

The impact of Meet & Greet and Active Responder volunteers at Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust

Meet & Greet volunteers and their impact on DNAs

Background

The Meet & Greet service at Salford Royal uses volunteers to help patients get to and from their hospital appointments.¹ The volunteers receive specialist training to enable them to assist anyone who is anxious about their hospital visit, or who requires additional assistance when they arrive. Patients and carers can book Meet & Greet support in advance of their visit and, as part of the booking process, volunteers provide reassurance about how individual requirements will be met on the day. The service supports people with a wide range of needs, including those with physical, sensory and learning disabilities and provides access to mobility scooters and wheelchairs where required.

Missed hospital outpatient appointments can lead to an inefficient use of staff and increased waiting times for patients. It is estimated that each patient who ‘Did Not Attend’ (DNA) a planned outpatient appointment costs the NHS £160.² During 2019/20 Salford Royal had 56,695 DNAs related to outpatient appointments.³ The Meet & Greet service is expected to help address this issue as well as contributing to improved patient experience.

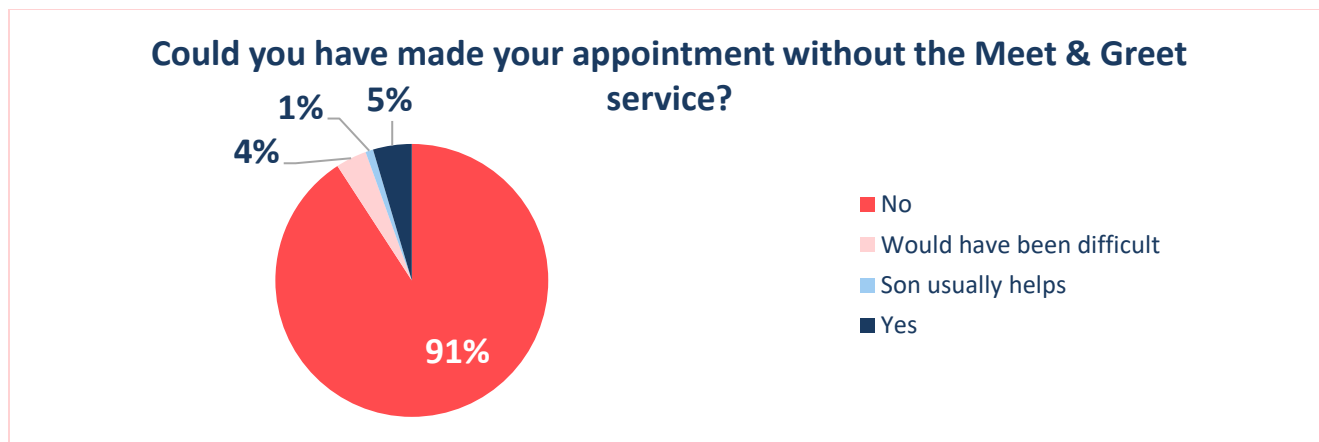
Findings

The Meet & Greet service was used 683 times between April 2020 and June 2021 and on 109 occasions during this period the use of the service was booked in advance. Each patient who booked in advance was asked to respond to the question “Could you have made your appointment without the Meet & Greet service?”. The majority of respondents (99 patients, 91% of the total) said that they could not have made their appointment without the help of the Meet & Greet service. A further 4% said it would have been difficult to attend without the service. Only 5% could have made their appointment without the service.

¹ [About the Service \(srft.nhs.uk\)](https://www.srft.nhs.uk/about-the-service)

² SRFT standard outpatient appointment letter

³ NHS Digital, Hospital Episode Statistics for England. Outpatient statistics, 2019-20, <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/4C/D1AE82/hosp-epis-stat-outp-pla-2019-20-tab.xlsx>



Based on the NHS missed outpatient appointment cost of £160, it can be estimated that by helping to prevent ninety-nine missed appointments, during the period covered by the data, the Meet & Greet service has contributed to a saving of approximately £16K for the NHS.

The Meet & Greet service has introduced a survey to ask those who use the service to provide feedback. So far five responses have been received and these have all been largely positive about the service. All five patients were very satisfied with their experience of using the service and would recommend it to others. Four patients felt that they would not have been able to attend their appointment without the service, and one said that they could only have attended with extreme difficulty.

The following are examples of some of the feedback received to date:

“I was wandering (totally lost) and [the volunteer] came to me and took me to where I should have been. I couldn’t have managed without! Many thanks - a wonderful service!” – Patient

“I had a great experience with the gentleman who took me to Orthotics and then came back to take me to radiology. Upon me finishing the gentleman had come to check I had finished before he went home. He was an absolute pleasure to speak to and I could not have done it without him. Thank you very much!” – Patient

Active Responder volunteers and their impact on staff time

Background

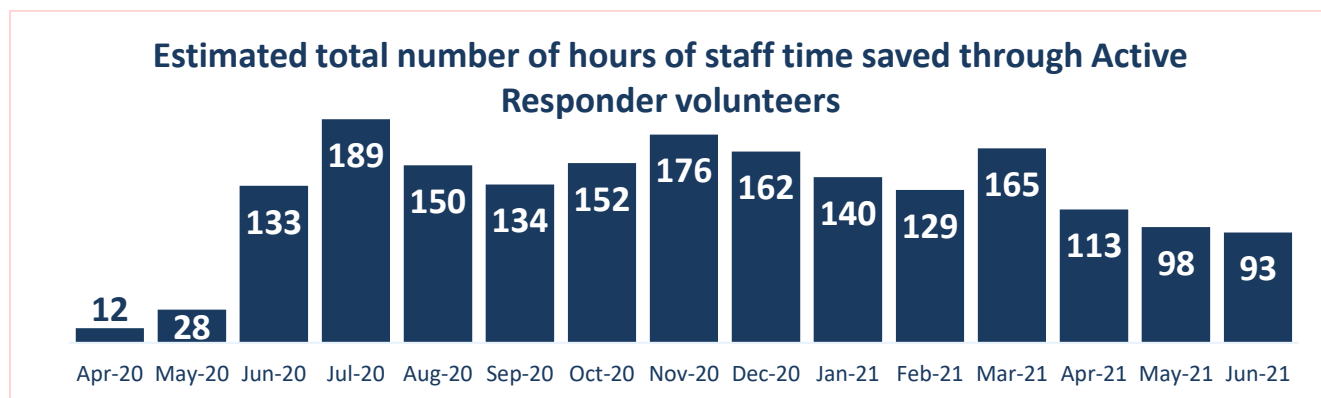
Salford Royal has recruited and trained a team of Active Responder volunteers to provide a flexible and easy to access volunteer service that can be fully responsive to the fluctuating demands in a busy hospital setting. These volunteers undertake a wide range of tasks in the hospital, including delivery and collection tasks. The delivery and collection tasks undertaken by Active Responders are expected to free up paid staff to focus more time on acute clinical tasks because previously the paid staff would have had to make these trips themselves. To help demonstrate this staff impact the Salford Royal volunteer service has been collecting information about the number and type of tasks undertaken by Active Responders and has also undertaken a study to measure how long, on average, each of these tasks takes.

Findings

During the 15-month period between April 2020 and June 2021, Active Responder volunteers made a total of 13,043 delivery and collection trips, including 7,290 patient package deliveries, 3,443 pathology lab runs, and 2,310 pharmacy / prescriptions runs. This means that, on average, 870 deliveries were made by volunteers per month.

Based on the average times recorded for each type of delivery and collection task we can estimate that the Active Responders are likely to have saved trust staff approximately 1,875 hours over this period. This is an average of 125 hours of staff time saved every month.

The two graphs below visualise the estimated staff time saved, in hours, by month. In the second chart the data is broken down by type of delivery or collection task.



Estimated number of hours of staff time saved, by type of volunteer delivery

