



Trauma Ward Support Volunteering Project - Barts NHS Health Trust

Evaluation Findings - September 2022

Introduction to volunteering at Barts



Violent and aggressive incidents can have a variety of triggers which act either together or in isolation. Some of these triggers are avoidable if they are spotted early enough and the appropriate resources are in place to prevent them from occurring. **Staff are often aware of the potential trigger events, but don't always have the time to address them fully.**

Barts Health NHS Trust reviewed the organisation's incident data and undertook a staff survey. Following analysis ([provisional analysis can be seen here](#)), the volunteer services team created an Active Response Volunteer role to support trauma wards across the trust.

The role was designed to provide low-risk patients with support that might help to alleviate some of the triggers for aggressive behaviours. The active response volunteers (ARV) provided support such as:

- Befriend patients, chatting and listening.
- Getting refreshments and snacks for patients.
- Support the discharge process.
- Support mealtimes.
- Undertake shopping for basic essential items.

Between March and June 2022, analysis of incident data and a follow up staff survey was conducted to evaluate the impact of the project.

Challenges to the role and project evaluation

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the pressures the NHS was under fluctuated and increased, some challenges were faced during the implementation of the Trauma Ward support volunteering project...

- Patient numbers skyrocketed and staff were stretched beyond all means. The number of incidents resulting from patient frustration or isolation, therefore, is not truly comparable.
- Further, staff shortages and turnover have meant that different individuals were working across the trauma wards to manage and meet demand.
- Many of the volunteers on wards had to alter or stop support, resulting in inconsistencies in service provision.
- Barts Health NHS Trust operates a large trauma centre, but as a result of the pandemic there was a significant shift in the types of trauma patients being admitted. Whereas, prior to the pandemic, the hospital supported a number of individuals who were the victims of gun or knife crime, post pandemic there was an increase in the number of victims of domestic abuse. These changes in patient circumstances resulted in differing patient needs and experiences.

Whilst this evaluation, therefore, provides an indication of the emerging themes from across the first 18 months of service delivery, we must take some caution in these findings.

Programme Evaluation

- The Trauma Ward Support Project supports a multitude of staff and organisational outcomes which includes reduction in the numbers of incidents on trauma wards, improved staff well being and perceived personal safety of staff, and positive changes in staff perceptions on volunteering.
- Before and after the programme, quantitative and qualitative questions were asked to staff members who worked with volunteers regarding the overarching outcomes and we received a total of 61 responses.
- Additionally, the incidents that happened on the wards were recorded in detail and have also included in the overall evaluation.

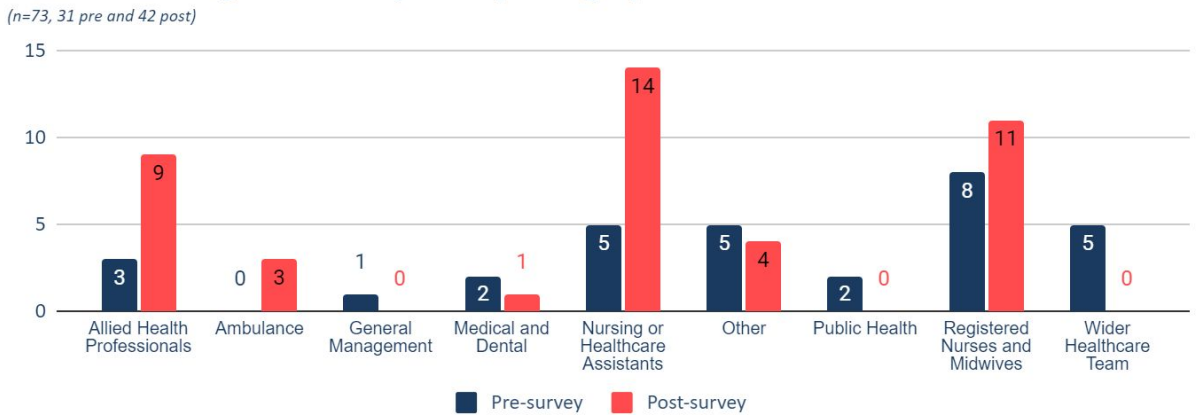
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staff pre-surveys completed

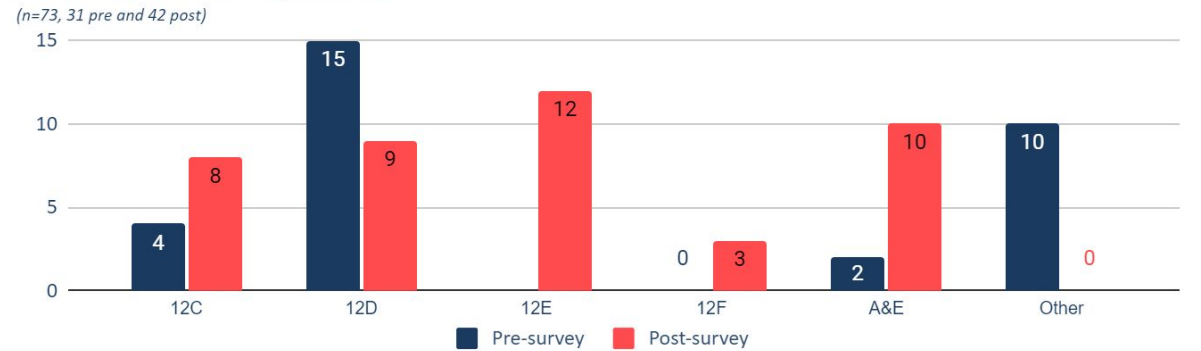
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staff post surveys completed

Which of the following best describes your occupational group?
(n=73, 31 pre and 42 post)



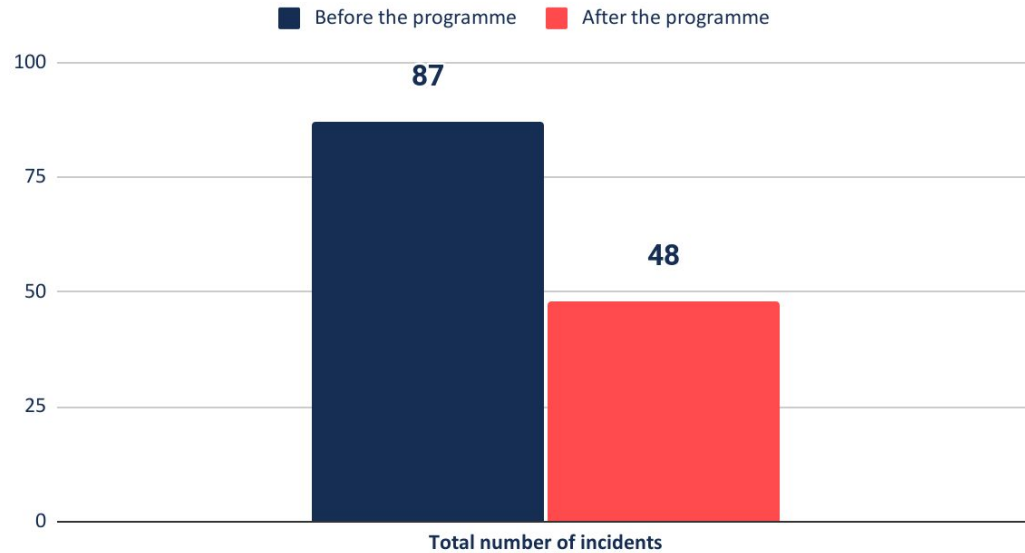
Please tell us which ward you are on.
(n=73, 31 pre and 42 post)



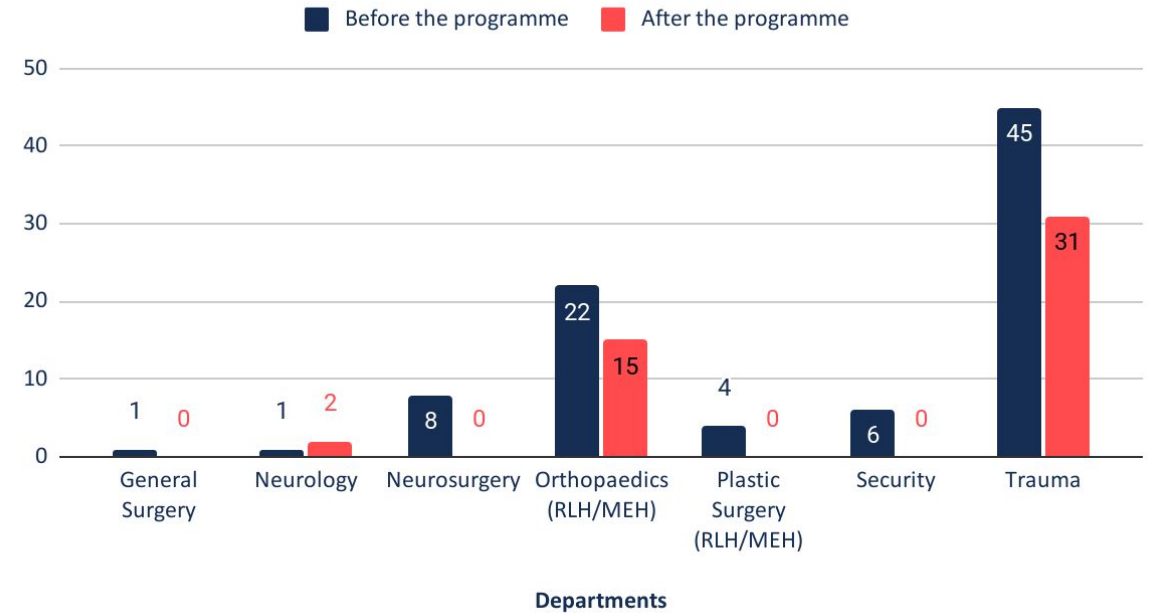
- The occupational groups of staff respondents vary, however the majority of them were Nursing or Healthcare Assistants and Registered Nurses and Midwives. The 'other' category included responses from porters, caseworkers, and ward hosts.
- The majority of respondents worked on ward 12D, but responses were also received from staff working on wards 12C and 12F and in A&E department. The 'other' category included responses from staff who worked across multiple wards.

Impact on the incidents recorded

Comparison of the total number of incidents recorded



Comparison of the incident numbers by departments



- After the programme, the overall number of incidents have been decreased from 87 to 48 (45%). The detailed analysis of these incidents by department demonstrated that in General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Plastic Surgery and Security departments no incidents were recorded after the programme began. Furthermore, the Trauma department has shown the greatest decrease in the incident numbers from 45 to 31 (31%).
- Due to the aforementioned challenges, we are unable to clearly decipher if the number of incidents have reduced as a direct result of the volunteering interventions. However, it does appear that in some instances staff perceptions have also improved...

Staff Members reflections on incidents

Comparison of staff reflections on ward experience after the programme

(n=73, 31 pre and 42 post)

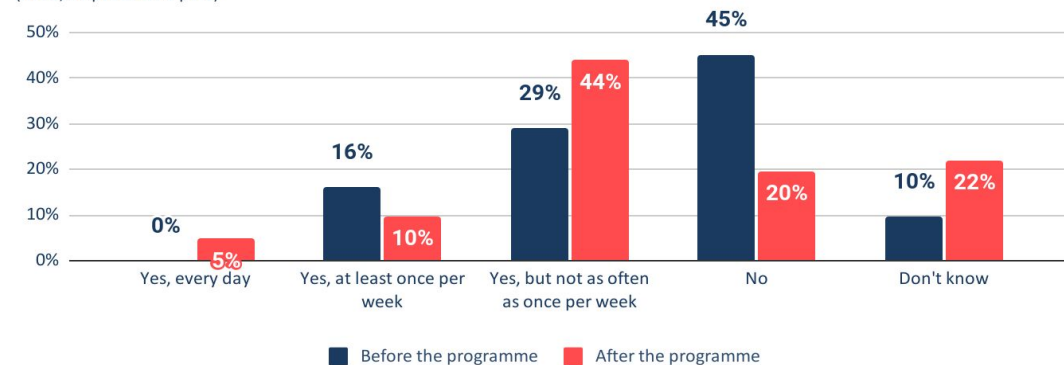


Before and after the programme, staff members were asked to reflect on patient experience, staff safety, incidents and time. The analysis of these responses has shown that there have been some positive improvements across all areas...

- After the programme, more staff members rated patient experience as slightly acceptable, acceptable or perfectly acceptable.
- Staff members also more positively rated staff safety after the programme, as well as the number and severity of incidents involving aggressive or violent behaviours.
- We saw a 36% improvement in the number of staff members who felt time to focus on priority clinical tasks was acceptable.

Over the past month have you experienced any incidents which have made you concerned for your personal safety?

(n=73, 31 pre and 42 post)



However, there were some elements of staff feedback that do not appear to have been positively influenced by the presence of volunteer support...

- When staff members were asked if they experienced any incidents which made them concerned for their personal safety, the number of individuals who disagreed decreased from 45% in the pre survey to 20% in the post survey, perhaps demonstrating that staff feel they are experiencing more incidents where they feel their safety is at risk.

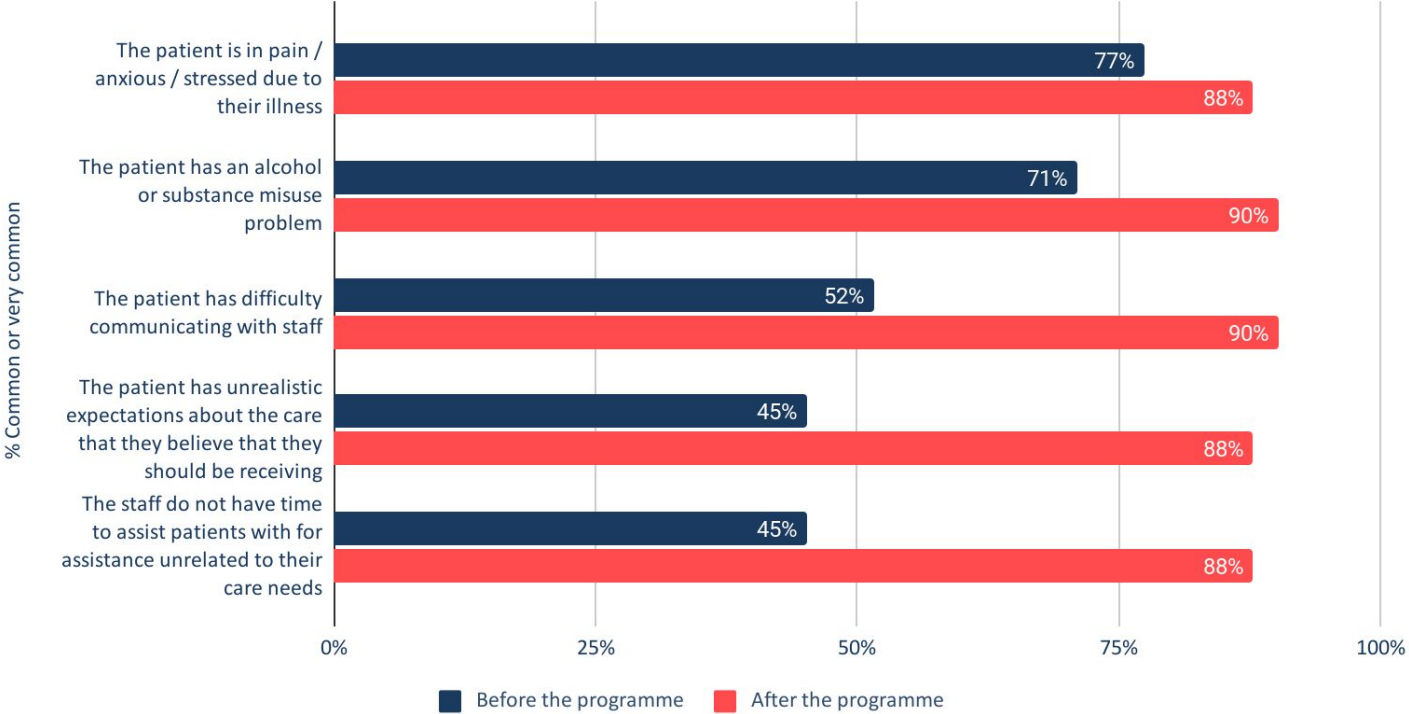
Staff Insights - Incidents

Before and after the programme, staff members reflected on the common causes of the challenging behaviours on the wards.

- In the post survey, we saw an increase in the number of staff members who felt all of the potential reasons for incidents were common or very common.
- Alcohol or substance misuse and difficulty communicating with staff were felt to be the most common causes of these challenging behaviours.

Common causes of the challenging behaviours on the wards

(n=73, 31 pre and 42 post)



Staff Insights - Volunteer Impact

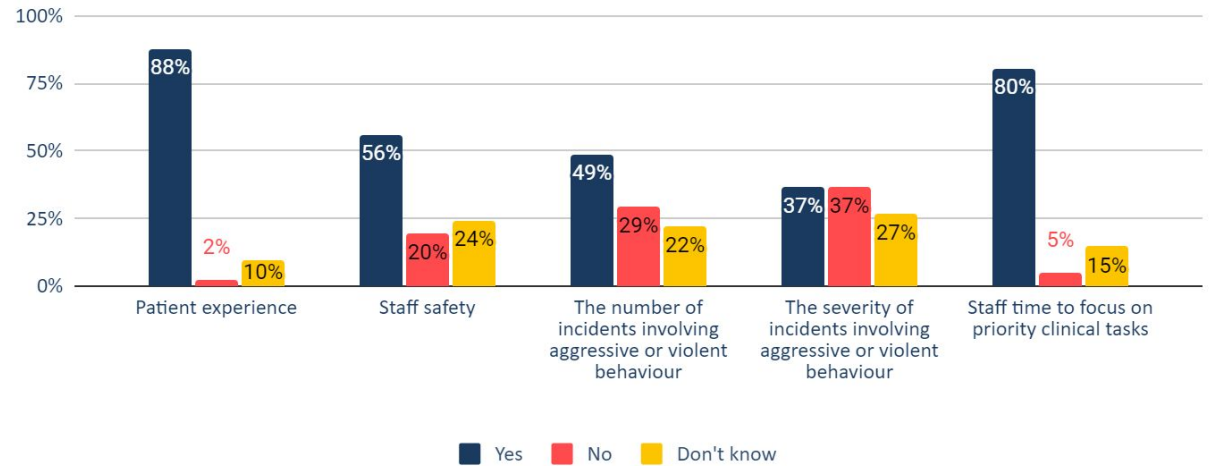
In the staff post-survey, staff members were asked to reflect on the impact the active response volunteers had had.

- The majority of staff members believe that volunteers had a positive impact on patient experience (88%). Additionally, 85% of staff agree that volunteers helped them to improve the quality of service they provide.
- 83% of staff agree or strongly agree that volunteers improve the working lives of staff and 71% agree that volunteer support helps them to feel less stressed. Further, 4 in 5 staff members agree that volunteers allow them time to focus on clinical tasks (80%).
- 83% of the staff agreed that they enjoy working alongside volunteers.
- Just over half of staff feel that volunteers have a positive impact on their safety (56%), but 1 in 5 (20%) do not. Similarly, while 49% of staff shared that volunteers positively affect the number of incidents, 29% of staff stated they do not. Further, 1 in 5 staff members feel volunteers do not have a positive impact on the number of incidents and nearly 1 in 4 on the severity of these incidents.

It therefore appears that whilst the majority of staff believe volunteers have an overwhelmingly positive impact on the patient and staff experience, they do not have as much of a perceived impact on staff safety and incidents.

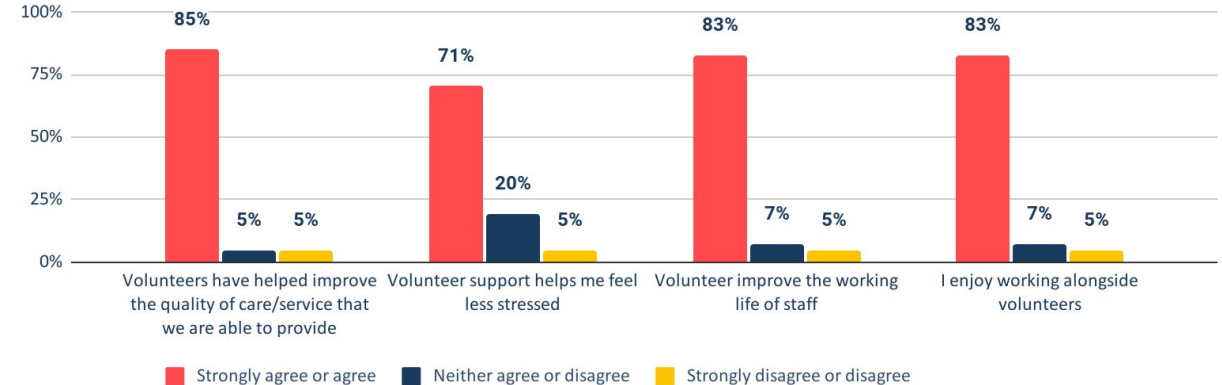
Do you believe that volunteer support have a positive impact in these areas?

(n=41)



Volunteer impact on the staff members after the programme

(n=41)



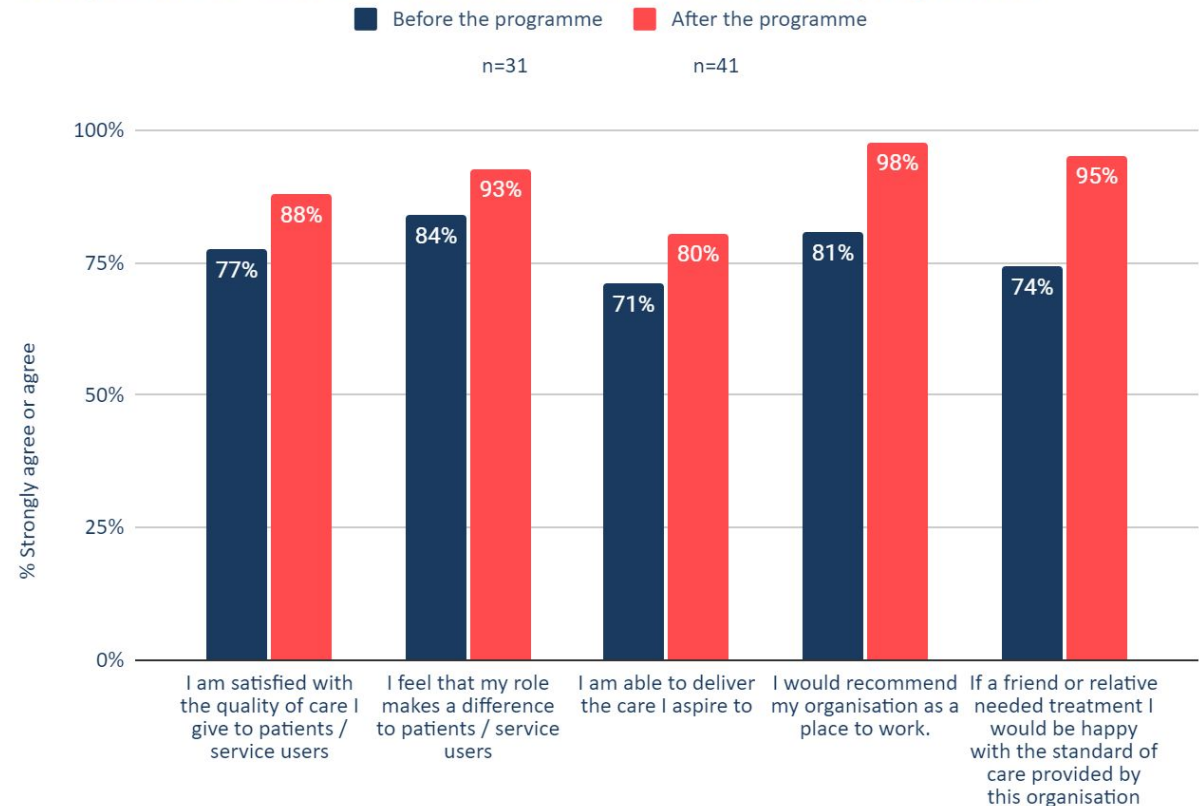
Staff Insights - Role satisfaction

Similarly, the comparison of staff feedback on the quality of their care/service demonstrated that there has been an improvement in each area after having volunteer support on the wards.

- **95% of staff** agree or strongly agree that if a friend or relative needed treatment, they would be happy with the standards of care provided by their organisation, which increased from 74%.
- **98% of staff** members agree or strongly agree that they would recommend the organisation as a place to work, which was increased from 81%.

The data, therefore, suggest that volunteers had a positive impact on improving the beliefs of staff members on the care they provide to patients / service users.

Comparison of staff believes in their service after the programme



Staff Insights - Overall Feedback

When asked what they believe are the primary benefits or issues from the introduction of volunteers onto the wards, staff reported...



“It will provide staff with the time to deliver compassionate care”

Registered Nurse / Midwife



“Higher patient satisfaction, enough resources to support patients”

Nursing / Healthcare Assistant



“Helps in saving time of the staff... Volunteers are helpful”

Nursing / Healthcare Assistant

When asked if there was anything else they would like to say about their experience of working alongside volunteers, staff reported...



“All the Volunteers have been so helpful, a massive thank you to them all”

Administration



“Volunteers are amazing with the selfless efforts to humanity”

Nursing / Healthcare Assistant



“Volunteers improve the mood of the ward”

Nursing / Healthcare Assistant

Conclusion

- Barts Health NHS Trust, the Trauma Ward Volunteers programme has demonstrated that volunteers had a positive impact on staff and organisational outcomes, such as saving staff time and improving the patient experience.
- Since the volunteers have been on the wards, a significant decrease was recorded in the overall number of incidents reported. This may indicate the project has been successful in evidencing the primary objective of this project which was reducing the incidents. However, with the changing landscape of the NHS in light of the COVID-19 pandemic it is difficult to determine if this is a direct result of volunteers, or if there were other factors at play.
- Indeed, staff perceptions of violent or aggressive incidents has not improved throughout the programme and some staff doubted the impact of volunteer support on number and severity of incidents. However, staff felt there were many benefits of having volunteer support - such as freeing up their time to focus on clinical tasks - and overall levels of role satisfaction had improved following the programme.
- It is recommended that monitoring and evaluation of the trauma ward role is continued to fully understand its impact as we move away from the height of the pandemic.
- Further, the programme has plans to expand it's offer, with plans for volunteers to undertake manual handling training so that they are able to escort patients for walks or outside. This may have further positive impacts on likelihood of incidents which could be evaluated at a later date.

Acknowledgements

Helpforce would like to acknowledge the hard work and support of the staff and volunteers for running this innovation and providing data for the evaluation. Special thanks go to Nancy Whiskin (Head of Volunteering), Mbemba Bojang (Volunteer Coordinator) and Rebecca Albany (Volunteer Coordinator).

helpforce

Thank you

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