

Impact Report

2024



**BETTER
OPERATIONS**



**BETTER
OPPORTUNITIES**



**BETTER
COMMUNITIES**



**BETTER
PLANET**



vita
health group
Part of Spire Healthcare

About Vita Health Group

Vita Health Group (VHG), part of Spire Healthcare, is a leading private 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.

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**Ishmael Beckford**

EDI and Sustainability Director

Foreword

Thank you for your interest in reading about our sustainability and social value journey at VHG.

As an organisation, we are committed to making sustainability a fundamental principle that guides our decisions and actions. We achieve this through our strategic commitment to delivering social value.

Our mission of making people better can only be achieved by embracing and understanding our responsibility. This includes creating a lasting, positive impact on the communities we serve, the environment we depend on, and the workforce that turns our vision into a reality.

This Impact Report follows on from last year's inaugural publication and reflects the effort that has gone into progressing these commitments over the last 12 months.

The data shared throughout the report is calculated using the National TOMs Framework and has been validated by the Social Value Portal®. We are proud of the quantifiable impact we have achieved over the year but recognise there is still more to do to build on our progress.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the delivery of the activities outlined in this report – this has been a huge collective effort.

We invite you to explore this report and hope you find value in better understanding the work we do at VHG.

The report outlines our four strategic pillars:



Year at a glance



BETTER
OPERATIONS



BETTER
COMMUNITIES



BETTER
OPPORTUNITIES



BETTER
PLANET

Validated by



**Social Value
Portal**

211 local
people employed

50 FTE unemployed
individuals with disabilities recruited

398 weeks of
apprenticeships

12,814 hours
dedicated to providing personalised support
to improve career and life skills

TOTAL OF
£14,204,106
SOCIAL VALUE
DELIVERED

383 hours
of expert EDI
training delivered

66 weeks of
training opportunities
provided to employees

80 hours
of expert support to
VCSEs and SMEs

£83,209
spend with VCSE

2,215 employees
provided with access to multidimensional
wellbeing programme

£105,919
spend with local SMEs in the supply chain

£169,775 invested
into initiatives to promote
more resilient communities

21 hours
of educational sessions
to students delivered

3,917 hours
dedicated to support for community health
or wellbeing interventions

405 hours
of volunteering delivered

The data above and throughout the report is calculated using the National TOMs Framework and validated by the Social Value Portal®.

Social Value – The Journey of Good Business

Social value is the social, economic, and environmental contribution we make to the communities in which we work above and beyond the services we're contracted to deliver.

We're now entering the second year of our Social Value journey – driven by the ultimate goal to become the Social Value Leader in Healthcare by 2026. In January 2024, we kicked off our Social Value journey by:

- ✿ Establishing a partnership with Social Value Portal®, offering external consultancy; a digital platform to centralise and analyse all our social value data; and conduct independent audits of our social value data for accuracy and transparency.
- ✿ Creating a Social Value Working Group with representatives across VHG.
- ✿ Participating in a full-day workshop run by Social Value Portal to lay the foundations for our Social Value Strategy.
- ✿ Hiring a dedicated Social Value Coordinator.

Since then, we've advanced forward at pace to embed, grow, and mature our Social Value impact.



Significant developments and achievements from the last year include:

- ✿ **Launching our Social Value Strategy:** Following from early planning and development in 2023, we finalised and officially launched our Social Value Strategy; offering clear direction for our focus, goals, and activities across a three-year period.
- ✿ **Onboarding Social Value Champions:** 16 team members across VHG have volunteered to be Social Value Champions, dedicating time to essential social value data collection, reporting, and governance. Our champions play a crucial role in driving our target-driven social value approach forward.
- ✿ **Launching Sustainability and Social Value Training:** We developed a mandatory training module providing a fundamental understanding of sustainability and social value, as well as VHG's approach to delivering impact beyond profit. Since its launch in September 2024, we achieved a completion rate of 85% by year-end with a trajectory to exceed 90% by Jan 2025.
- ✿ **Increasing employee volunteering initiative uptake:** Employee volunteering commitment increased from 233 hours to 405 hours 2023-24, reflecting increased dialogue and engagement with social value.
- ✿ **Becoming a finalist for “Social Value Initiative of the Year” at the HSJ Partnership Awards 2024:** Our recognition as a finalist illustrates that our effort and impact is generating value. A great success since launching our official Social Value journey less than a year ago.
- ✿ **Collating and validating Social Value data:** We gathered tangible, reportable information on the great work we do across VHG services, and had it externally validated*. Our commitment to supporting people, communities, and the planet is evident in the £14,204,106 of social value activity delivered across our existing services in 2024.

*Data validation refers to the creation, delivery and generation of social value impact that has been officially audited and validated by the Social Value Portal. This ensures accuracy, adherence to best practices, and a true reflection of the value generated for people, communities, and the environment.

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 de-carbonisation



BETTER COMMUNITIES

Promoting resilient, healthy populations

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



BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting people to reach their potential

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



BETTER OPERATIONS

Delivering a generative operating model

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

Lessons Learned and Looking Forward to the Future

Alongside great achievements, rapid and ambitious change has inevitably brought challenges. As we progress on this journey, we continue to learn, adapt and grow toward success.

Some of the challenges, lessons learned, and focus areas for the future include:

- Expanding roles and responsibilities:** Our Social Value Strategy has resulted in the need for new practices, roles, and responsibilities throughout the organisation. These have been implemented and are continually being reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Identifying disparities in Social Value delivery logistics:** We've identified disparities between the NHS services which have a strong, on-the-ground presence, and digitally oriented corporate services. This means our NHS services are better equipped to deliver social value to the local communities we work in, as opposed to our corporate services being limited in their range of influence, having to deliver social value online. We are working with Social Value Portal to develop a consistent, workable approach for delivering and recording social value across our remote corporate contracts.
- Becoming a Social Value Leader in Healthcare by 2026:** Our ultimate goal is to become a Social Value Leader. As we move beyond embedding the core principles of social value, we aim to use the coming year to establish greater clarity on what leadership looks like and the actions required to get there. Social Value Portal will be providing its expert consultancy to workshop this further, starting in early 2025.

In our last Impact Report, we pledged to make our ambitions bigger and bolder each year, and we believe the significant progress made over the past 12-months reflects that commitment. The progress we've made is a testament to the values of our people, who are committed to helping others. Our appetite for big, bold, ambitious social value change remains, and we're excited to see what we'll achieve together over the next year.

1. Better Operations

Driving Positive Change

At VHG, our commitment to sustainability and social value is at the heart of everything we do. We believe in the power of business to drive positive change, and our efforts extend beyond compliance to deliver tangible benefits to our people, communities, and the planet. This is reflected in our daily operations as we implement a generative operating model – working closely with the third sector as key partners, fostering diversity in the workplace, prioritising employee wellbeing, and maintaining a responsible supply chain. This holistic approach not only enhances our service delivery but also reinforces our commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.



Notable achievements in 2024 include

- Delivering expert Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) training, valued at **£59,604** social value.
- Rolling out multidimensional wellbeing programme access for employees worth **£305,250** of social value.
- Providing mental health awareness campaigns for employees, equating to **£7,140** of social value.
- Spending with local SMEs in the supply chain, totalling **£105,919** of social value delivered.
- Providing 80 hours of expert support to Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) and small to medium enterprises (SMEs), generating **£8,560** in social value.
- Spending with VCSEs in the supply chain, delivering **£83,209.10** in social value.

Our commitment to sustainability and social value is visible not just as a policy, but as a practice deeply embedded in our operations. In the next section we will explore these highlights in greater detail, showcasing how each initiative contributes to our overarching mission of **making people better**, and delivering positive impact on our people, communities, and planet.

Championing Equity: Our Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

At VHG, EDI is a cornerstone of our organisational ethos. We recognise the importance of fostering an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Our dedication to EDI at VHG is demonstrated with continuous upskilling, progressive leadership, inclusive practices, and zero tolerance of discrimination through our Freedom to Speak Up function. This dedication is one of our key company priorities, ensuring that we not only meet but exceed the expectations of our diverse workforce and service users.

Leadership and Expertise

Our EDI initiatives are spearheaded by our EDI & Sustainability Director and are delivered by a dedicated team of EDI practitioners. This team is instrumental in delivering a comprehensive range of training sessions, reports, engagement events, and expert support throughout the year. Their efforts ensure that EDI principles are embedded in every aspect of our operations.

VHG is committed to the development of all colleagues. By investing in EDI training for all colleagues, VHG is actively improving the competency of the workforce, ultimately contributing to better outcomes for patients, customers, and service users.



EDI training in numbers

- 🌱 **£59,604** social value generated through the delivery of expert EDI training in 2024.
- 🌱 **1,081** colleagues took part in some form of EDI training in 2024.
- 🌱 **1,587** hours of EDI training were completed by VHG colleagues.

Example of trainings delivered were:

Training Delivered	Number of Colleagues
Micro aggressions Webinar & Training	259
Equality & Health Inequality Impact Assessment Training	249
EDI Informed Recruitment	190
LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Training	143
Disability Awareness Training	141

Inclusive Practices

We strive to create an inclusive working environment with fair policies and practices, ensuring that everyone feels they belong and can perform to their full potential, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances. We have maintained our core inclusive practices including our range of colleague networks and recruitment positive action schemes. In addition to this we stand in solidarity against all forms of violence, abuse, and discrimination maintaining our zero-tolerance approach to such behaviours.

Case Study National Inclusion Week®: Driving Impact Through Inclusion

Introduction

National Inclusion Week® (NIW), founded by Inclusive Employers in 2013, is an annual event dedicated to celebrating inclusion and fostering inclusive workplaces. Each year, Inclusive Employers select a theme and provide toolkits and resources to help organisations prepare for the week. In 2024, VHG actively participated in NIW, led by the EDI & sustainability team, under the theme #ImpactMatters. This case study highlights the significant activities and outcomes of our participation, focusing on the panel discussion and our people networks.

Panel Discussion: Catalysing Conversations for Change

A key highlight of our NIW activities was a pre-recorded panel discussion featuring members of the EDI & sustainability team. The panel addressed various questions on inclusion and shared personal experiences which sparked thought provoking and meaningful conversations within the organisation. This discussion was instrumental in promoting awareness and driving change and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from colleagues. The panel's candid discussion highlighted the crucial role of lived experiences in understanding and addressing inclusion challenges.

Promoting Education and Awareness

Throughout the week, we emphasised the importance of education and awareness on EDI-related topics. The EDI team designed and delivered training sessions on micro aggressions, anti-racism, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and disability awareness. These sessions, available both pre-recorded and live, have equipped our workforce with the knowledge and tools to foster a more inclusive workplace environment.

"I have just watched and listened to this [panel discussion] and as a more mature gay person it was lovely to hear such positive words from all of the 4 of you. Thank you for being so open and honest with your Q&A's. I could see the passion coming from you all and like myself, I feel very privileged to have worked in this field for the past 34 years and seen the changes that are being implemented."

VHG employee feedback

Empowering Through People Networks

Our people networks played a crucial role during NIW, serving as a platform for support and advocacy. These networks provide safe spaces for discussion and help address issues faced by under-represented and disadvantaged groups within our organisation.

Conclusion

National Inclusion Week® 2024 was a testament to VHG's commitment to inclusion and diversity. Through impactful activities such as the panel discussion and the promotion of people networks, we not only celebrated our achievements but also identified areas for future improvement.



Driving Impact Through Inclusion

Continuous Improvement

We are committed to challenging all forms of discrimination and reducing inequalities in access and experience. Through initiatives such as the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) and the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES), we collect, analyse, and publish data to develop targeted action plans that drive continuous improvement in equality year-on-year.

Key findings from the 2023/24 WRES:

- The proportion of ethnically diverse employees grew from 17.3% (2022/23) to **18.7%**.
- Reports of discrimination among ethnically diverse employees dropped from 8.1% (2022/23) to **5.3%**.
- Incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse from employees declined from 4.4% (2022/23) to **2.7%**.
- Confidence in equal career opportunities rose from 72.5% (2022/23) to **86.7%**.

The key purpose of the WRES is to identify and address inequalities experienced by ethnically diverse employees. By addressing areas of disparity, the WRES also helps to ensure that ethnically diverse employees have equal access to career opportunities and receive fair treatment in the workplace. These findings reflect our progress and ongoing commitment to addressing disparities and fostering an inclusive workplace.

Key findings from the 2023/24 WDES:

- More employees reported a disability, rising from 10% (2022/23) to **18%**.
- Representation of disabled employees grew in all pay bands.
- Confidence in equal career opportunities improved, increasing from 71% (2022/23) to **89%**.

The main purpose of WDES is to evaluate whether employees with a disability have equal access to career opportunities and are treated fairly in the workplace. Although there are still aspects of inequality that need to be addressed, these findings highlight the significant progress we have made across various areas.

Our work around the WRES and WDES links with VHG's Sustainability and Social Value Strategy, focusing on better opportunities for employees, and promoting diversity and employee wellbeing.

If you would like to learn more or access the WRES and WDES reports, visit these links:

**WRES 2023/24
Report**

**WDES 2023/24
Report**

Speaking Up

As a company, we want to know when things go well – and, more importantly, when they go wrong. This allows us to share best practice, learn from challenges and seize opportunities to improve the experience for colleagues, service users and customers.

Our Freedom to Speak Up function fosters a culture of openness, honesty, and transparency, encouraging employees to raise concerns without fear. At VHG, this is reflected in leaders handling issues with sensitivity and confidentiality, sharing lessons learned, and taking corrective action.

In 2024, we made significant strides to enhance our Freedom to Speak Up function. We did this by:

- 🌱 Appointing a Lead Guardian.
- 🌱 Introducing an annual Speaking Up survey to identify improvement areas.
- 🌱 Expanding our team of guardians to seven.
- 🌱 Promoting the Speaking Up function through outreach campaigns.
- 🌱 Mandating Freedom to Speak Up training to ensure colleagues at all levels understand the importance of speaking up.



Kirsty Keir, Lead Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

One employee shared their story of having a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian:

"I had a very positive experience. I felt listened to and that my concerns were taken seriously. Everything was handled sensitively. I was not sure whether this process would really make any difference and was just a tick box exercise, but I felt that it was really worthwhile raising my concerns and that this will make a positive difference and change to policy and practice."

Colleague

Our plans for 2025 include:

- 🌱 The implementation of a Guardian NGO self-development tool to ensure our guardians are confident in handling concerns of varying complexity.
- 🌱 Supporting the implementation of Freedom to Speak Up - a reflection and planning tool: This tool will be used to identify any areas of weakness within our Speaking Up culture and will allow us to define a clear strategy to improve speaking up and speaking out throughout VHG.

Through these efforts, VHG champions EDI, fostering a culture of awareness, acceptance, respect, and understanding. We are proud of the progress we have made and remain dedicated to advancing our EDI goals in the years to come.

Wellbeing in Action: Fostering a Healthier Workplace at VHG

The Health and Wellbeing team at VHG is dedicated to fostering a supportive and healthy work environment. Over the past 12 months, we have implemented a comprehensive action plan aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of our colleagues. These efforts are part of our broader commitment to creating a workplace where everyone can thrive. Here are some of the highlights from our 2024 initiatives.

Promoting Open Dialogue

One of our most impactful initiatives this year has been fostering open dialogue through various forums. By creating safe, structured environments across six of our service areas, we have enabled colleagues to share their thoughts and experiences freely. Approximately 55 small group or one-to-one listening sessions were held, resulting in valuable qualitative feedback that was shared with respective managers. This initiative has been transformative, breaking down hierarchical barriers and promoting open, transparent communication. Colleagues reported that being listened to attentively, without judgement or interruption, significantly enhanced their ability to communicate effectively. They felt empowered to voice their concerns and ideas, fostering a more open-minded approach to influencing change.

Mental Health Advocates

This initiative supports a compassionate corporate culture in what, at times, can be a fast-paced and high-stress work environment. Early interventions by mental health advocates have helped employees remain productive, engaged, helping them to navigate transitions more smoothly with resilience and adaptability. This year, 17 additional advocates completed accredited in-house training, and efforts are underway to firmly establish their presence and capacity within the organisation. This initiative has provided employees with the support they need to navigate challenges with resilience and adaptability.

Mindfulness Sessions

Recognising the positive effects of mindfulness on mental health, productivity, emotional wellbeing, and overall quality of life, we committed to facilitating a virtual mindfulness space every Thursday. Each of the 50 sessions delivered a different mindfulness exercise, helping colleagues manage workload pressures and enhance team dynamics. Some clinical colleagues have since introduced mindfulness practices to their clients, further extending the benefits of this initiative. The feedback has been positive, with many colleagues reporting improved focus, reduced stress, and a greater sense of wellbeing.

Health and Wellbeing Webinars

Throughout the year, we organised various health and wellbeing themed webinars, covering topics from menopause to pain management. Some of the most popular events were delivered by We Care, which introduced its new app My Strength making personalised emotional wellness support available to all colleagues. The We Care team also delivered an in-depth discussion with a qualified nutritionist on the impact of eating habits. These webinars provided valuable information and resources, contributing to the overall wellbeing of our colleagues. The engagement and feedback from these sessions has been exceptional, highlighting the importance of providing accessible and relevant health information.

Looking Ahead

Our commitment to promoting health and wellbeing remains strong, and we look forward to continuing to support our colleagues in becoming their best selves, both personally and professionally. With new initiatives and expanded programmes, we aim to make an even greater impact on the health and wellbeing of our workforce in 2025.

Case Study Embrace Your Menopause: Our Commitment to Women's Health

The Problem

Women over 50 are the fastest-growing segment of the UK workforce, yet many face inadequate support during menopause. This often leads to reduced working hours, missed promotions, or even job resignations. Such outcomes not only affect individual wellbeing, but also limit the potential of businesses and the wider economy. We recognise the significant impact menopause can have on our employees. With 70% of our workforce being women, it's crucial we can ensure that our female employees thrive both professionally and personally.

Our Solution

To support women experiencing menopause, VHG implemented a comprehensive menopause support programme. As part of the initiative, we established a menopause policy and toolkit, and a pilot emotional support programme. The pilot programme, which began in April 2024, was designed to help employees manage the emotional and practical challenges of menopause. It consisted of six weekly sessions, each lasting two hours, and was based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The course covered psychoeducation, management strategies, and peer support, and was delivered by a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner and a CBT Therapist.

The Team Behind the Initiative

This impactful initiative was developed by a dedicated team at VHG, including members from our Talking Therapies Clinical team, EDI team, the Health and Wellbeing team, and Human Resources (HR). Their combined efforts and passion for employee wellbeing were instrumental in the success of the initiative.

"We wanted to create a programme that truly made a difference in our colleagues' lives, helping them feel supported and empowered during a challenging time."



Case Study Embrace Your Menopause: Our Commitment to Women's Health

The Impact

The pilot programme received a positive response, with 135 employees expressing interest in the programme through an initial survey, highlighting the widespread need for such support. The pilot cohort ran with 30 employees participating and with more on a waiting list for 2025.

The course outcomes have been highly positive:

- Increased confidence: Participants reported a 100% improvement in their confidence in managing menopause symptoms.
- Enhanced knowledge: Knowledge about menopause improved from an average of five out of 10 to nine out of 10, signalling an 80% increase.
- High recommendation rate: 90% of participants would recommend the course to other colleagues.

Feedback from participants underscored the programme's value and the company's commitment to employee wellbeing.

Participants appreciated the inclusive and supportive environment, the practical tools provided, and the opportunity to connect with others experiencing similar challenges.

"I'm really grateful for this opportunity and love the fact that we are able to tap into this valuable resource as employees."

"This is a brilliant idea and really shows how employers care about the wellbeing of our staff."

"It has been eye-opening and the group sessions have been great. Learning from each other, knowing we're not alone, and being able to cope with the feelings that menopause is not a stigma, it is natural, it is unavoidable but very much manageable."

Next Steps

Building on the success of the pilot, VHG plans to expand the programme and make it a permanent offering. Monthly drop-in sessions will be implemented to provide ongoing support and information on specific topics. Additionally, VHG aims to establish menopause cafés and consider the introduction of menopause champions to foster a supportive community. By continuing to adapt to the needs of our employees and striving for menopause accreditation, we aim to create a more inclusive and thriving workplace.

Overall, the Embrace Your Menopause initiative has demonstrated a significant positive impact on employee wellbeing and confidence. By offering comprehensive support and fostering an inclusive environment, we are committed to helping our colleagues navigate menopause with confidence and continue to thrive both professionally and personally. Most importantly, we strive to ensure that no one experiencing menopause symptoms is at a disadvantage.

Working with the Third Sector as Key Partners

At VHG, central to our social value strategy is the collaboration with VCSEs. These partnerships are pivotal in driving our mission to generate positive impact within the communities we serve.

Our strategy outlines a comprehensive framework for engaging with VCSEs, emphasising the importance of co-production, capacity building, and sustainable partnerships. Through initiatives such as the Digital Inclusion Initiative in Essex, the Domestic Violence Advice Forum in Bristol, and the Older Adult Fair in Calderdale, and other community- supported awareness campaigns across the UK, we demonstrate the tangible benefits of these collaborations.



Impact Areas

Incorporating partnerships with VCSEs in our service delivery, allows us to address critical community needs and enhance overall wellbeing. Below, we highlight the key areas where our partnerships have made a substantial impact:

1. COMMUNITY WELLBEING

- Health promotion and prevention:** Through initiatives such as perinatal support meetings and networks, we can provide mental health support within the communities we serve.
- Wellbeing education programmes:** We deliver targeted health education sessions in schools and community centres, focusing on mental health, physical wellbeing, and preventive care. These programmes empower individuals with knowledge and tools to manage their health proactively.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

- Supporting vulnerable groups:** Our partnerships with VCSEs enable us to reach and support vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and those experiencing social isolation. Through initiatives such as Older Adult Listening Groups, PCREF (Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework) events, drop-in sessions, and peer support groups, we foster social inclusion and provide essential support networks.
- Employment and skills development:** We collaborate with VCSEs to offer employment support. Our main goal is to establish strong partnerships between the NHS Talking Therapies Services' (TTS) Employment Advisors (EAs), and local Job centre Plus, Disability Employment Advisers, and Work Coaches to coordinate support, promote access to mental health and employment resources, and support local communities to voluntarily engage with NHS Talking TTS.



3. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Community-led environmental projects: By supporting local environmental projects, we help communities develop and implement sustainable solutions that address local environmental challenges. These projects often involve community volunteers and foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the environment.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supporting local economies: Our procurement practices prioritise local suppliers and VCSEs, ensuring that our spending supports local economies. This approach not only strengthens local businesses but also creates job opportunities and stimulates economic growth.

Building capacity for VCSEs: We provide expert support and resources to help VCSEs enhance their operational capacity and sustainability. This includes training in areas such as mental health advocacy and social value, supporting these organisations to make people better.

By focusing on these impact areas, we demonstrate how our strategic partnerships with VCSEs contribute to our mission of making people better and creating lasting positive change in the communities we serve.

Responsible Supply Chains: A Commitment to Sustainability

In today's world, responsible supply chains are more crucial than ever. They ensure ethical practices, sustainability, and efficiency, which are vital for any forward-thinking organisation. At VHG, we're dedicated to upholding these principles, and our latest initiative is a testament to this commitment.

VHG's New Purchase Order System

VHG has embedded an improved Purchase Order (PO) system, marking a major leap forward in our purchasing processes.

Our new PO system automates and streamlines the entire purchasing process, from onboarding suppliers and placing orders via internal catalogues, to goods receipt and invoice matching. This automation reduces errors, and boosts data accuracy and reporting capabilities. It also features a controlled, automated approval workflow to ensure compliance and accountability.

Advantages and Impact:

- Improved accuracy and control.
- Strengthened supplier relationships.
- Enhanced compliance and standardisation.
- Supporting sustainability practices.
- Robust modern slavery checks.

We're thrilled about the positive impact this new system will have on our organisation, both in terms of operational efficiency and sustainable transparency. Together, we're building a future where responsible supply chains are the norm, not the exception.



2. Better Communities

Building Resilience and Reducing Health Inequalities

This pillar of our strategy is dedicated to the work we undertake to support communities in building resilience to reduce health inequalities. VHG achieves this through various initiatives that create a positive impact, complementing our core business of providing people with access to talking therapies. At the heart of this approach is our team of Partnership Liaison Officers (PLOs), who deliver the lifestyle programme, Healthy Living Healthy Minds (HLHM).

PLOs work across all our NHS TTs, ensuring the communities in each of the nationwide services are aware of the services available to them. They develop partnerships with key charities and other VCSEs, organise events, educate medical professionals on the benefits of talking therapy, and play a key role in engaging with communities, especially those facing barriers or health inequalities.



In 2024, we delivered a positive impact for the communities in which we work:

- 3,917 combined hours of activity were delivered by our PLOs and through the HLHM programme, generating a total of £639,003 in social value for the communities we serve.
- 169 hours of digital literacy training were delivered to support communities, generating £2,954 social value.

Our bespoke lifestyle programme HLHM, is centred around providing support with physical activity, healthy eating, and improving lifestyle habits. Delivered by our team of Health and Wellbeing Coaches, participants can choose to attend group webinars with a focus on physical activity, nutrition, healthy lifestyle habits and motivation, and can also take part in our exercise classes which are currently delivered online (we are progressing with the set-up of in-person sessions).



Healthy Living Healthy Minds: Transforming Wellbeing Through Personalised Support

Introduction to HLHM

HLHM is our innovative lifestyle programme designed to support individuals in making positive changes for better physical and mental health. Delivered in conjunction with our TTSs, HLHM provides a comprehensive approach to wellbeing through a combination of one-to-one support and group activities. By empowering individuals to take control of their health and wellbeing, HLHM contributes to our overarching goal of creating Better Communities.

Programme Expansion

In 2024, we proudly expanded the HLHM initiative into our NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire TTS and NHS Kent & Medway TTS. This expansion allows us to reach more individuals in need of support and underscores our commitment to improving mental health and wellbeing across different regions.

Upskilling Our Team

We have invested in upskilling our team by funding further qualifications that allow us to tailor physical activity advice to a specific list of long-term health conditions. Additionally, we delivered training to therapists to empower them to have more progressive conversations about overcoming barriers to becoming more active.

Future Plans

Looking ahead to 2025, we plan to increase our face-to-face exercise sessions in all regions, including the launch of Walk and Talk sessions. These sessions will provide a unique opportunity for patients to engage in physical activity while receiving support in a natural and relaxed environment. We also aim to increase referrals and expand the programme to reach even more individuals in need of support. By continuously evolving and expanding our initiatives, we strive to make a lasting impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our communities.

Impact and Feedback

“Very experienced help which has probably saved my life, as I felt before the therapy that I was on my own and couldn’t cope, but with support I got from your team helped me immensely, which is hard to put in words how grateful I am, thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

“[HLHM] Has been a life changer and saver. Can’t praise this service enough. Thank you so much for your support, encouragement, sense of humour and compassion”

Patient

The HLHM initiative has made significant strides in 2024, expanding its reach and enhancing its offerings to better serve our patient population. Through personalised support, advanced training for our team, and inclusive programme options, we continue to make a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our communities.

Empowering Communities Through Building Resilience

The importance of mental health and wellbeing cannot be overstated. Our PLO team is at the forefront of our mission to engage with communities, build their resilience, and work towards reducing health inequalities. By fostering strong connections and providing essential support, we aim to empower individuals and communities to thrive despite the challenges they face. Our initiatives span various regions and focus on diverse groups, ensuring that everyone has access to the resources and support they need.

School and University Engagement

- Youth Leadership Programme:** In collaboration with Wigston College, we co-produced and developed a youth leadership programme, including drop-in sessions to engage with young adults and understand their perceptions of mental health.
- Student Mental Health Ambassador Course Production:** We created a new six-week course in partnership with Wigston College, involving direct feedback from students to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Perinatal Support

- Antenatal parent mental health animated film workshop:** We provided expertise on the content of a series of animated films focusing on the wellbeing of parents, ensuring the inclusion of mental health support for both mothers and fathers.
- Multidisciplinary team meetings for perinatal pathway:** Our clinical team worked with perinatal organisations to raise awareness of our TTSs and improve pathways for patients, aiming to increase referrals and enhance the patient journey.
- Family Hub opening:** The PLO provided support for the new Family Hub opening across the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR) area and attended an event to inform all new providers on the mental health support offered by VHG, as well as the perinatal pathway we have for mothers and fathers.





Community and General Outreach

- 🌱 **Travellers Engagement Project:** We initiated a project to provide support for the traveller community, addressing high suicide rates and the stigma around seeking help.
- 🌱 **Menopause support:** We conducted multiple menopause taster sessions and drop-in events to raise awareness of our new menopause pathway and provide psychological support for women experiencing menopause.
- 🌱 **Domestic Violence Advice Forum:** We engaged with lived experience and professional contributors to provide education on available mental health support and gathered feedback to improve service access for those affected by domestic violence.
- 🌱 **Digital inclusion:** In partnership with the Good Things Foundation, we delivered digital skills training, provided free mobile data, and donated digital devices to bridge the digital divide and improve access to mental health support.
- 🌱 **Mental Health Advocacy Training:** We funded a two-day Mental Health Advocacy Course for local organisations in the Kent and Medway area, equipping their employees with the skills to recognise and respond to mental health issues.

By addressing mental health needs across various demographics and regions, we strive to create a more resilient and equitable society. Our efforts in school and university engagement, perinatal support, older adults support, and general community outreach demonstrate our commitment to fostering wellbeing and reducing health inequalities.

Case Study Spin to Win: Breaking Mental Health Barriers at PureGym

How the Initiative Started

In January 2024, we partnered with the PureGym team on Walnut Street in Leicester, to raise awareness about the NHS TTS among gym members. The partnership was inspired by the idea that people who prioritise their physical health, may also be interested in improving their mental health.

The Hurdles to Engagement

Starting in February 2024, our NHS TTS team scheduled monthly visits to the gym, with the flexibility to increase frequency based on engagement levels. Positioned at a branded stand, our team aimed to spark conversations about mental health with those who passed by.

During the first visit, a meaningful interaction occurred when a male gym-goer confided in one of our PLOs about struggling with a family bereavement. By the end of their conversation, he described feeling as though ***“100lbs had been lifted from his chest.”***

However, overall interactions were low, and very few gym-goers were open to stopping to talk. The same pattern continued in March, prompting us to rethink our approach.

Developing an Innovative Engagement Strategy

Recognising the need for a fresh strategy, our Senior PLO collaborated with the PureGym team to create a more interactive experience. This led to the development of the Spin to Win challenge - a game where gym-goers spun a wheel for a chance to complete a challenge and win a prize.

To keep the concept fresh we varied the challenges, which included:

- 🍃 **Row or bike 2km:** Testing how quickly participants could burn calories.
- 🍃 **Push-ups:** Measuring how many could be completed within a set time.
- 🍃 **Pinch grip:** Holding a weighted metal panel for as long as possible.



Case Study Spin to Win: Breaking Mental Health Barriers at PureGym

Impact and Reach

Introducing the Spin to Win challenge proved to be a turning point. It attracted gym-goers to our stand, sparking meaningful conversations about mental health and the NHS TTS. Month after month, engagement increased, reflecting a growing willingness to discuss mental wellbeing.

Engagements per visit:



Learnings

Our collaboration with PureGym reinforced the importance of creativity and innovation in addressing mental health stigma. The success of Spin to Win demonstrated that interactive and engaging activities can effectively engage people and facilitate meaningful discussions.

People want to talk, they want to share their stories, but sometimes, they are hesitant, especially if they feel isolated or believe the *“It’s only happening to me”* narrative in our heads. However, when we change our approach to reaching people about important topics that affect their lives, they are more willing to open up and share, and that is true for everyone.

“Physical health and mental health are not mutually exclusive, they are interconnected. Investing time and energy into our physical and mental health is a holistic approach to our wellbeing.”

Ade Anifowose, PLO, NHS Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland TTS

Making Mental Health Support Accessible to All

Our partnership with PureGym has been a valuable learning experience, reinforcing the link between physical and mental health. By continuing to innovate and adapt our approach, we can further break down barriers, and make mental health support more accessible and less stigmatised. This initiative underscores our commitment to integrating mental health awareness into everyday environments, ensuring support reaches those who need it most.



Supporting Minds: Our Older Adults Activity Booklet Initiative

Background and Inspiration

Working closely with older adults, we recognised the importance of providing engaging and accessible resources tailored to their needs. Many older adults face challenges such as poor sleep hygiene, loneliness, and the need for mental stimulation. These insights guided us in developing an activity booklet that not only entertains but also supports mental and physical wellbeing.

The idea was to develop an engaging activity booklet featuring puzzles, important contact information, and a range of helpful resources.

The booklet serves as a versatile tool, designed to support individuals with poor

sleep hygiene, people waiting in doctors' surgeries, and those who would like to enjoy an activity at home.

Collaborating with our marketing team, we brought this vision to life, delivering a resource-packed booklet.



Benefits and Impact

The activity booklet offers numerous benefits, including:

- Mental health support:** Providing resources and activities that promote mental wellbeing.
- Improved sleep hygiene:** Offering tools and tips to help individuals improve their sleep patterns.
- Mood, exercise, and sleep tracking:** A weekly chart to help users monitor and improve their overall health.
- Self-expression:** Opportunities for individuals to express themselves creatively.
- Free resources:** Access to podcasts and yoga exercise classes.
- Engaging activities:** Including puzzles, bingo, and mindful colouring pages.

By focusing on the needs of older adults, we created a resource that not only addresses their specific challenges but also enhances their quality of life. This initiative exemplifies our commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of those we serve, enhancing their wellbeing through thoughtful and engaging resources.



3. Better Opportunities

A Commitment to Inclusive Growth

At VHG, we are committed to creating better opportunities for our employees by providing equal opportunities, upskilling and training, and developing essential life skills.

In 2024, our efforts across the board have yielded impressive results. We have:

- ✔ **Employed or retained 211** full-time equivalent (FTE) local people, generating a social value of **£8,885,330**.
- ✔ **Recruited 50 FTE** unemployed individuals with disabilities, delivering social value of **£2,518,110**.
- ✔ Employed apprentices for a total of **398 weeks**, contributing a social value of **£108,508**.
- ✔ Upskilled existing employees through accredited training for a total of **66 weeks**, with a social value of **£865**.
- ✔ Provided **12,814 hours** of personalised support to improve career and life skills, resulting in a social value of **£1,422,226**.

In this section, we will explore the story behind these numbers and illustrate what opportunities at VHG look like in practice.



Supporting People to Reach Their Potential

Enhancing the Digital Learning Experience

This year, our Learning and Development (L&D) team enhanced access to training and e-learning by upgrading our digital platform, The Knowledge. The new, user-friendly platform is tailored to our employees' needs, allowing them to engage with training more efficiently. Improved navigation has empowered employees to find relevant courses, upskill, and meet continuing professional development (CPD) standards with ease. Feedback indicates increased confidence and easier navigation.

We now offer 617 courses accessible to all employees, ranging from clinical, compliance, and legal training, to modules in equality and diversity, and personal wellbeing. In 2024, our employees completed a staggering 29,126 hours of training, including e-learning, webinars, virtual training, and face-to-face sessions.

Supporting New Colleagues with Their Induction

The L&D team transformed our induction and mandatory training by shifting from a one-month intensive model to a phased approach over three months. This change allows new employees to engage with the material at a manageable pace, reducing overwhelm and improving retention of essential knowledge. The phased approach also enhances work-life balance during onboarding, helping employees settle into their roles while gradually building competencies. As a result, we've seen completion rates rise from 97% to 100%, with an increase in positive feedback on the training experience.

As part of the induction and onboarding, we offer every new starter the Insights Discovery – Improving Your Personal Impact training. This interactive virtual training provides participants with tools to understand their communication styles, strengths, and areas for development, enabling them to adapt their approach in team settings. This personalised learning experience empowers employees to build stronger relationships, enhance collaboration, and navigate complex environments with confidence. Feedback from participants highlighted improved interpersonal skills, increased self-confidence, and a deeper understanding of how to create a positive impact within their teams.

From January to December 2024, 631 colleagues completed the Insights Discovery training:

- 🍃 **27%** of VHG employees completed the programme.
- 🍃 **77%** of attendees were female.
- 🍃 **17%** of attendees belonged to a racial minority community.
- 🍃 **22%** of attendees had a disability.

Talent Development

In 2024 we continued to drive better opportunities and professional growth with our successful Thrive Mentoring Programme, Apprenticeships, Aspire Leadership Development Programme, and a new Leadership Essentials course.



Thrive Mentoring Programme

In 2024, we continued with our third cohort of Thrive. The programme fosters an environment of guidance, skill-sharing, and career development, built around a series of 1:1 mentoring conversations but with a team approach. The programme continues to be a success and was shortlisted for the HR Impact award by Personnel Today. By ensuring access to mentorship for all employees, regardless of background or seniority, we upheld our commitment to equal opportunities and created a stronger, more inclusive support network across VHG.

Out of the 56% of employees who completed the Thrive programme:



83% were female.



14% were from ethnically and culturally diverse communities.

This highlights the programme's significant impact on talent development and career progression, demonstrating the value of mentoring.

Aspire Leadership Programme

Inclusive leadership in healthcare has proven to drive better team performance, foster innovation, and improve employee morale - ultimately enhancing the quality of care provided to patients. This year saw the completion of cohort one of the Aspire Leadership Programme (Aspire) and the start of cohort two. Aspire is a six-month programme designed to equip managers with the skills necessary to drive our company's strategic objectives and achieve operational excellence. The modules include both People Management and Commercial Operations. Feedback from the delegates on cohort one was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the value and benefit gained from the experience.

Leadership Essentials Course

With Aspire being a longer and more in-depth leadership programme, we were keen to provide a leadership development offering to more managers across VHG. With that in mind, we started delivering a highly impactful two-day Leadership Essentials course to our managers in September. This training is designed to equip managers with tools and techniques to effectively lead in VHG, covering topics such as communication skills, team engagement, leadership styles, and managing difficult conversations, all tailored to the unique challenges and needs of VHG. 48 colleagues attended the Leadership Essentials course in 2024.



"Taking part in the Aspire Programme was a brilliant opportunity that has helped me with my development as a team leader within VHG. We were lucky enough to have modules on all of the main areas of the business that we encounter on a day-to-day basis. Having high-quality content from each of these areas has made me more confident when conducting daily tasks in my role. I was able to broaden my knowledge on other business areas and also, it's a great networking opportunity to get to know other members of staff from around the business."

Aspire participant

Apprenticeships

We continued to expand opportunities for professional growth by offering a range of apprenticeships to employees across various roles and levels. These apprenticeships have provided employees with structured, hands-on learning experiences while allowing them to gain recognised qualifications alongside their work.

Our data shows that 67% of employees who completed their apprenticeships from November 2021 to October 2024 have successfully progressed their career pathways here at VHG. Of those:



58% are women.



8% are from ethnically and culturally diverse communities.



17% have a disability.

Our apprenticeships vary from Level 3 HR apprenticeships to Level 6 Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner apprenticeships. By making apprenticeships accessible to all employees, we have supported equal opportunities for career development, particularly for those who may not have pursued traditional education routes.

At VHG, people are at the centre of what we do. The success of our people reflects our organisation's commitment to developing talent and fostering a culture of growth and opportunity. By investing in employees, we are not only supporting individual career advancement but also strengthening our workforce with skilled and motivated professionals ready to take on greater responsibilities.



Case Study Professional Development in Practice: Opening Doors to a Career in Adult Mental Health

Patrice Adjovu's placement experience exemplifies how professional development opportunities at VHG can be transformative for individuals at various stages of their careers. As a second-year Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Patrice's placement with us, which offered invaluable learning opportunities in a supportive environment, significantly enhanced her growth.

A Nine-Month Placement with A New Focus

In January 2024, Patrice joined the VHG West Essex Step 3 team for a nine-month placement, where she worked closely with a dedicated team delivering CBT interventions to adults with moderate to severe mental health challenges, including anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression.

Patrice's clinical background has primarily been focused on working with children and young people, with some experience in research with a NHS TTS team.

The Power of a Supportive Environment

Although Patrice was initially apprehensive about transitioning from child-focused work to adult mental health, her concerns were quickly eased thanks to the positive working environment.

"Before starting the placement, I'll admit I felt a little apprehensive... However, those nerves quickly faded thanks to the team's warmth, encouragement, and the incredible support they offered me through supervision and training opportunities."

Patrice

Creating a Clear Plan for Growth

On day one, the team met with Patrice to discuss her goals and create a clear plan. This proactive approach helped Patrice to feel prepared and confident about their time with the West Essex Step 3 team.

Responsibilities over the placement included managing a caseload, delivering CBT interventions to clients with diverse presentations, navigating intervention protocols, attending training sessions on complex mental health presentations. Plus, Patrice had the opportunity to shadow senior stakeholder meetings, gaining insight into the operational and decision-making process of the service.



Case Study Professional Development in Practice: Opening Doors to a Career in Adult Mental Health

Experiencing an Exceptional Level of Supervision

A standout feature for Patrice's time at VHG was the exceptional level of supervision she received. Alongside weekly meetings with her clinical supervisor, Patrice benefitted from ongoing support from her line manager and consultant clinical psychologist.

Despite the challenges of gaining systemic experience, Patrice found the encouragement she received to think systemically and integrate multiple clinical perspectives invaluable in developing a holistic approach to care discussions.

The Power in Recognition and Appreciation

Patrice appreciated the team's culture of recognition and support, which helped her to feel valued.

"From monthly pamphlets highlighting successes to encouraging emails from the Line Manager, there was a genuine culture of acknowledgement and positivity. Personally, I felt this through kind words during supervision and thoughtful recognition of my progress."

Patrice

Broadening Future Horizons

Reflecting on her experience, Patrice expressed deep gratitude for the opportunities she had at VHG. The placement not only enhanced her clinical skills, but also opened her mind to new career possibilities in adult mental health.

"This placement has truly broadened my horizons... My positive experience with VHG has opened my mind to the possibility of a career in adult mental health. Overall, I'm incredibly grateful for my time at VHG West Essex. The team's support and warmth created an ideal environment for growth and learning."

Patrice

Transforming Lives: Employment Advisory Services in Kent and Medway

Extending Employment Advisory Services

At VHG, we create better opportunities not just for our employees, but also for the people we serve. Our commitment to equal opportunities, upskilling, and life skills development is at the heart of every service we deliver.

In April 2024, we were awarded the NHS TTS contract for Kent and Medway, which triggered a transformative expansion of services. This milestone significantly improved access to employment advisory services, extending support across the entire region. Previously, these services were available in less than half of the TTSs in Kent and Medway.

Launched alongside the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) national rollout of employment support, the new service ensures comprehensive coverage. EAs now work closely with clinical teams, offering a fully integrated and holistic approach to support.

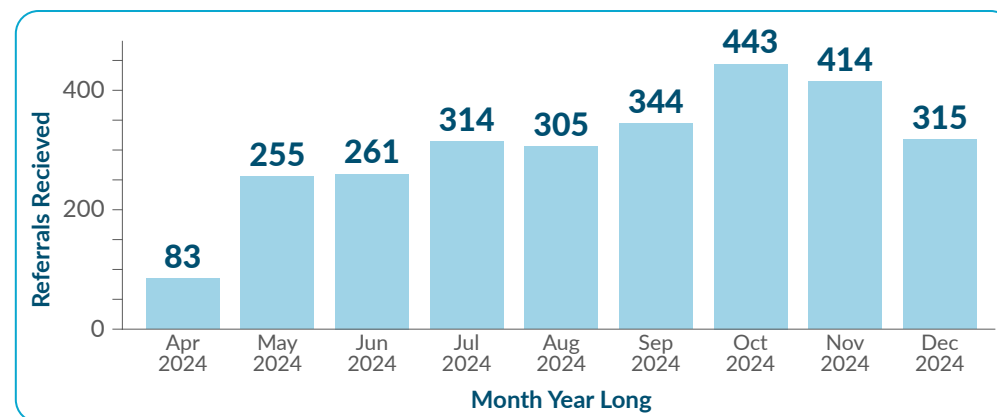
Between April and December 2024, extensive recruitment and training efforts were undertaken to guarantee high-quality employment services for clients accessing talking therapy support. Clients can benefit from this support at any stage — before, during, or after their treatment. From just 17 EAs in April, the team grew to 32 by December 2024, with recruitment ongoing for a final two positions. Additionally, six Senior Employment Advisors (SEAs) are now leading the services across the region, ensuring exceptional support for all clients.

For many clinicians, collaborating with EAs was a new experience, making it essential to foster positive working relationships. We implemented several initiatives to ensure clinicians were competent at referring clients to the employment support service and understood its benefits. The initiatives included:

- A video guide on referring clients to employment support using IAPTUS clinical software.
- SEAs' participation in monthly team meetings for clinicians.
- A comprehensive training module for all new employees, followed by weekly Q&A drop-ins.
- Monthly presentations at whole service team meetings to share data, positive feedback, and details about the support offered to clients.
- A monthly newsletter featuring success stories, feedback, and data.

These initiatives have been met with enthusiasm from clinical teams, enhancing collaboration and enabling us to provide seamless, integrated support to clients.

The steady rise in referrals since April 2024 is a testament to the success of these efforts:



Between April and December 2024:

- 1,756 clients accessed employment support in Kent and Medway, and we anticipate this number will continue to grow in 2025 as the team solidifies its presence.
- A total of 6,737 employment support appointments have been conducted in the region.
- This personalised support to improve career and life skills equates to £408,609 social value delivered in 2024, making it an impactful start for VHG in the Kent and Medway area.

We are delighted to have received numerous positive testimonials from clients, highlighting the profound impact of EA support on their lives:

"I cannot thank my EA enough for the employment support I have received over several months. Her help and advice have been invaluable during a very difficult period in my life, helping me stay in work, putting in place workplace adjustments, and making referrals, including to Occupational Health. She has provided a safety net when I struggled with my mental health and coping with work, helping me get the support I needed. Her encouragement has given me the courage and determination to face my daily challenges."

Client

Good News Story: Empowered to Achieve

Last year, a client approached our service struggling with relationship difficulties and significant stress. After a thorough assessment, they embarked on a seven-week course of low-intensity CBT. During their second session, they were referred for employment support to tackle the stress they faced at work.

At their EA assessment, the client expressed feeling stuck in a rut, with no progression in their toxic work environment. They revealed a long-term aspiration to transition into a new role by 2025. Throughout the EA appointments, the advisor concentrated on empowering the client to manage their work-related stresses and worries, applying the tools from their CBT sessions. The client reported noticeable improvements while on shift, attributing this progress to the support received.

Additionally, we assisted the client in reviewing and updating their CV, boosting their confidence to apply for new positions. Their efforts paid off when they were headhunted by a company and invited for an interview. We provided comprehensive interview preparation, including mock questions and the STAR technique.

The client aced the interview and began their new role in January 2025, successfully achieving their goal. This journey highlights the transformative power of tailored support and the client's resilience in overcoming challenges.

Conclusion

The expansion of the Employment Advisory Services in Kent and Medway has been a resounding success, providing invaluable support to clients and fostering strong collaborations between clinical and employment advisory teams. As we move into 2025, we are excited to continue building on this foundation, further enhancing the quality and reach of our services. The positive feedback from clients and the steady increase in referrals underscore the significant impact of our work. We remain committed to empowering individuals, helping them navigate their employment challenges, and supporting their journey to recovery and wellbeing.

4. Better Planet

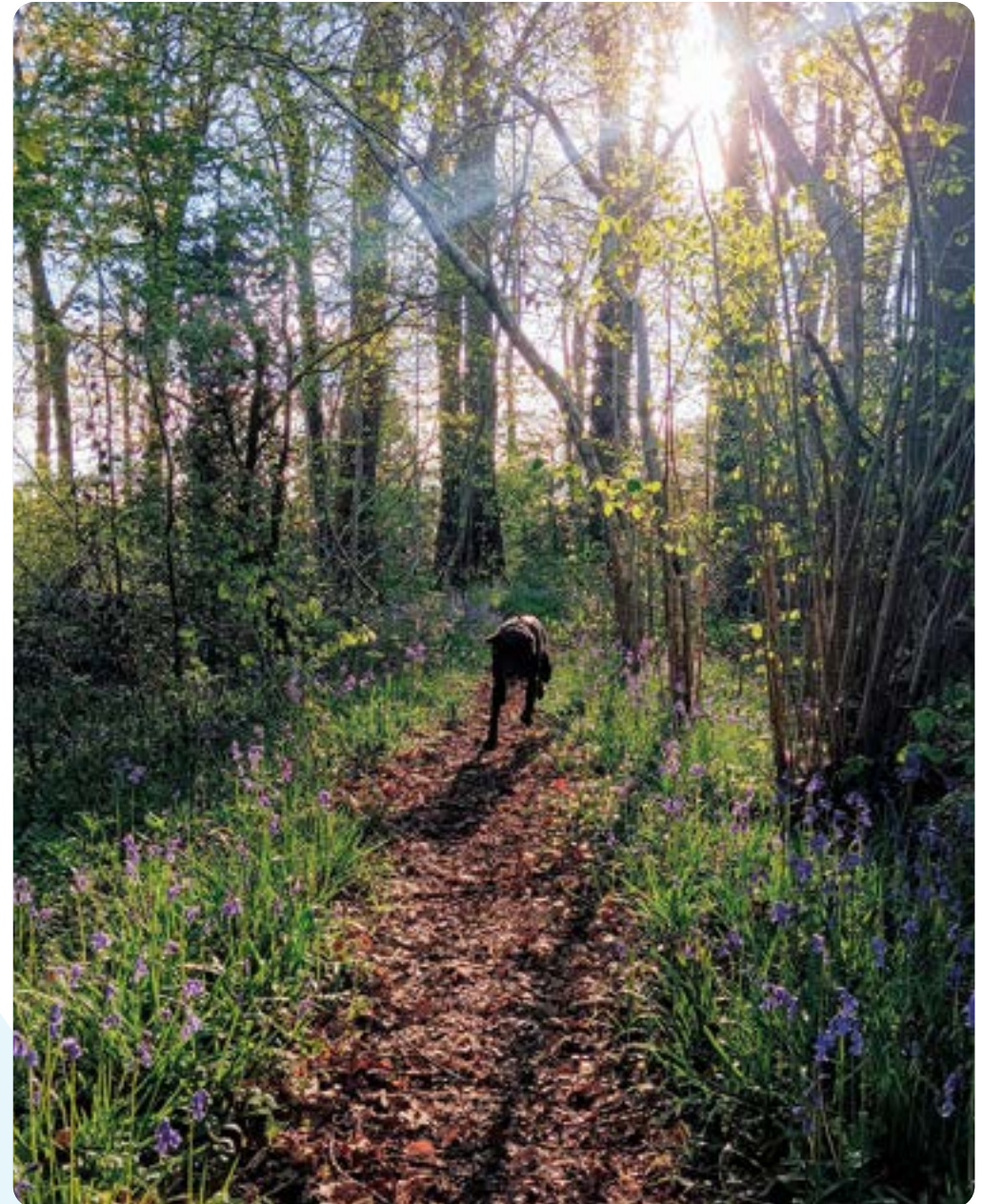
Pioneering a Greener Future

At VHG, sustainability and social value lies at the heart of everything we do. Our sustainability ambition is not just a goal but a guiding principle that shapes our operations and strategies. We are dedicated to achieving net-zero emissions across all scopes by 2050, with an even more ambitious target across our Scope 1 and 2 emissions, where we aim to achieve net-zero by 2030 – reflecting our proactive stance towards environmental stewardship. This ambition is intertwined with our core values of leadership, integrity, and operating with a people-centred approach, ensuring that our growth and success are aligned with the wellbeing of our planet and society.

Our 2024 achievements include:

- Reducing Scope 1 and 2 emissions by **15.6 tCO₂e**, compared to our baseline.
- Walking over **24,451 miles** collectively as part of our four-week Walking Challenge, promoting sustainable travel alongside health and wellbeing.
- Launching a **pilot e-bike initiative** as a sustainable travel option in one of our services, led by a regional employee.
- Dedicating **405 hours** to volunteering, including **156 hours** focussed on environmental conservation and ecosystem management, together generating over **£6,205** in social value.

This year was one of active engagement with sustainability, and we're excited to share our journey toward creating a better planet in this section.



Charting Our Path to Net-Zero: VHG's Carbon Management Journey

The VHG carbon report, prepared by Sustainable Energy First, outlines our progress towards our net-zero target. New to our 2024 report is the change in our baseline year from 2021 to 2023. This is because, in 2021:

- Our Scope 3 reporting was not complete. We now have more comprehensive Scope 3 reporting that captures the whole value chain.
- There were blind spots in some of our business activity data. We now have access to more comprehensive and representative data around our business-as-usual activities, filling gaps that were present in 2021.
- Due to the business impact of COVID-19, it was an abnormal year for the business. The following two years of operations have reinforced that 2021 was not representative of “normal” business, and therefore, not an appropriate year for a baseline.

At the same time, we were able to recalculate the 2023 emissions, including all the above mentioned, ensuring the baseline reflects VHG's true business as usual. The subsequent carbon report section will provide the restated 2023 data.

VHG is committed to reaching net-zero emissions by no later than 2050.

VHG is committed to reaching net-zero emissions for Scope 1 and 2 by 2030, aligned with our parent company Spire Healthcare. Our Scope 3 target is set to achieve net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, in line with the UK Government's Climate Change Act (2008).

Following acquisition by Spire Healthcare in late 2023, VHG remains committed and accountable to its own sustainability ambitions and targets, sharing VHG-specific data and carbon reporting outside of our parent company's annual reports.



Carbon Report Highlights

Collectively, our 2024 reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 carbon emissions totals 30.1% (15.6 tCO₂e), compared to our 2023 baseline.

The emissions under our control continue to follow the downward trend we've observed over the years. This has been made possible primarily by switching to renewable energy suppliers and implementing recommendations from our ESOS audit, including:

- 🌱 Changing to LED lights, which are more energy efficient.
- 🌱 Controlling heating.
- 🌱 Installing hourly meters to better track our consumption.
- 🌱 Implementing an Energy Management Policy.

While we've seen reductions in Scope 1 and 2 emissions, indirect emissions from our value chain increased by 21% compared to the baseline. Given the breadth of our value chain, further focus is needed to achieve our goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. VHG's total emissions, including all material Scope 1, 2 and 3 data sources, were 20% higher than our baseline year, totalling 3,590 tCO₂e.

Scope	Activity Category	2023 (tCO ₂ e)	2024 (tCO ₂ e)
1	Direct emissions from the operation of owned and controlled facilities and equipment		
Scope 1 Total (tCo2e)		23.0	12.2
2	Indirect emissions from the production of purchased energy		
Scope 2 Location-Based Total (tCo2e)		29.5	24.5
3	Scope 3: Indirect emissions from the value chain		
3.1	Purchased goods and services	1,816	2,380
3.2	Capital goods	75	56
3.3	Fuel and energy related activities	77	101
3.4	Upstream transportation and distribution	17	18
3.5	Waste generated in operation	65	48
3.6	Business travel	170	190
3.7	Employee commuting	676	687
3.8	Upstream leased assets	42	73
Scope 3 Location-Based Total (tCo2e)		2,938	3,553
Total Gross Emissions – Location-Based (tCO₂e)		2,990	3,590
Intensity Ratio tCO₂e per £m Location-Based		32.1	33.5
Intensity Ratio tCO₂e per head Location-Based		2.2	1.9

Miles of Impact:

The Success of Our Walking Challenge

In our ongoing commitment to sustainability and promoting a healthier planet, we launched the Walking Challenge as part of our Better Planet pillar of our Sustainability & Social Value Strategy. This challenge not only encouraged physical activity and wellbeing among our colleagues but also highlighted the importance of reducing our carbon footprint by choosing walking over other forms of transport.

Background and Inspiration

The Walking Challenge was inspired by the five pillars of wellbeing: connection, physical activity, learning new skills, giving to others, and paying attention to the present moment. Our mission was to incorporate all these elements into a single event that would engage as many colleagues as possible across the organisation.

The idea took shape as small teams of colleagues virtually raced each other around England by submitting their weekly step counts.



The Participation and Impact

Launched on March 25th 2024, VHG's first-ever Walking Challenge saw an impressive 34 teams, each consisting of six participants, committed to taking part. Throughout the four-week challenge, we received plenty of photos, entries of animal encounters, and overall feedback about the effectiveness of the challenge in encouraging our colleagues to get outside to walk.

The challenge concluded on Earth Day, 21st April. Collectively, participants walked nearly the circumference of the Earth, amassing an incredible total of 54,872,366 steps, equivalent to approximately 24,451 miles – a distance we hadn't anticipated but felt incredibly proud to conquer.

The Walking Challenge winning teams



The impact of the Walking Challenge extended beyond physical activity. It fostered a sense of community, improved mental health, and encouraged sustainable practices. Colleagues reported significant personal achievements, such as weight loss, improved mood, and enhanced wellbeing. One participant shared:

"I have lost 11kg and have been exercising every day since the walking challenge started. It was really the kick in the butt I needed to get back to a healthier lifestyle. The changes in my mood, health, and wellbeing are amazing. Thank you for putting together the challenge and being the driving force I needed to kick-start my lifestyle changes again!"



Case Study Pedal Power: The Success of Our E-Bike Initiative

Introduction and Environmental Focus

In our continuous efforts to promote sustainability and reduce our carbon footprint, we introduced the e-bike initiative as part of our Better Planet strategy pillar. This project aimed to provide an eco-friendly alternative for short-to-medium-distance commutes, reducing travel costs and embracing sustainable practices within the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) team.

Background and Inspiration

The idea to invest in an e-bike was simple yet packed with potential. The goal was to reduce travel costs and promote sustainability. However, like any pilot project, it required careful planning and collaboration. The project hinged on securing match funding, with £2,000 earmarked for the initiative. Early challenges included navigating the policy and insurance landscape for the e-bike, which required teamwork across departments to ensure all necessary measures were in place. Practical issues, such as securing the bike to prevent theft, were addressed by removing the battery when parked, making it less attractive to opportunistic thieves.

The Challenge and Participation

The PLO team quickly embraced the e-bike, especially avid riders who found it a game-changer for their commutes. From February to October, the e-bike travelled over 60 miles per month, proving to be versatile, easy to use, and enjoyable. Whether zipping between meetings or darting to events, the e-bike demonstrated its practicality and efficiency.

Impact and Achievements

The success of the e-bike was measured not just in miles but in the conversations and interest it sparked. By showcasing the feasibility of this eco-friendly travel solution, the team inspired discussions about expanding the initiative beyond BNSSG. The e-bike's reliability and efficiency aligned perfectly with our organisational sustainability goals, marking it as a significant win for our green initiatives.

Conclusion and Future Outlook

One of the most notable impacts was the e-bike's role in promoting sustainable commuting practices. It served as a testament to what can be achieved with creative funding, teamwork, and a willingness to embrace change. As the e-bike continues to rack up miles, it proves that progress can come with a little pedal power and a lot of heart.



VHG Volunteers: Making a Difference Together

The VHG Volunteering Support Scheme, now in its second year, continues to empower colleagues to make a difference in their communities. This initiative allows all VHG employees to take one day per calendar year out of their normal working hours to contribute to a non-profit voluntary or community action, project, or organisation. The choice of activity is left entirely to each colleague, giving them the freedom to volunteer their time to a cause they identify with.

Simplifying the Process

Our focus on making the Volunteering Support Scheme more accessible and streamlined helped to increase employee participation. This streamlined application process, combined with continued promotion through our communications, newsletters, conversation channels, and board meetings, has increased participation. We also launched a Teams channel to help colleagues connect with others in their local areas and organise their volunteering opportunities. This approach delivered notable improvements in engagement, as the biggest barrier to uptake we identified was colleagues not wanting to volunteer alone and struggling to find a charity or a cause to volunteer for.

Benefits of Volunteering

The benefits of our Volunteering Support Scheme are wide-ranging, depending on the projects our colleagues choose. 100% of the received feedback in 2024 indicated that participants learned something new and would recommend the scheme to their colleagues. This feedback highlights that volunteering time contributes to continued learning and allows our colleagues to give back to their valued causes and communities.



Participation and Impact

In 2024, 83 VHG colleagues applied to use their volunteer day, with some choosing to combine their efforts on collaborative projects to maximise their impact. In total, 405 hours were dedicated to 42 unique projects and activities, resulting in what accounts as £6,205 of social value delivered for people, communities, and the planet.

Every project supported by our Volunteering Support Scheme represents a contribution to the communities where our colleagues live and work. These projects range from leading school museum trips to volunteer coordination at the charity Scope. Other benefits include contributions towards our organisational climate goals, such as supporting projects focused on the natural world and environment. Examples include bike refurbishment and recycling in Bristol, litter picking on a Leicestershire River, and assisting at a wild otter rescue centre in Devon. The group effort project at Hartcliffe City Farm in Bristol, highlighted in our 2023 Impact Report, also continued to thrive, with 21 colleagues spending their days at the farm's market garden in 2024.


Looking Ahead

We are excited to continue growing the Volunteering Support Scheme in 2025, following its continued success throughout 2024. As part of our commitment to maximising Social Value from VHG's operations in our communities, we aim to encourage greater participation from our colleagues, and develop more strategic VCSE partnerships. We have incorporated a conversation prompt for volunteering day arrangements into our Personal Development Plan templates, and will continue to raise the profile of the Volunteering Scheme in our company communications and conversation boards. Our goal is to see a **30% increase** in volunteering days completed year-on-year.

"Would definitely get another date booked in for the next year, the team felt they made a difference to the area, and it was a great achievement."

Colleague feedback

Volunteering highlight:

 **Facilities Team Beach Clean:** Our facilities team demonstrated their commitment to sustainability by organising a team beach clean-up. On a chilly day in October, the team removed five bags of plastic and general waste from the shoreline of Herne Bay, while also enjoying some group bonding time and brisk exercise.



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