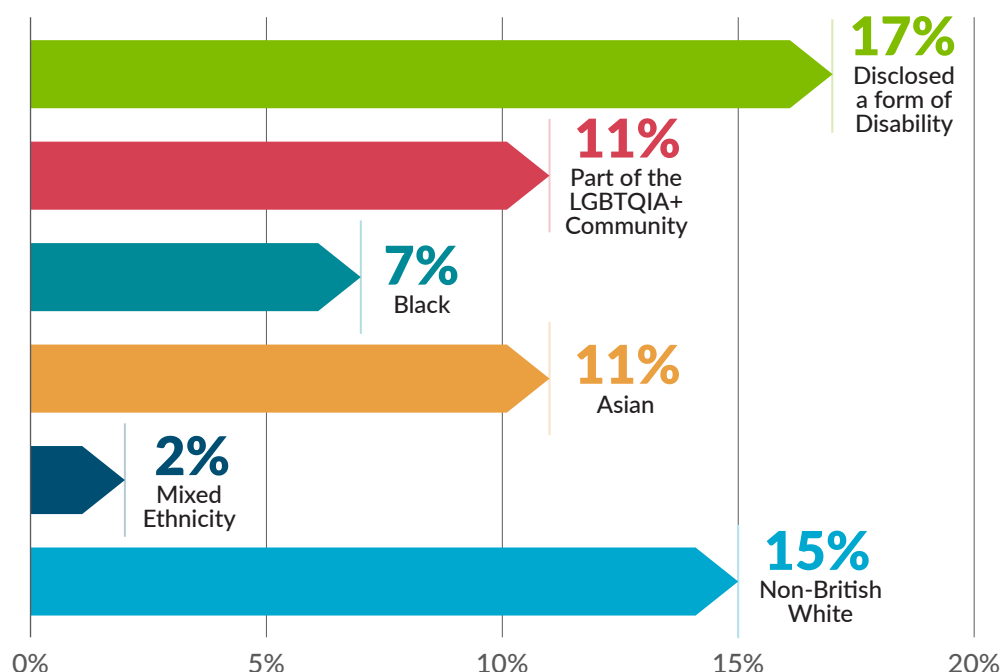
- Leadership development: design and deliver a leadership development programme and strengthen inclusive leadership capabilities, starting with entry-level managers.
- Apprenticeships: maximise our use of apprenticeships for skills and professional development.



EDI focus in Learning and Development

2023 was a year where we continued to put equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into focus.

Among our new starters in 2023:



In 2023, it remained our priority to empower our colleagues and increase their understanding of best EDI practices when leading people. We launched manager-specific training to support our people with:

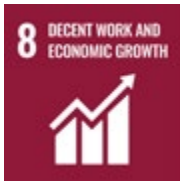
- Reasonable adjustments¹.
- Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)².
- EDI informed recruitment for managers³.

Our EDI team have also worked to promote and drive engagement with training on:

- LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- Microaggressions.
- Disability awareness.

Alongside launching new training, the L&D team focused on implementing improvements in how digital training is delivered. We have worked to improve the accessibility of our e-learning courses to ensure they are all accessible, and have removed barriers and standardised the process to ensure the courses are accessible to all. With the current 23 EDI-related training modules and our dedicated EDI team, VHG's focus on building an equal, diverse, and inclusive workforce has never been greater.

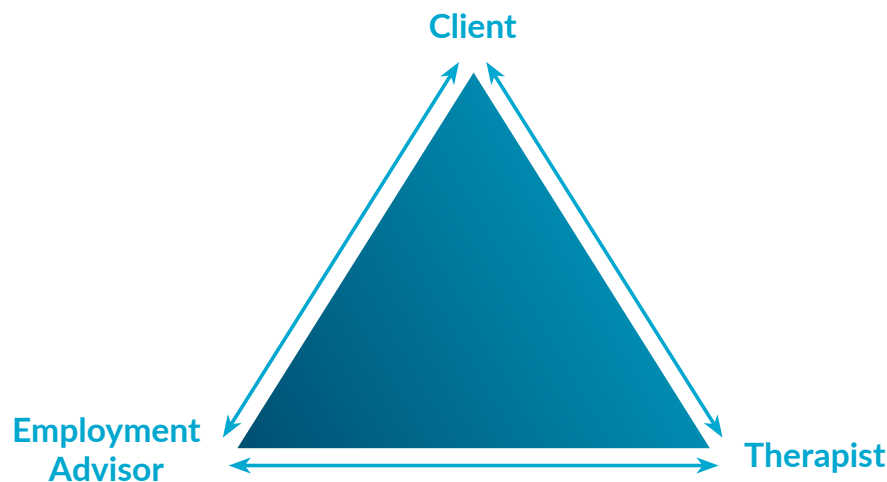
- Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.
- An EIA is an evidence-based approach designed to help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.
- Training for hiring managers or those involved in the recruitment process encapsulating the need for diverse panels, how to implement key positive action recruitment schemes such as the Disability Confident Scheme, Ethnicity Matters Scheme, Gender Matters Scheme, and more.



Employment support for our communities

In the second half of 2023, we launched a new Employment Support Service add-on to our core TTS in the BNSSG area. This supplementary service is available to all patients who go through our Talking Therapies assessment and are suitable for support. Support focuses on progression towards a patient-led goal to remain in, return to, or find work, with steps to the goals being broken down to form progressive tasks. Employment support starts people on their journey towards their goal, by increasing knowledge and confidence so the individual can manage their own situation.

Tripartite model of employment support delivery



We promote collaborative working with our therapists, with a patient-centred delivery model. The structure of the session feeds from the initial assessment and promotes fidelity to employment goals, whilst remaining conscious of TTS barriers and recovery.

The delivery of the Employment Support (ES) is led by a team of our Employment Advisors (EA) and Senior Employment Advisors (SEA). Our go-live date for the launch of the ES in BNSSG was June 2023, with the first assessments completed in July by SEAs.

This was slightly ahead of time due to waiting list building quicker than planned, as we know from previous launches that typically, new services take a long time to build up referrals and interest in a new pathway. This shows not only how much this pathway was needed within BNSSG but also confirms that engaging with therapists on multiple fronts is effective in securing ES referrals. Our engagement plan at BNSSG included:

- 🌿 Attending trainee, Step 2 and Step 3 meetings to introduce ES.
- 🌿 MS Teams channel with how-to documents and regular updates from the ES team alongside Q&A for potential referrals.
- 🌿 Senior Management Team backing and support to communicate with wider teams.
- 🌿 1-1 referring therapist communications from EAs.
- 🌿 Implementation of good news stories and case studies being showcased within BNSSG.

In the first six months of running the service at our BNSSG location, we received 854 referrals, out of which 64% of people identified as female and 27% were people from racially minoritised communities.

To date, 415 initial ES assessments have been completed by the EAs and SEAs, with a total attendance rate of 73%. What we've seen from the data to date, is that the intention of people accessing the ES is not split equally (Graph 2). The majority of the referred patients want support with finding work (55%), followed by a focus on remaining in work (35%) and finally 10% with a focus on returning to work.

Patient feedback:

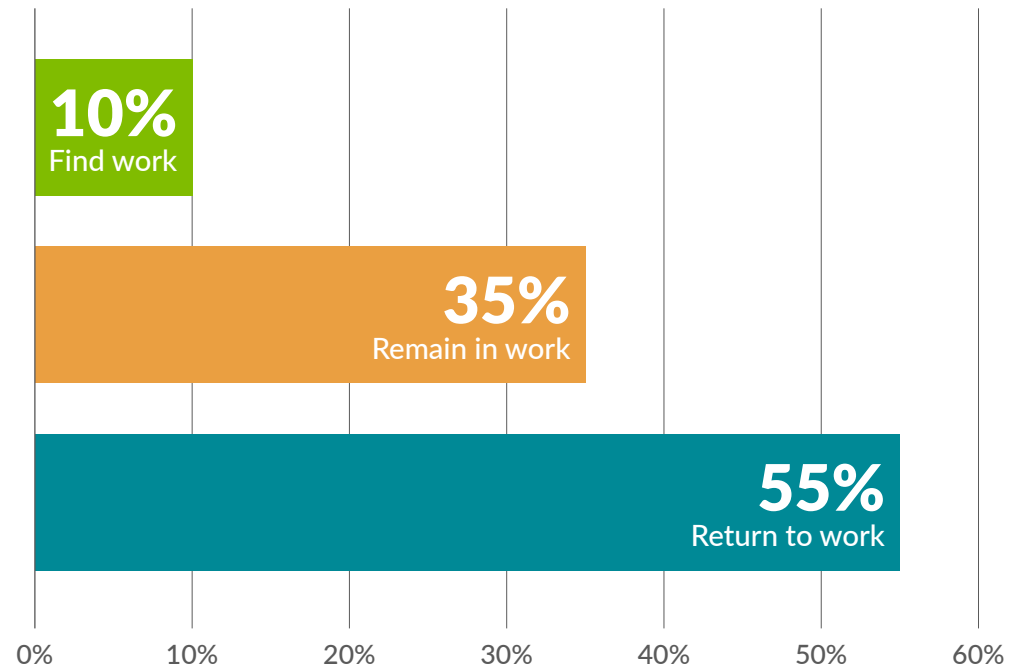
"I felt extremely supported throughout the time I spent with EA. The interview support was invaluable, and I was able to fix the mistakes I made in the past with over-answering the questions. I don't feel I would have secured my new job without that help".

ES patient

"I'm absolutely loving it [ES]. The staff are so much better than the last place. I just wanted to say a massive thank you for all your help getting back into employment."

ES patient

Graph: Demand for the Employment Support Service split by focus category



Increasing referrals to the service as a whole and improving organisational knowledge of Talking Therapies isn't something that the ES team have been targeted to achieve from the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions). However, thanks to the effective collaboration with the PLO team, the ES team has been able to further the reach of VHG within BNSSG; increasing referrals to the service and ES pathway as well as improving EA signposting knowledge. We are excited to continue this moving forward and have a team of knowledgeable networkers who believe in what VHG does as a company.

CASE STUDY: Remain in work

Background and EA Assessment:

During the initial assessment into the service, the patient reported symptoms of low mood and anxiety, for which our therapist implemented relevant treatment.

Prior to the discharge, the therapist referred the patient for ES. This allowed time for the EA and the therapist to work together with the patient to provide a personalised support package. **This dual approach was key to success, as close working with Talking Therapies colleagues ensures that patients have both their employment and their mental health needs met.** Patients are therefore having both sets of needs supported at the same time and by the same team.

What were the key issues or challenges that the EA addressed in support of the patient?

During the initial assessment with the EA, the patient reiterated that they were “in a lot better a place” thanks to therapist support and was now ready to move forward and take the next step - they had taken a part-time role to pay the bills but had fallen into a rut and now wanted a more challenging role suitable to his academic achievement. They had no structured approach to motivate themselves to seek other employment and lacked job search and interview skills.

What goals were the patient looking to achieve?

The patient's main employment goal was to gain full-time employment in a job that he felt was challenging and utilised the skills and abilities they gained at university and in the world of work. The EA agreed an initial action plan that both them and the patient felt would provide a framework, and more importantly, a clear structure to move forward, with Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound (SMART) objectives. EA informed the therapist that this was now in place to complement the discharge from the therapy planning process.

What resources were engaged to address the problem?

-  Undertake skills assessment to identify core competencies.
-  Job search support and alignment of CV to jobs being applied for.
-  Interview support and practice utilising the STAR (situation, task, action, result) approach.
-  Mock interviews using person specs and job descriptions.
-  Gaining feedback from interviews where the patient was unsuccessful.
-  Exploring the hidden job market and utilising LinkedIn.

Patient feedback:

“[My EA] Gave me a sense of direction by setting me achievable targets and was always positive, upbeat, and encouraging throughout. EA knowledge of the interview process of local authorities was particularly helpful, I was very nervous about interviews before, but my EA gave me confidence by working with me on a targeted interview preparation routine. My EA was brilliant throughout and I am very grateful for all the help that they gave me. I went from having no direction to having a new job with a local authority with lots of room to grow.”

ES patient



4. Better Operations

VHG has a dedicated EDI team as part of the EDI and Sustainability department. The team is a collection of passionate individuals holding responsibility for key policies and initiatives such as Reasonable Adjustments, Access to Work, Freedom to Speak Up, and more. The team also undertakes key NHS auditing processes such as the Equality Delivery System (EDS), Workplace Race Equality Standard (WRES) and Workplace Disability Equality Standard (WDES). At VHG, we pride ourselves on being dedicated to working in an inclusive manner and supporting our people with bringing their whole selves to work.

Several EDI team members are network chairs, and the team works closely with the employee networks to support the experience of colleagues with protected characteristics throughout the organisation. Our available colleague networks are:

-  Diverse-Ability Network.
-  Race Equality Network.
-  WITA (Women at Vita) Network.
-  Carers Network.
-  LGBTQIA+ Network.
-  Faith Network.

VHG also has a working group dedicated to take forward issues on EDI, in which the EDI team plays a role of sounding board and advocates. Our colleagues can join the conversation, raise questions, share resources, and challenge for better.

Key findings from the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES)

Each year, VHG completes its annual WRES report. The WRES is a key tool for analysing ethnicity in the workforce, its key purpose is to ensure that racially minoritised colleagues have equal access to career opportunities and receive fair treatment in the workplace. Some of the key findings from our most recent WRES report include:

-  In 2022, 17.3% of our workforce were from a racially minoritised background, in comparison to 77.2% white colleagues within the organisation.
-  Although this is in line with the wider England and Wales population mix, we are behind NHS trusts who averaged greater levels of ethnic diversity at 24.2% in 2022.
-  Nonetheless, the percentage of colleagues from racially minoritised communities has increased since 2021 which was 15.8%.
-  We acknowledge this indicates a positive trend, however, recognise that improvements are still needed to increase the diversity of our workforce.

The report also identified that there is an underrepresentation of racially minoritised colleagues in clinical and non-clinical senior and very senior management roles, which extends to board-level representation. We are committed to addressing these inequalities via our Ethnicity Matters Scheme and various other inclusive recruitment practices which are outlined in the next section.

Inclusive recruitment practices

The organisation continues to recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining a diverse workforce, to ensure we are representative of the populations we serve. We, do however, recognise that certain populations face significant barriers to accessing work. Due to this, we have continued supporting several positive action schemes to reduce these barriers. These include:

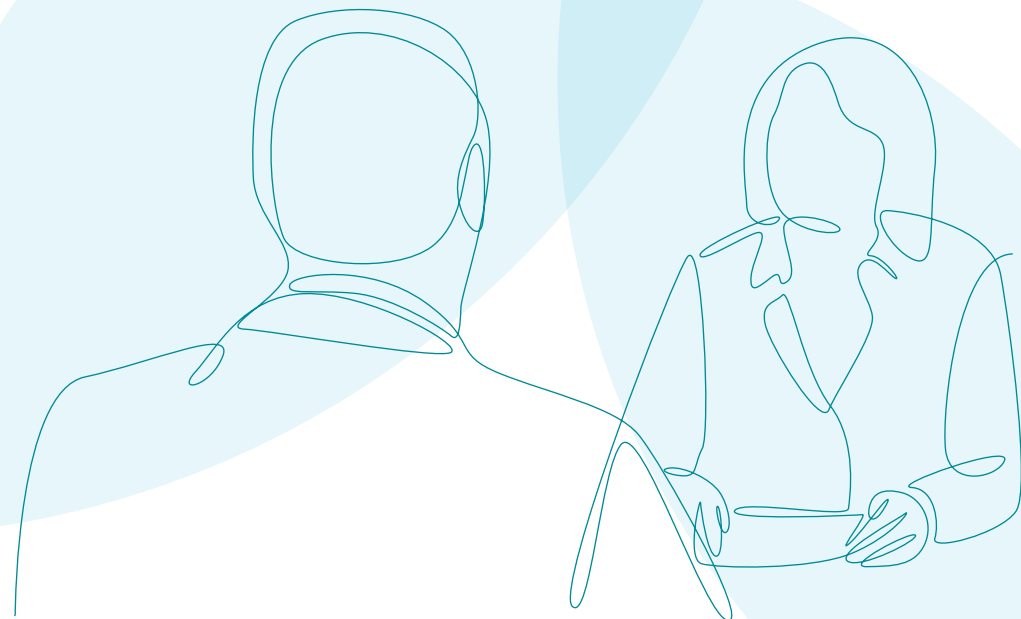
- Armed Forces Covenant Scheme.
- Disability Confident Interview Scheme.
- Ethnicity Matters Scheme.
- Gender Matters Scheme.

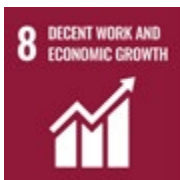
These schemes aim to ensure that individuals with certain protected characteristics including gender, ethnicity and race, and disability, as well as individuals who have served in the armed forces, are given a fair chance when applying for roles within the company.

We recognise that individuals with certain protected characteristics may face disadvantages, additional barriers and inequalities when applying for roles and we acknowledge that we have a responsibility to look at ways in which we can minimise and mitigate the inequalities that protected communities face.

We also have several other interventions in place to maximise the fairness of our recruitment practices. These include:

- Anonymised application process.
- Diverse interview panels.
- Manager training on EDI-informed recruitment.
- EDI informed recruitment and selection policy.
- Access to diverse vacancy hosting boards.
- Internal auditing of recruitment process compliance.
- External EDI commitments.





Spotlight on disability

Key findings from the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)

Like the WRES, the WDES is completed annually and is a tool designed by the NHS for analysing disability in the workforce. Its specific purpose is to evaluate whether colleagues with a disability, long-term health condition or neurodiversity have equal access to career opportunities as well as fair treatment in the workplace.

Some of the key findings from our most recent WDES report include:

-  In 2022, 10.2% of VHG's workforce identified as having a disability, whilst 84% of colleagues identified to be non-disabled. This indicates that there has been a slight increase in disabled colleagues since 2021, which was recorded as 9.1% disabled colleagues vs 88.2% non-disabled. However, the data shows us that there is an underrepresentation of disabled colleagues at all levels.
-  The report also highlighted that 136 out of the 144 (94.4%) of colleagues who had requested a reasonable adjustment had their support or reasonable adjustment provided. This highlights the improvements that VHG has made to its reasonable adjustment process, which is in place to support disabled colleagues with any reasonable adjustments they may require to fulfil the duties within their work roles.



For further information on the WRES and WDES report findings, including all the data, you can find a link to the reports here:

[WRES Report](#)
[WDES Report](#)

Over 2023, VHG has continued to build on its existing work to embed EDI into everything we do. Disability awareness and inclusion have been a continued area of focus in 2023, with several initiatives carried out to improve the experience of our disabled colleagues and reduce the barriers they face in accessing opportunities.

This work includes several actions that followed from the findings of our last WDES data, where certain areas of experiential inequality were identified.

Activities completed to address this included, but aren't limited to:

-  Ongoing promotion of our positive action schemes to reduce barriers disabled job applicants might face.
-  Expansion of our range of colleague and manager-accessible disability-related internal resources.
-  A review and update of our reasonable adjustment policy and training for managers.
-  Inclusion of EDI (inc. disability) related subject matters in manager training programmes and internal training campaigns on the issue of microaggressions.
-  A Code of Conduct Policy was also launched to better articulate expectations around behaviour for all colleagues.
-  Raising awareness around disability declarations and the value of the organisation holding this information to support improvement. Progress in this area was highlighted by our promotion to Disability Confident Leader status in our most recent independent validation.

Progress in this area was highlighted by our promotion to Disability Confident Leader status in our most recent independent validation.

"Throughout the accreditation process, we were immensely impressed by Vita Health Group's dedication to fostering an inclusive workplace. Their approach was not only comprehensive but also notably thorough. The attention to detail demonstrated was evident in the meticulous documentation, evidence, and narratives presented."

Vita Health Group's achievement of the Disability Confident Leader (Level III) accreditation is not just a recognition of compliance but speaks of their proactive initiatives and continuous efforts to go above and beyond in creating a workplace that champions diversity and inclusion."

Mark Woodward, Head of Occupational Delivery, Neurobox





Health and wellbeing of our people

At VHG, we recognise the importance of developing a health and wellbeing strategy and action plan which underpins our values and focuses on helping every individual in the organisation to be their best. In 2023, we developed a plan which aims to:

- 🌱 Prioritise health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- 🌱 Promote an open culture around mental health.
- 🌱 Ensure work design and culture drives positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 🌱 Increase organisational confidence and capability in managing mental health and wellbeing.



Work on our health and wellbeing agenda has picked up pace over the second half of 2023, and we are focused on delivering a comprehensive action plan in 2024.

The preparation for this has been underpinned by engagement with colleagues across the organisation, to ensure we can capture as much information as possible to inform our health and wellbeing actions. Supporting and tapping into existing wellbeing champions has also helped generate ideas on how to support the wider business both centrally and locally. A 12-month calendar of events has been launched, which will see a mix of activities and awareness-raising campaigns. These will include:

- 🌱 Guest speakers.
- 🌱 Competitions.
- 🌱 'Lunch and Learn' education sessions.
- 🌱 Monthly listening groups as part of our 'Talk to Us' campaign.
- 🌱 Wellbeing support.
- 🌱 Induction training for new starters.
- 🌱 Weekly mindfulness sessions.

Our "Wellbeing Hub" has also been revamped and contains a host of resources for colleagues to explore including a newly designed wellbeing action plan, access to Vita podcasts, details on our EAP and digital wellbeing resources.

This work follows a significant investment in resources in this space, including the establishment of a new health and wellbeing manager and health and wellbeing practitioner role.

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