

Complementary Therapy Volunteers Evaluation Report

Northern Care Alliance

June 2025

Executive summary

The project

With an aim to improve staff wellbeing, the Complementary Therapies volunteer service provides various treatments to staff across the Trust's four health care organisations. The treatments were provided by a small number of volunteers, and also a number of staff members who volunteered their time to give back to the Trust and their colleagues.

Key findings



Conclusions & recommendations

The Complementary Therapy service has resulted in a multitude of benefits for both staff and volunteers, and ultimately the organisation. As well as high levels of satisfaction with the support received, staff feedback illustrates that the volunteer's support has resulted in positive impacts on staff emotional wellbeing, working lives, and their perception that the organisation is taking positive steps to support their wellbeing. Further, volunteers themselves reported multiple benefits, including providing an opportunity for personal development, as well as a feeling of being able to make a difference to those to whom they provided support.

Following the success of the service, a bid has been submitted to NHS Charities Together to create an additional Complementary Therapy Service. The service will be specifically focused on reducing sickness and absence from musculoskeletal conditions, stress, anxiety, and mental health issues. The service will be led by the Complementary Therapy Lead, with support from three Therapists and an Administrator.

Service Overview

- With a vision to encourage and incorporate complementary therapies within the services provided across the Northern Care Alliance (NCA), the volunteering team introduced a new volunteering service.
- This **Complementary Therapies service** provided various treatments to staff across their Trust's four health care organisations, including massage, reflexology and Reiki. The treatments were provided by a small number of volunteers, and also a number of staff members who volunteered their time to give back to the Trust and their colleagues.
- Overarchingly, the programme aimed to have a positive impact on colleagues emotional wellbeing.
- In January 2023, Helpforce Insight and Impact team partnered with NCA to evaluate this initiative. The findings within this report detail the evaluation of the Complementary Therapies service, completed in June 2025.



Evaluation Approach: Methodology

Helpforce’s approach to evaluating...

Using its established *Insight & Impact* evaluation service, Helpforce follows a consistent methodology to determine the impact of volunteering roles on health and wellbeing outcomes. Target outcomes are identified across a range of beneficiaries representing the people and organisations involved, and then we collect the necessary data to prove and evidence the outcomes.

The Complementary Therapies programme aimed to achieve the following outcomes...

**Staff**
Improved staff wellbeing.
Staff are satisfied with the care they are able to provide.
Staff believe that their organisation is taking positive steps to support their wellbeing.
Staff believe that volunteers are having a positive impact on their working lives.
Staff are satisfied with the support they receive from volunteers.

**Volunteer**
Develop new skills that supports their personal & professional development.
Improved confidence & sense of purpose.
Increased social connections.
Confidence that time spent volunteering is of benefit to staff and the organisation they volunteer for.
Feel well supported in undertaking their volunteering role.
Satisfied with and happy in their role.

**Organisation**
Staff feel valued by their organisation.



The evaluation involved two data collection methods:


- A **staff survey**, asking questions in relation to their experience of using the service and what difference it had made to them. The survey also contained questions regarding staff perceptions of the organisation they work.
- A **volunteer survey**, asking questions about their experience of delivering the Complementary Therapies role and the impact it had on them.

Responses to these surveys were collected between March 2024 and April 2025. During this time, we received **276 staff survey responses** and **5 volunteer survey responses**.



Throughout the report, data findings are linked back to the beneficiary using icons at the top right-hand side of the screen. Evidence strength is also rated used icons. These icons are as follows...

Findings / outcomes related to...




 Staff  Volunteers

 Organisation

Insights vs Impact

 Insight  Impact

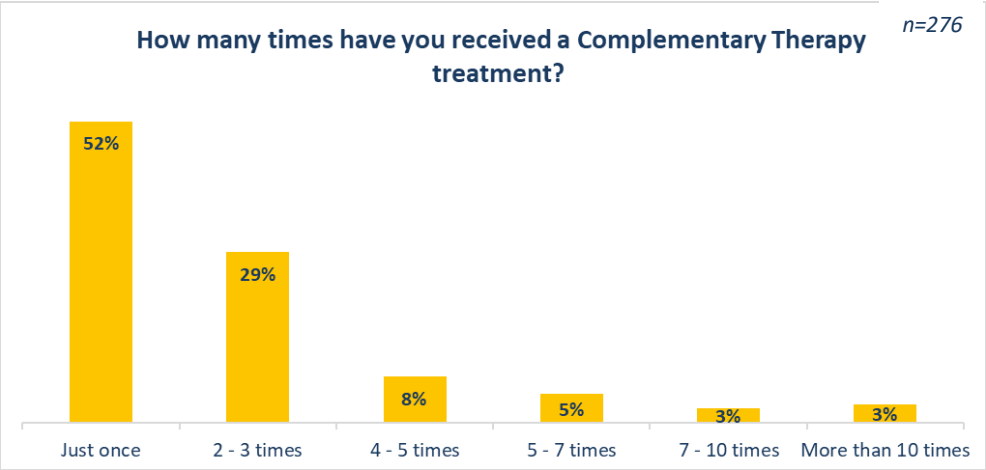
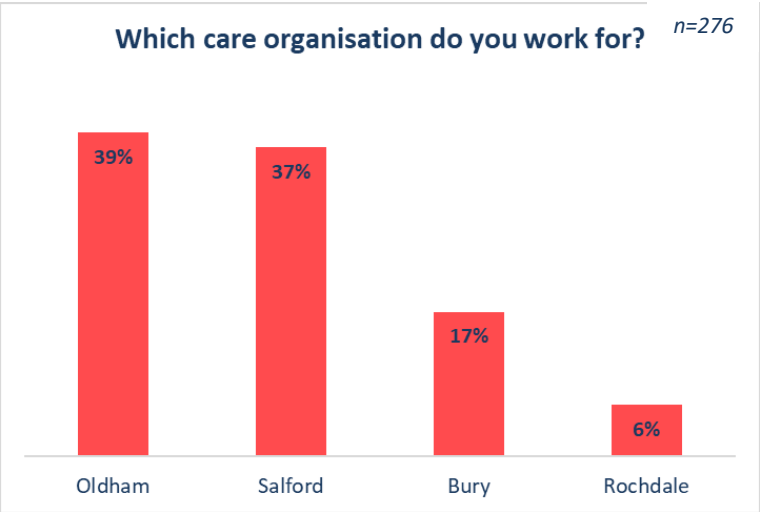
Evidence strength ...

 Compelling evidence  Promising evidence  Limited evidence

Insight: Staff Use of Complementary Therapies



To the end of May 2025, Northern Care Alliance recorded **4,869 visits to the Complementary Therapies** service by Northern Care Alliance Staff. Within the staff survey, individuals who had used the service were asked which care organisation they worked within, their job role, and their use of the complementary therapies service.



The majority of respondents were based either at Oldham or Salford.

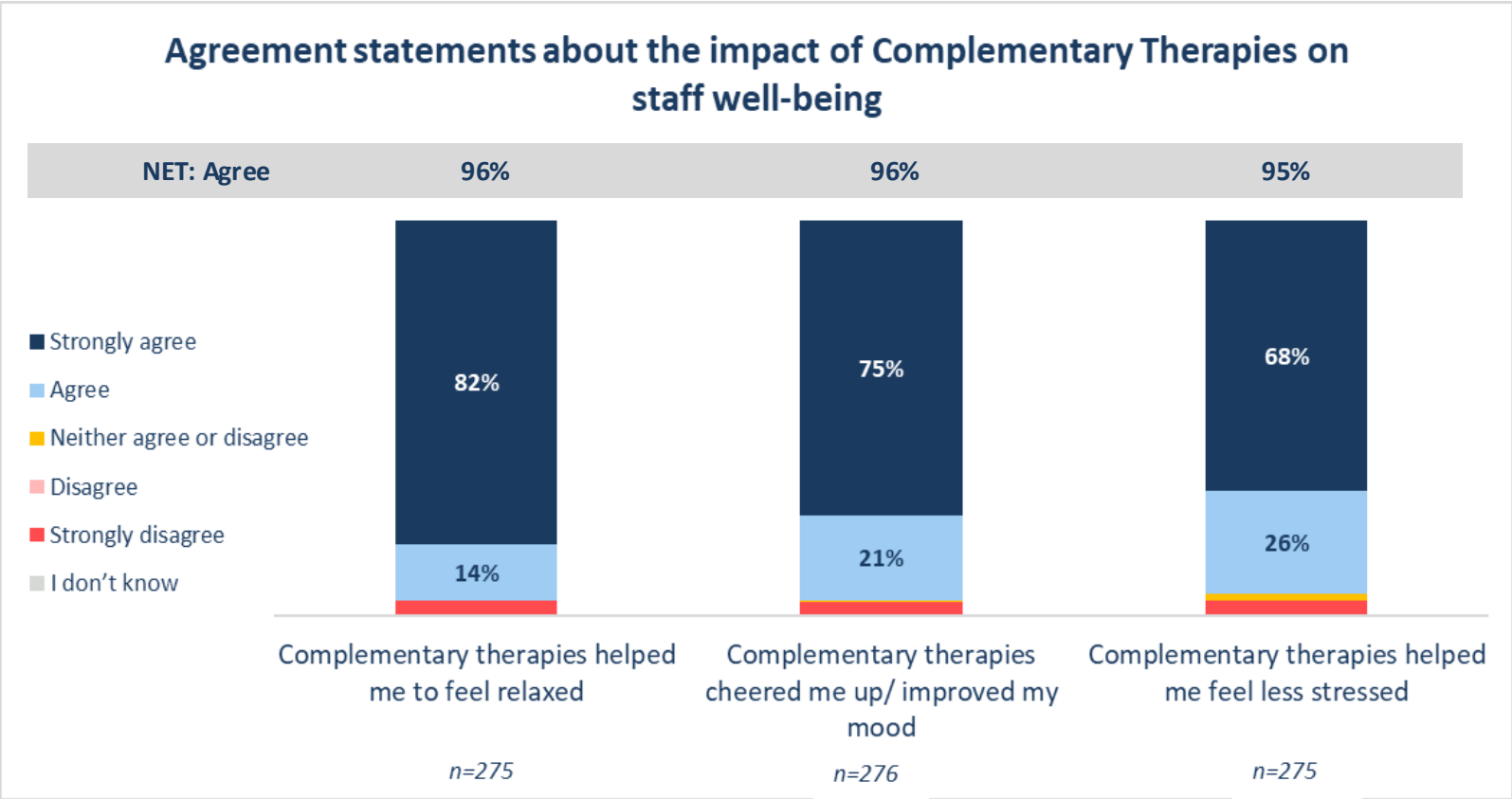
A quarter of those who had used the service were registered Nurses or Midwives, quickly followed by Allied Health Professionals and the wider healthcare team (including admin, clerical, and facilities staff).

Over half of participants had only used the Complementary Therapies service once. However, some staff do appear to have been using the service regularly, having received treatment more than 10 times.

Impact: Staff Emotional Wellbeing




Within the staff survey, participants were first asked for their feedback about the difference the service had made to their wellbeing.



96% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that the complementary therapies they received helped them to feel relaxed and improved their mood.

95% agreed or strongly agreed the service helped them to feel less stressed.

As agreement with all three statements was high, this therefore indicates that the **treatments and support received by staff had a positive impact on their emotional wellbeing.**



"15 minutes out of a busy schedule makes such a difference to my mood and wellbeing."

Allied Health Professional

Please note: Chart labels under 4% have been removed to aid chart readability.

Impact: Staff Perceptions of the Organisation



Staff were then asked about the impact complementary therapies had on their perceptions of the organisation and their working lives.

Again, high levels of agreement were seen in relation to both statements.

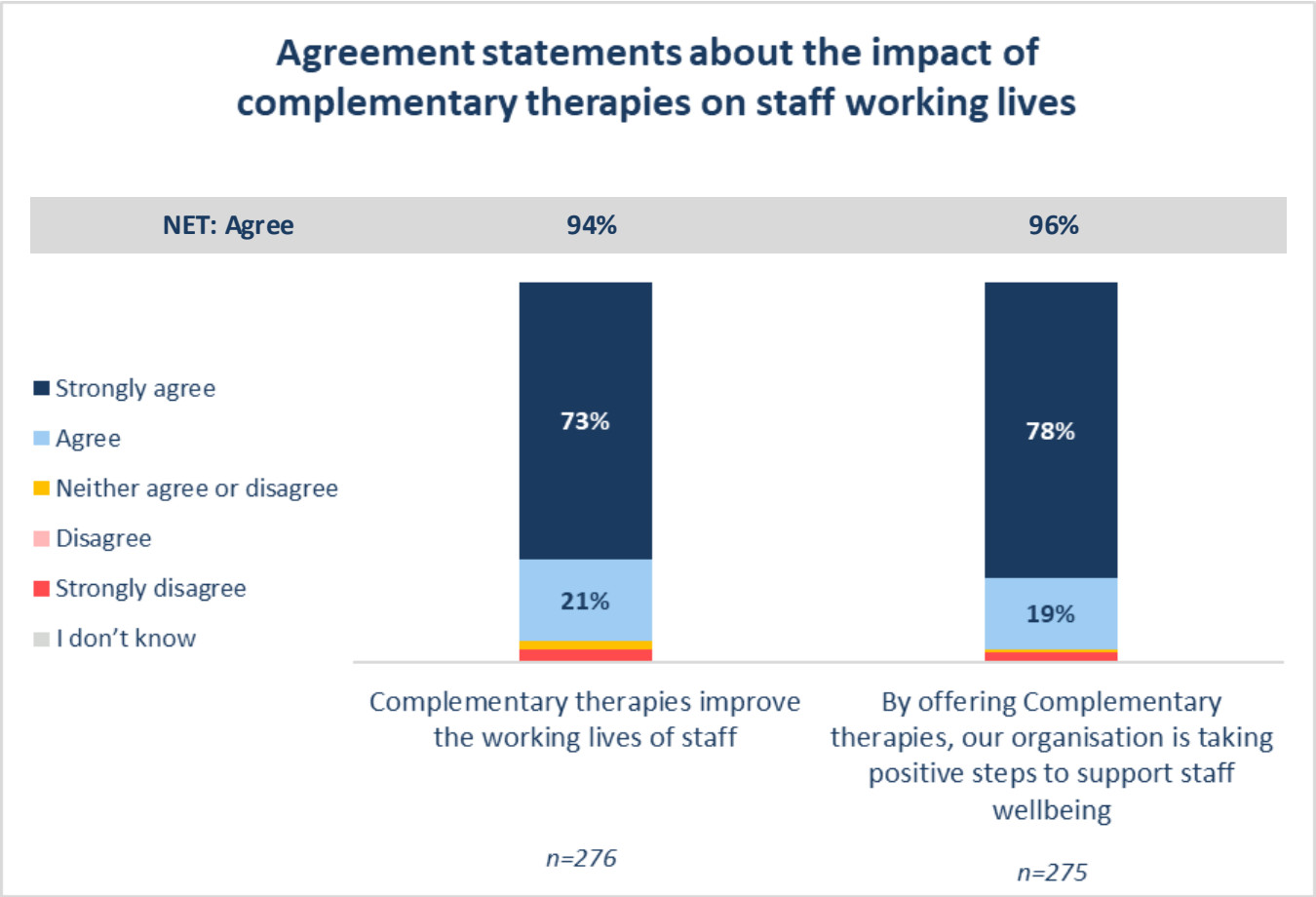
94% of staff agreed or strongly agreed the Complementary Therapy service improved their working lives. Further, 96% agreed that by offering this service, the organisation they work for is taking positive steps to support staff wellbeing.

These findings therefore indicate that offering support via a service such as Complementary Therapies can have a **positive impact on staff perceptions of the organisation they work for.**



"Really great idea to introduce this to the Trust. This is a positive move to represent a Trust that cares about its staff and wellbeing."

Wider Healthcare Team Member



Please note: Chart labels under 4% have been removed to aid chart readability.

Impact: Staff Satisfaction

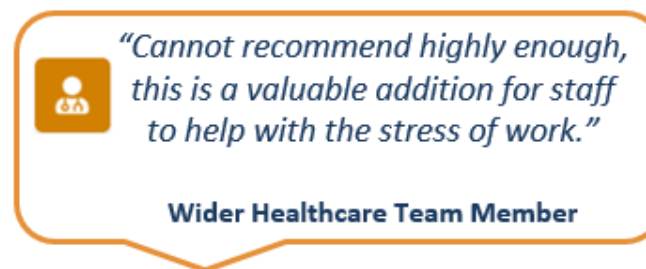


And finally, staff participants were asked about their overall satisfaction with the Complementary Therapy service.



As illustrated in the infographics above, staff were overwhelmingly positive about their overall Complementary Therapy service experience. 9 in 10 staff were **very satisfied** with their experience of using the volunteer service, and 96% were **very likely to recommend the service** to colleagues.

Overall, the feedback received from staff illustrates that **the service has been successful in reaching its anticipated objectives** – as well as high levels of satisfaction with the support received, analysis illustrates the volunteer's support has resulted in positive impacts on staff emotional wellbeing, working lives, and their perception that the organisation is taking positive steps to support their wellbeing.



Impact: Volunteer Experience



Within the volunteer survey, respondents were first asked about the impact volunteering had had for them, as well as their perceptions of the impact had had for the people and organisation they support...

Of the five volunteers who participated in the volunteer survey...



All five volunteers strongly agreed volunteering had given them a sense of purpose.



All five volunteers agreed or strongly agreed volunteering had increased their confidence.



All five volunteers agreed or strongly agreed volunteering had allowed them to develop new skills.



Four volunteers agreed or strongly agreed volunteering had allowed them to make new social connections / friends.



All five volunteers strongly agreed their volunteering had a positive impact for the staff they supported.



All five volunteers agreed or strongly agreed volunteering had a positive impact for the organisation they volunteer for.

Whilst only a small number of responses were received from Complementary Therapy volunteers, we can see that the responses to all impact statements were overwhelmingly positive.

It appears that the project has been successful in **providing volunteers with an opportunity to develop their confidence, sense of purpose, and skills**. Additionally, for the majority of volunteers, they felt they had been able to **gain new social connections** as a result of volunteering (one individual was neutral).

Further, all volunteers agreed that the Complementary Therapy role had a **positive impact for the staff they supported and the organisation** they volunteer for.



"I really enjoy taking time out for mental health and wellbeing providing back, neck and shoulder massage and foot reflexology for staff - it has helped both myself and colleagues."

Complementary Therapy Volunteer

Impact: Volunteer Satisfaction



Volunteer survey respondents were also asked about the support they had received to undertake their volunteering role, as well as their overarching satisfaction with their volunteering experience.

All volunteers agreed that they had **received sufficient training to undertake their role, as well as the equipment needed**. Further four of five volunteers felt well **supported by the volunteering team and other members of hospital staff**. One volunteer was neutral, but did not provide any comment as to why they felt this way.

Satisfaction levels with the volunteering experience were high, with all volunteers stating the role had met or exceeded expectations and that they were satisfied with their volunteering experience.

Overall, it appears the Complementary Therapy volunteer role appears to have **succeeded in meeting the anticipated outcomes for volunteers**, providing a positive experience which resulted in personal development as well as a feeling of being able to make a difference to those to whom they provided support.

Of the five volunteers who participated in the volunteer survey...



All five volunteers agreed or strongly agreed they had received sufficient training and the equipment needed to undertake their role.



Four volunteers agreed or strongly agreed they had received enough support from the volunteer team, and from other members of staff.



Conclusions and recommendations

- The Complementary Therapy service appears to have been successful in reaching all the intended staff outcomes envisaged as a result of using the service. Staff reported improved emotional wellbeing, working lives, and perceptions of the organisation they work for. Further, there were high levels of satisfaction with the volunteer support received, with the vast majority of staff being very likely to recommend the service to their colleagues.
- Whilst only a small number of responses were received to the volunteer feedback survey, these were representative of the volumes of volunteers delivering the service and their responses indicated they had had a positive experience. Further, feedback illustrates that Complementary Therapy role had supported volunteers to experience all the anticipated outcomes, resulting in personal development as well as a feeling of being able to make a difference to those to whom they provided support.
- We can therefore conclude that the Complementary Therapy service has resulted in a multitude of benefits for both staff and volunteers, and ultimately the organisation. The service is currently funded to run until March 2026 and will continue to deliver treatments and support to staff until this time.
- Following the success of the service, a bid has been submitted to NHS Charities Together to create an additional Complementary Therapy Service. The service will be specifically focused on reducing sickness and absence from musculoskeletal conditions, stress, anxiety, and mental health issues. The service will be led by the Complementary Therapy Lead, with support from three Therapists and an Administrator.

Data limitations

- Within the staff survey, responses were also sought from individuals who did not use the Complementary Therapy service. Both these individuals and those who did use the service were then asked a set of questions in relation to their perceptions of the care they felt able to deliver, and their perceptions of the organisation they work for. Unfortunately, due to a significant discrepancy in the number of responses received from each group, a comparison of the responses was not viable.
- Additionally, due to researchers being brought into the programme once the programme had already gone live, there were limitations on the types of measures that could be undertaken. For example, it was not possible to considering setting up a staff survey before and after programme implementation to determine if there was any impact on staff wellbeing or organisational perceptions as a result of establishing the service.
- Should future evaluation of this service be undertaken, researchers would recommend consideration be given to implementing a data collection method that could obtain feedback from staff before they use the service, and then after. This approach would help determine the causal link between the service and any change in impact measures.

Acknowledgements

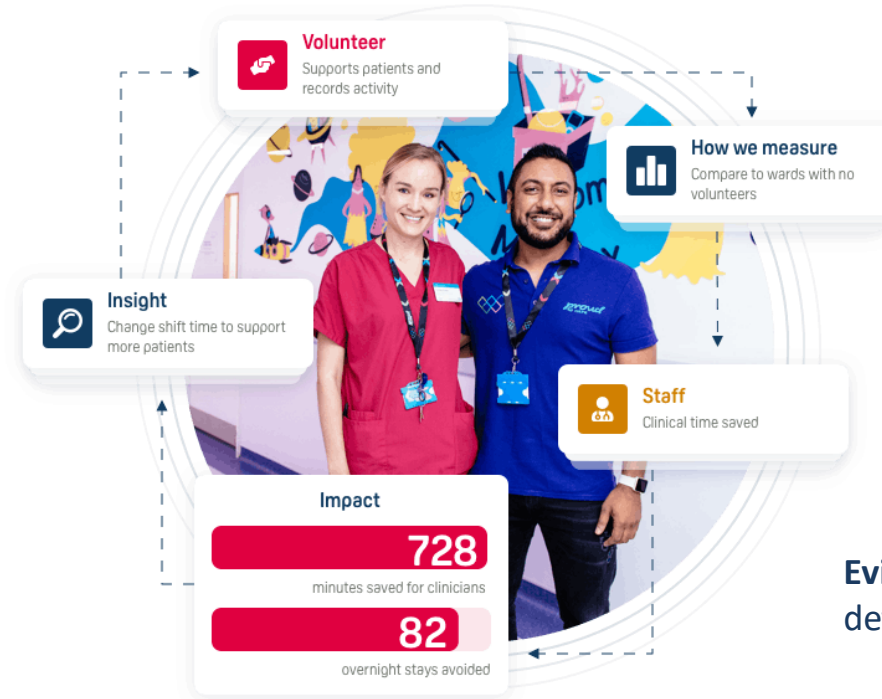
Helpforce would like to pass on our thanks to the Patient & Service User Experience & Volunteer team at Northern Care Alliance, with particular thanks to Sarah Jones, Complementary Therapy Lead, and Lucy Boulter, Head of Volunteering.

We would also like to pass on our thanks to the participating staff and volunteers for providing their insights and feedback - without them, this evaluation would not have been possible.

Appendix: About the Helpforce Insight and Impact Service

What is it?

- The I&I Service is an online tool to help you easily and effectively evaluate your voluntary project or initiative.
- It guides you on a simple 4-step process, from designing outcomes for your beneficiaries through to what data we will need to collect - how, when, and from whom.
- Resulting in an evaluation report that our team produces for you, showing evidence of impact made against the outcomes and insights around how the project is working.



A guide to some key terms we use



Insights provide an understanding of a situation or problem. They help us to share valuable information around what is working well, and what is not working so well, so that we can advise on potential service improvements and developments.



Impact relates to evidence of lasting and sustainable changes. Impact data helps us to understand the value and difference being made as a result of the project.

Evidence is reviewed against the following criteria to determine if it is **compelling**, **promising**, or **limited**:



- Is the sample size / response rate reliable and robust?
- Is the data direct or a proxy measure?
- Is there a causal link between the evidence and the outcome?
- Is there a control group or comparative data set?
- How was the evidence gathered – directly from participants, or via a third party?
- Was the survey question well designed, or has there been signs of misunderstanding by participants?

help*force*

Thank you

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