

## SUPPORTING OVERSTRETCHED NHS SERVICES DURING PERIODS OF EXTREME PRESSURE

How RE:ACT provide non-clinical support to NHS Hospitals and ambulance services facing extreme pressure during winter months.



**163 VOLUNTEERS  
DEPLOYED**

**OVER 1,000  
VOLUNTEER HOURS \***

\*between Nov 22 and Jan 23

In the winter, a higher concentration of COVID-19 and flu significantly increase patient numbers. During these high-pressure periods, NHS Hospitals and ambulance services face extremely high levels of admissions and as a result many NHS hospitals and ambulance services quickly become overstretched.

NHS staff are forced to work around the clock to meet demand and patients are left facing long waiting times. RE:ACT supports by going into hospitals to help with non-clinical assistance tasks, leaving healthcare professionals much-needed time to focus on providing the medical care their patients need.

**MARK HART**  
**HEAD OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESILIENCE  
AND RESPONSE, WALSALL NHS TRUST**

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**RE:ACT volunteers professionally integrated into supporting frontline NHS staff at a time of significant stress, high tempo and high workloads at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust. Their timely and genuine efforts coupled with that splendid volunteer spirit was remarkable and so welcomed.**

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Examples of some of the tasks RE:ACT volunteers are helping with include:

- Transferring patients between wards.
- Providing meals and refreshments to patients and their loved ones.
- Restocking medical stations.
- Providing sympathy and conversation to those patients facing a long wait.

When needed volunteers are also assisting with the cleaning and restocking of ambulances and ensuring refreshments are always available to ambulance staff who often get very little chance of a break.



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*This weekend was a busy one for Worcester A&E. Patient admissions reached 98 in a 12-hour shift (the average is usually around 60). The A&E team were certainly up against it. Usually, there would be seven Care Assistants per shift, but on that Saturday, we were down to only three and Sunday five. Without the support of RE:ACT, the Care Assistants would have had to absorb the full workload through this period of higher admission levels. At the time a few staff commented on what a great help RE:ACT had been, particularly tending to the drink and meal duties. The Health Care Assistants would usually be distributing meals too so they were able to solely focus on the physical care needs of the patients, We were all relieved that RE:ACT was there to help. It made a real difference to the team, patients and anxious accompanying relatives.*

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**ZOE BROWNRIGG - HEALTHCARE ASSISTANT  
WORCESTER ROYAL HOSPITAL A&E DEPARTMENT**