

Salford Dining Companion Volunteer Service Impact and Insight Evaluation Report - March 2022

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1. Introduction

Volunteers are crucial to the NHS's vision for the future of health and social care, as they work in partnership with skilled staff to perform a variety of roles that support patients, staff and the organisation.

At **Salford Royal, which is part of the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust**, the idea for the Dining Companion role came in the summer of 2018 after a long standing volunteer's husband passed away on one of the wards. The volunteer noted that had she not been able to assist her husband at mealtimes, he may have missed crucial meals because he would not have received the required assistance from the ward staff as they had been rushed off their feet. The role of the Dining Companions volunteer was born.

Dining Companions play a crucial role in the hospital; encouraging and enabling patients to eat and drink, and therefore helping to reduce the risk of malnutrition and dehydration. Dining Companions support patients by supporting patients with their meals and refreshments, and making mealtimes more sociable. They also provide an environment for independence by positioning trays and food/drink utensils so that patients can access them.

Back in March 2020, in the height of the pandemic, all Dining Companion's duties were put on hold. But in July 2021, the Dining Companions were relaunched with the addition of a dedicated mealtime coordinator to train, support and supervise this group of new volunteers.

At the start of the project there were 15 volunteers across six wards supporting patients at mealtimes. By the end of the project, the Dining Companions service had grown to eight wards, with 80 volunteers.

2. Service outcomes

The Dining Companions service supports a multitude of patient, staff, volunteer and organisational outcomes...



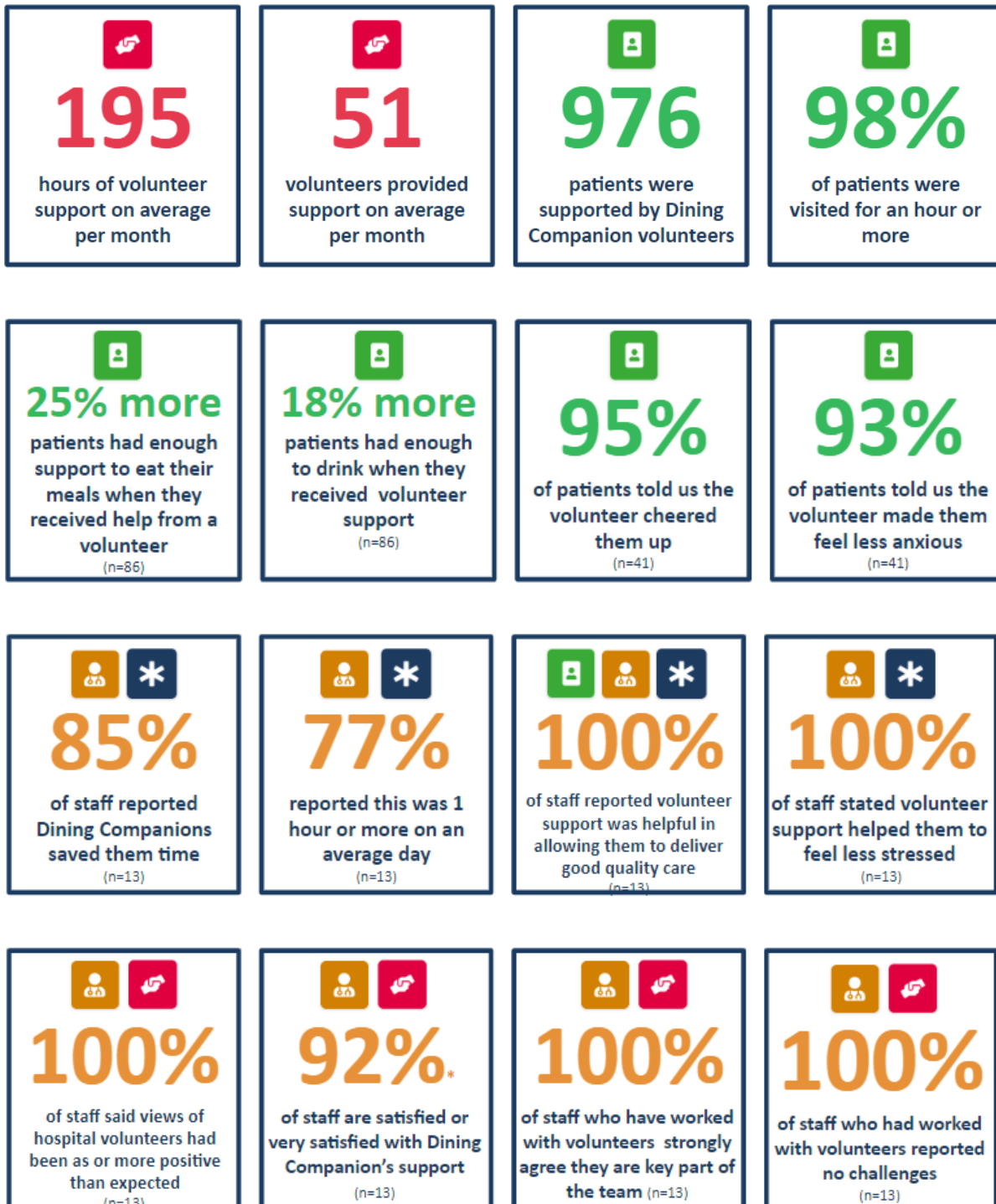
This evaluation will examine quantitative and qualitative feedback received from both staff and patients to evidence the impact the Dining Companions service is having on these outcomes.

The key evaluation questions for this project are:





- Do Dining Companion volunteers improve patient nutrition and hydration levels?
- Do Dining Companion volunteers improve patient emotional wellbeing?
- Do Dining Companion volunteers improve patient's experience?
- Do Dining Companion volunteers improve staff wellbeing and capacity?
- Do staff members see value in the Dining companion volunteers?

3. Finding snapshot

Across September 2021 to January 2022...



Outcomes / impact related to...

-  Patients
-  Volunteers
-  Staff
-  Organisation

4. Methodology

Patients and staff within wards L1, L4, L6 and C2 and stroke rehab were asked to complete the Salford mealtime surveys (please see appendix A and B) across September 2021 to January 2022. Both staff and patients who had and had not received volunteer support were asked to complete the survey as a comparator. In total, we received...

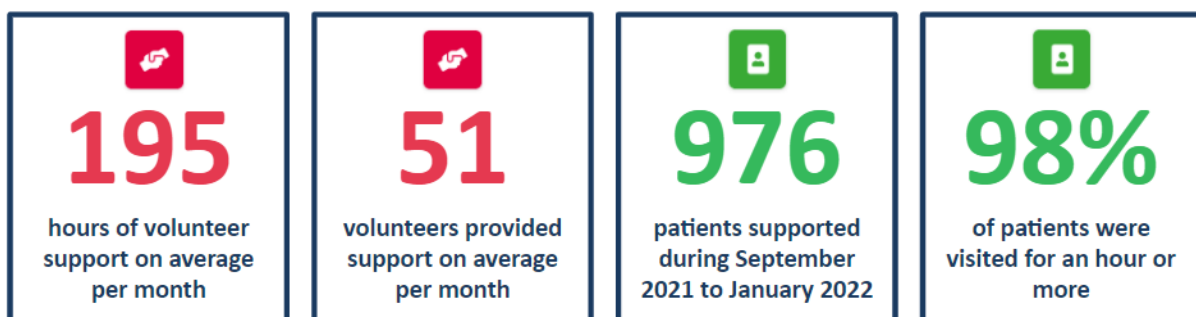


Responses consisted of 41 responses from patients who received support from a volunteer, who were asked to complete the survey after they had had an interaction with a volunteer. 40 responses were received from those who didn't receive volunteer support and a further 5 respondents did not answer this question. The majority of respondents were aged 51 and above (56%) and were of white ethnicity (49%).

Staff were asked to complete the survey at adhoc intervals. We received 13 responses from staff who had received volunteer support, and a further 16 responses from those who had not. The majority (31%) of responses were from staff working on ward C2. 14 responses were from healthcare assistants, 11 from nurses and we received 1 response from a doctor, housekeeper, matron and allied health professional.

We also reviewed system data across the same period to determine the number of patients supported, volunteer hours and other Dining Companion volunteer service data.

5. Evaluation findings



Between September 2021 and January 2022, volunteers provided support for on average 195 hours per month. We saw the highest number of volunteers during November 2022 at

62 volunteers undertaking a volunteering shift. The lowest numbers (43 volunteers) were seen in January 2022.

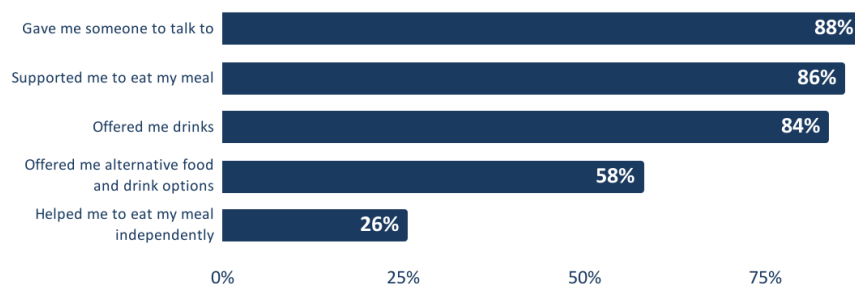
976 patients were supported during this time period. Of the patients who had received volunteer support (41 patients), 98% reported volunteers spent an hour on more with them each visit. 81% of respondents who received volunteer support reported they were visited at least twice a week, with the remaining 19% stating they were supported once a week.

Do Dining Companion volunteers improve patient nutrition and hydration levels?

Volunteers provided support on wards at mealtimes which helped to ensure that patients had enough to eat and drink during their hospital stay. When asked what contributions hospital volunteers had made, **92% of staff felt Dining Companion volunteers improve patient nutrition and hydration levels by supporting mealtimes.**

When asked what support they received from their volunteer visits, **over 4 in 5 patients reported they were supported to eat their meal** and over a quarter of patients stated they were supported to eat independently. Further, **over 4 in 5 patients reported the volunteer offered them drinks.**

Chart 1: Types of volunteer support received by patient

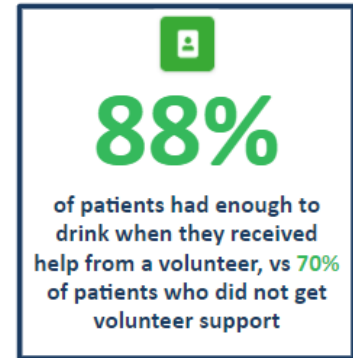


This support was witnessed by staff who had worked alongside volunteers. **100% reported they had observed Dining Companions supporting patients to eat.** 92% also reported seeing volunteers providing encouragement to patients during mealtimes.



73% of patients who received volunteer support reported they always had enough support to eat their meals during their hospital stay. **This was 25% higher than those who did not receive volunteer support,** where only 48% stated they had enough support to eat their meals.

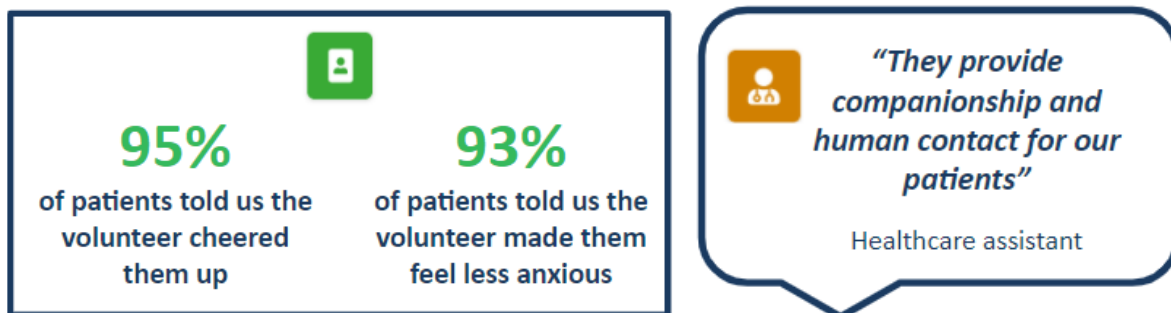
88% of patients who were supported by volunteers stated that they received enough to drink during their hospital stay. **This is 18% more than those who did not receive volunteer support.** Of those patients, 23% told us they did not have enough to drink as they were not provided with enough help, with 8% reporting this was because they weren't offered enough to drink.



This therefore suggests that volunteers can help improve patient nutrition, reducing the risk of malnutrition and dehydration.

Do Dining Companion volunteers improve patient emotional wellbeing?

From chart 1, we can see that 88% of patients reported that the volunteer support gave them someone to talk to. When asked what impact the volunteers had for them...



Staff mirrored these statements, with **92% of staff reporting they had observed volunteers providing patients with companionship** / someone to talk to. When asked about volunteer contributions, **46% of staff with volunteer support stated that they bring human kindness into busy hospital life**, and 38% stated that they provide essential reassurance and company to patients when we are stretched for time.

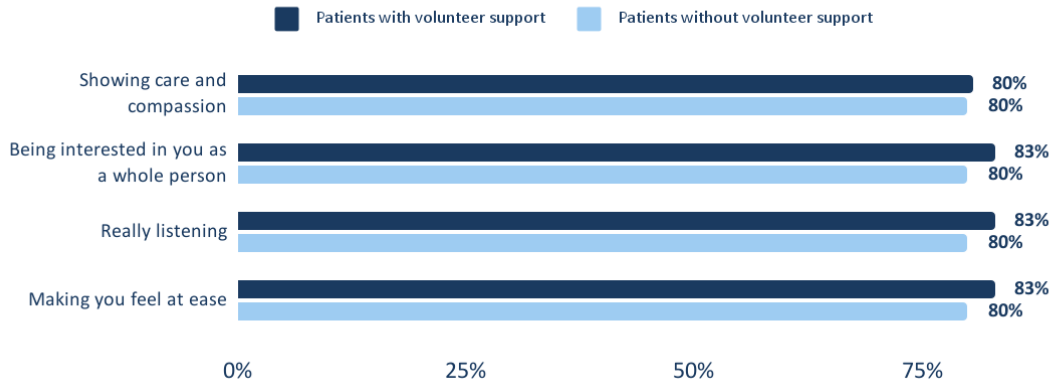
With the increased support during mealtimes, but also the additional companionship that the Dining Companions volunteers provide, our findings suggest that these roles do have a positive impact on both patients' physical and emotional wellbeing.

Do Dining Companion volunteers improve patient's experience?

When asked if they would recommend the hospital to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment, **88% of patients who received volunteer support reported they were likely or extremely likely to recommend.** However, this figure was **higher for those who did not receive volunteer support, at 93% of patients.** However, whilst making no

impact on overarching levels of hospital experience, when asked about individual aspects of their hospital and care experience, we did see higher perceived levels of consultation and relational empathy reported for those who had received volunteer support...

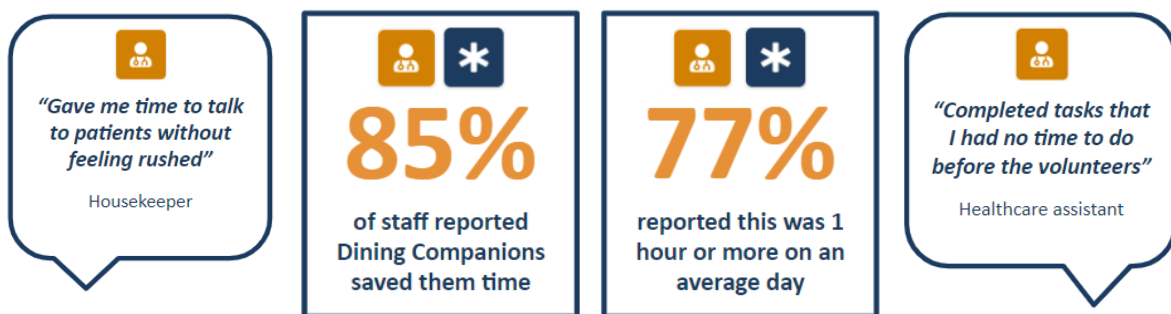
**Chart 2: Patient's perceived consultation and relational empathy
% responding with excellent, very good or good**



Patients who received volunteer support were more likely to rate these elements of their care as excellent or very good - for example, this was 5% higher for ‘being interested in you as a whole person’ and ‘really listening’.

Whilst we cannot account for other factors impacting upon a patients perceptions of these care indicators, volunteer support has been a consistent theme for these patients. This data therefore suggests that volunteer support may contribute to positive experiences against individual care indicators, improving patients overall hospital stay experience.

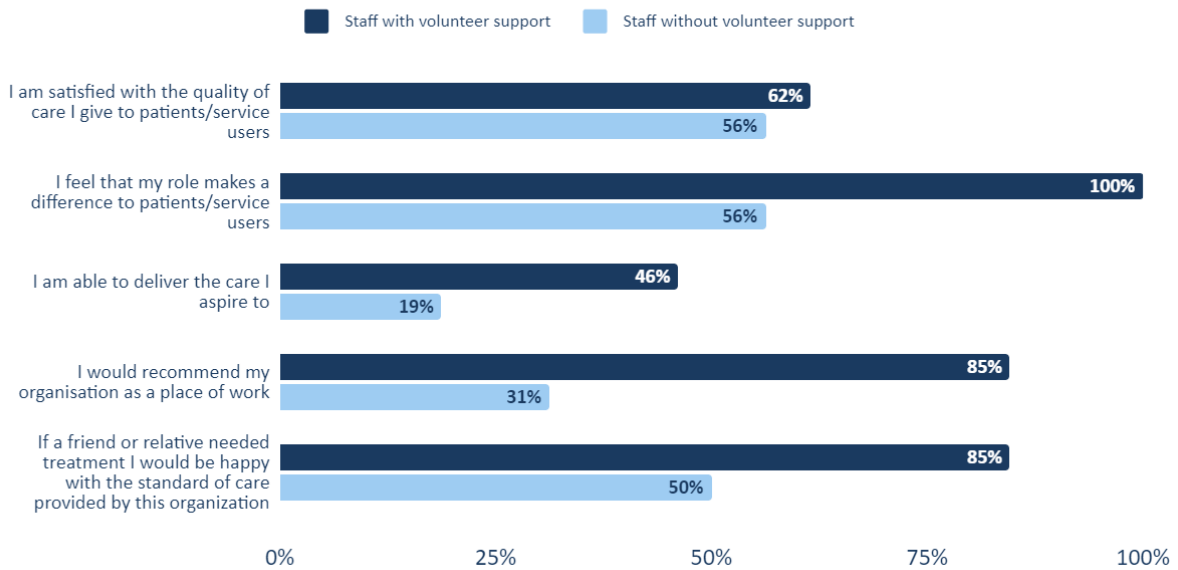
Do Dining Companion volunteers improve staff wellbeing and capacity?



In relation to staff capacity, **staff reported Dining Companion volunteers saved them a significant amount of time.** With this extra time they were able to complete tasks they would otherwise not have been able to complete, completed more tasks, or were able to concentrate on other patients.

We can also see a marked improvement in the reported levels of role satisfaction and engagement for staff members who worked alongside volunteers...

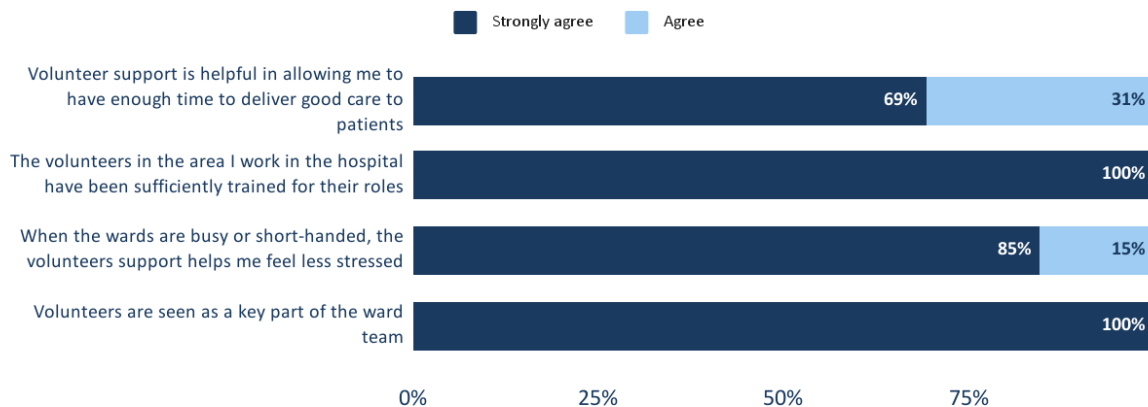
**Chart 3: Quality of care and staff engagement
With vs without volunteer support**



Perhaps most notably, **44% more staff reported that they feel their role makes a difference to patients**. Further, there was a 54% difference in the number of staff who would recommend their organisation as a place of work. Whilst this may not be entirely attributable to the volunteer support they received, further evidence suggests that volunteers have made a positive impact for staff.

When asked about the difference volunteer support had made to them, 100% of staff agreed or strongly agreed on all 4 impact measures...

Chart 4: Difference volunteers have made to staff



100% of staff stated the volunteer support they received helped them to feel less stressed when wards are busy (agreed/strongly agreed), therefore suggesting that volunteers not only support staff time and capacity, but also their emotional wellbeing.

Do staff members see the value of Dining companion volunteers?

100% of staff who had worked with Dining Companions said views of hospital volunteers had been as they expected or more positive than expected, with **92%* of these staff satisfied or very satisfied with the volunteer support they had received.**

As seen on chart 4 above, **100% of the staff strongly agree that volunteers are seen as a key part of their team**, therefore suggesting they are fully integrated into and valued within the wards. Some of the quotes provided by hospital colleagues through the survey help to demonstrate this...

	<i>"They are a god send to us"</i>	<i>"They have a huge impact with patients and staffs time management"</i>	<i>"Amazing people and see the difference they make"</i>	<i>"Our ward couldn't cope without the support of the dining companions"</i>
Healthcare assistant		Healthcare assistant	Nurse	Healthcare assistant

When asked if there were any challenges in hospital volunteering, **100% of staff who had worked with volunteers said there were no challenges.** However, 31% of staff who had no experience of working with volunteers stated that there was a lack of clarity around volunteer roles, and 19% felt there was too much variation in how volunteers do things. This suggests that those colleagues who do not receive volunteer support may have mixed perceptions of volunteer services.

However, some staff who do not currently work with volunteers felt that Dining Companions would be very valued on their wards...

	
<i>"The dining companion service would really help our ward and we would be grateful to know our patients were being supported at mealtimes as we don't always have the time do this"</i>	<i>"We would love to have volunteers come and help our patients at mealtimes, we are short staffed and would therefore free up staff to complete other duties."</i>
Healthcare assistant	Healthcare assistant

Our evidence therefore suggests that the Dining Companion role is not only valued by staff, but is an integral part of service delivery for the wards in which it operates.

*Data recorded as to 85%, with 8% being extremely unsatisfied. However this appears to be an error as when asked why they feel this way they stated "Our ward couldn't cope without the support of the dining companions".

6. Conclusions

In summary, the evaluation of the Dining Companion volunteer service at Salford continues to demonstrate the immense value volunteering can bring to acute settings. Not only do these volunteers provide much needed support to vulnerable patients to ensure their nutrition and hydration needs are met, but they provide emotional comfort and companionship during their hospital stay.

Whilst volunteer services may not have a direct impact on patients likelihood of recommending the hospital services, there is evidence to suggest they do impact on several elements of a patient's care, including their sense of being seen as a whole person and being fully listened to, suggesting hospital volunteers do contribute to a more positive patient experience.

Staff who have worked with volunteers praise the service, recognising the impact it has for both patients and themselves and their colleagues. Dining Companions save staff valuable time, and allow them additional opportunity to provide the level of care they wish to give their patients. Further, by receiving volunteer support staff's own wellbeing is improved by reducing workplace stress.

It can be concluded, therefore, that the Dining Companions service leads to a multitude of positive outcomes to staff, patients, volunteers and the organisation.

7. Appendices

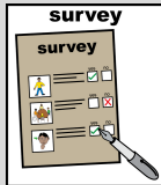
Appendix A - Patient mealtime survey - Please note, some of the questions in the survey below have been altered since the survey took place.

Hospital number

H.....



Salford Care Organisation
Northern Care Alliance NHS Group



**Salford Royal Foundation Trust
Meal Time Survey**



Name of ward you have been a patient on

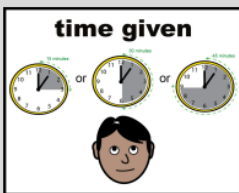
1

Were you supported by a volunteer during your hospital stay?



Yes No Maybe

2



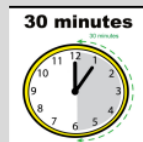
How much time did the volunteer spend with you each visit?



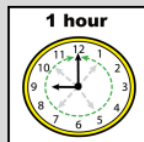
5 minutes



15 minutes



30 minutes



1 hour

More
Than
1 Hour

3

How often did you spend time with a volunteer?

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Everyday

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Every other day

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Twice a Week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

Once a week

4

What did the volunteer do ?



Offered support at mealtimes



Offered me drinks



Gave me someone to talk to



Read a newspaper with me



Did activities with me
(crosswords, played games)

We are interested to see what difference having
volunteer support has made to you.

Do you agree with the following statements?

4 **The volunteer has cheered me up**



		
Yes	Not Sure	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 **The volunteer made me feel less anxious**



		
Yes	Not Sure	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 **Did you get enough help from volunteers at mealtimes**



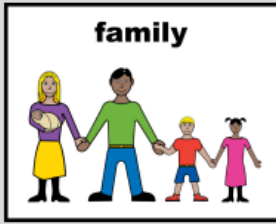
			No help needed
Yes	Sometimes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7 **During your stay did you get enough to drink?**



			
Yes	No, because i did not get enough help to drink	No, because i was not offered enough drinks	No, for another reason
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





8 How likely are you to recommend this hospital to your friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment



- Extremely Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

9 Please rate the following statements about your current hospital stay

How good was your health care provider at....

 <p>care for you</p>	<p>Showing Care and Compassion (seemingly concerned, connecting with you on a human level: not being indifferent or "detached")</p>												
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Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Does not apply								
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>								
	<p>Being interested in you as a whole person (asking / knowing relevant details about your life, your situation: not treating you as just a number)</p>												
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>								
 <p>ask you questions</p>	<p>Really listening (Paying close attention to what you are saying: not looking at the notes or computer as you were talking)</p>												
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>								
 <p>friendly staff</p>	<p>Making you feel at ease (Introducing him/herself, explaining his/her position, being friendly and warm towards you, treating you with respect: not cold or abrupt)</p>												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Poor</th> <th>Fair</th> <th>Good</th> <th>Very Good</th> <th>Excellent</th> <th>Does not apply</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Does not apply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Appendix B - Staff mealtime survey

Dining Companions Staff Survey Aug 21

1. About you

1. Please tell us which ward/department you are on *

2. What is your job role? *

- Nurse
- Healthcare assistant
- Allied Health professionals (e.g. Physiotherapist etc.)
- Doctor
- Other (please specify):

2. About Volunteers

3. Do you have volunteers that support your department/ward? *

- Yes (Go the question 4)
- No (Go to question 12)
- Not sure (Go to question 12)

4. What did the volunteer do? (Please select all that apply)

- Provided companionship for patients/someone to talk to
- Supported relatives
- Provided drinks/refreshments for patients
- Encouraged patients to eat (e.g. snacks/mealtime)
- Supported patients to eat (feeding)
- Did activities/read newspaper etc. with the patient
- Other (please specify):

5. Have your views about hospital volunteers changed at all since your first interaction with a hospital volunteer?

- No, my experience with them has been very much what I had expected
- Yes, my experience with them has been more negative than what I had expected
- Yes, my experience with them has been more positive than what I had expected

6. If your views did change, what exactly was different in your view?

7. Thinking about your most recent experience with a volunteer, how much - if any - time did they save you on an average day?
i.e. by supporting patients with non clinical tasks, freeing you to focus on clinical tasks

- Saved me no time
- Don't know
- Saved less than 5 minutes
- Saved 5-10 minutes
- Saved 10-20 minutes
- Saved 20-30 minutes
- Saved 30-45 minutes
- Saved 1 hour or more

8. If volunteers have given you extra time, what did you do with this time?

9. We are interested in what difference having volunteer support on your ward has made to you.
Please tell us how far you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
Volunteer support is helpful in allowing me to have enough time to deliver good care to patients	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The volunteers in the area I work in the hospital have been sufficiently trained for their roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When the wards are busy or short-handed, the volunteers support helps me feel less stressed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteers are seen as a key part of the ward team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Satisfaction with volunteers

Please rate your overall satisfaction with the volunteer support you have received.

- Very unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

11. If you are 'Very unsatisfied / unsatisfied' - why do you feel this way?

12. In your opinion, which of the following do hospital volunteers contribute to?

Please choose your top three options *

- Reducing pressure on staff on wards
- Freeing up staff time to spend on clinical care
- Increasing patient satisfaction by providing vital non-medical support on wards
- Improving patient nutrition and hydration levels by helping at meal times and during the day
- Providing essential reassurance and company to patients when we are stretched for time
- Bringing human kindness into busy hospital life
- Enhancing the level of care provided
- Improving the mood within the hospital
- Collecting more feedback from patients
- Increasing patient and visitor satisfaction and experience within the hospital
- Reducing readmissions to hospital by helping patients make a smooth transition back home after discharge
- Supporting patients to be independent
- Volunteer make none of these contributions
- Other (please specify):

13. What are the challenges of hospital volunteering?

Please choose up to three options *

- Volunteers take up too much staff time
- There is a lack of clarity about volunteer roles
- There is too much variation in how volunteers do things
- volunteers are unreliable
- Volunteers change too often
- None of the above
- Other (please specify):

14. Do the following statements apply to you and your job? (NHS Staff Survey questions) *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	N/A to me
I am satisfied with the quality of care I give to patients/service users	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that my role makes a difference to patients/service users	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to deliver the care I aspire to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend my organization as a place of work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a friend or relative needed treatment I would be happy with the standard of care provided by this organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Additional Comments