

HELPFORCE I&I CASE STUDY 1

To see this project set up within our I&I tool please visit [here](#)

Measuring the impact of activity & mobility support volunteers Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

The challenge...

Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (SWB) believed that patient deconditioning, taking place within acute medical and community wards, was contributing to poor patient outcomes and additional demands on staff and services. An activity & mobility support volunteer service was introduced to help address these issues. The service provided patients with:

- Encouragement to leave bed and get dressed into day clothes
- Encouragement and support with specially designed mobility-related activities
- Mental stimulation and encouragement at the bedside
- Chair-based games to provide further mental stimulation and activity.¹

As part of the Volunteering Innovators Programme (VIP) Helpforce was invited to work with SWB to understand what, if any, impact the volunteer service was delivering for the trust, its staff and its patients.

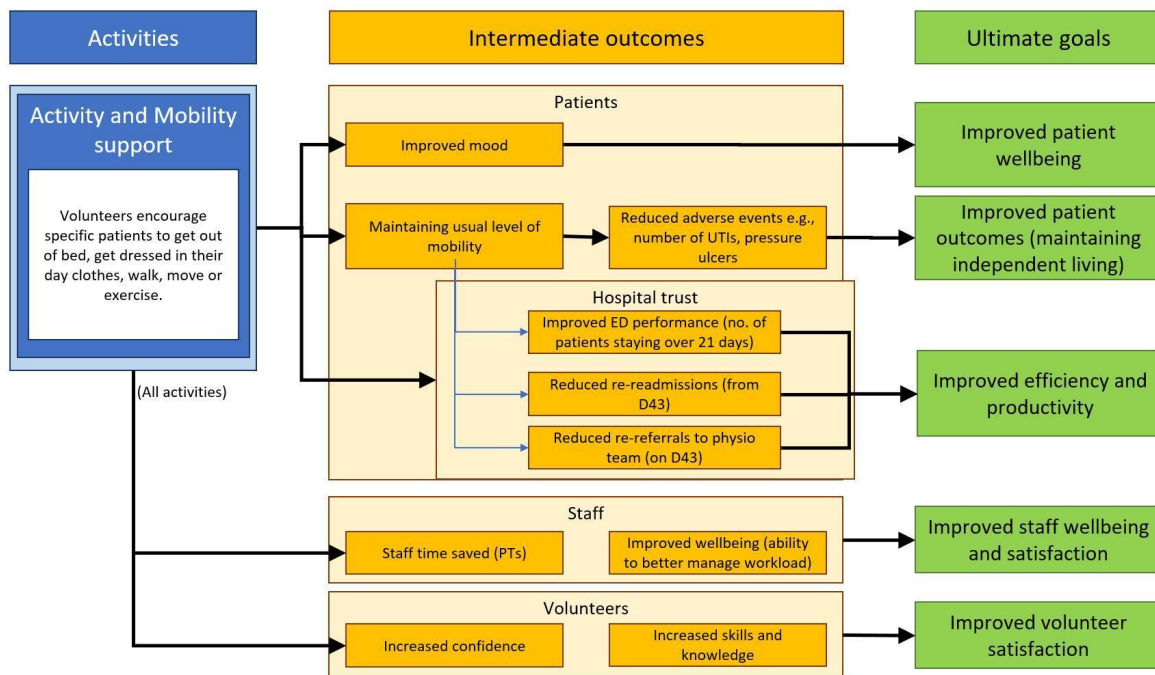
Our approach...

Helpforce worked closely with key stakeholders from SWB to design and implement a methodology for gathering insights and recording impact that would align with the Trust's need for continuous improvement in the service and contribute to further development of the VIP volunteering evidence base.

Our Insight & Impact (I&I) approach combined three key elements:

1. Co-design of a **Theory of Change** setting out links between activities, intermediate outcomes and ultimate goals related to the service

¹ More information about the service can be found [here](#)



2. Development of an **I&I approach plan** setting out key information about the service, its objectives, prioritised outcomes for measurement, research questions and the metrics to be used to record impact (including bespoke metrics tailored to the needs of the Trust as well as more generic metrics used across all VIP sites)

Key evaluation questions

- Do mobility volunteers help patients maintain their usual level of mobility?
- Do patients have improved mood as a result of volunteer support?
- Are volunteers satisfied in their role as a mobility volunteer?
- Does the volunteer mobility service help to reduce referrals to the physio team?

Activity capture

- Number of volunteers
- Number of volunteer hours
- Number of patients supported
- Frequency of volunteer visits per month

3. **Ongoing support** with implementation of the I&I plan and assistance with data collection and analysis, including analysing data from SWB's Better Impact system.

Helpforce also provided access to some useful tools:

- The **Helpforce Impact Reporting (HIR) tool** to support consistent recording of volunteer related activity and survey data

- **Helpforce's standardised surveys** for staff, patients and volunteers which helped with consistency of analytical approach across the VIP.

The outcome...

By working with Helpforce to implement a robust I&I approach for the service, SWB was able to develop an evidence base to help strengthen the case for current and future investment in volunteering.

By January 2020, SWB had 58 activity & mobility support volunteers operating across three wards. During 2019/20 volunteers provided:

- **Over 500 patient interactions** involving support for walking and exercise
- Encouragement to patients not to stay in their pyjamas all day which led to **nearly 200 patients putting on their day clothes** who would not otherwise have been expected to do so.

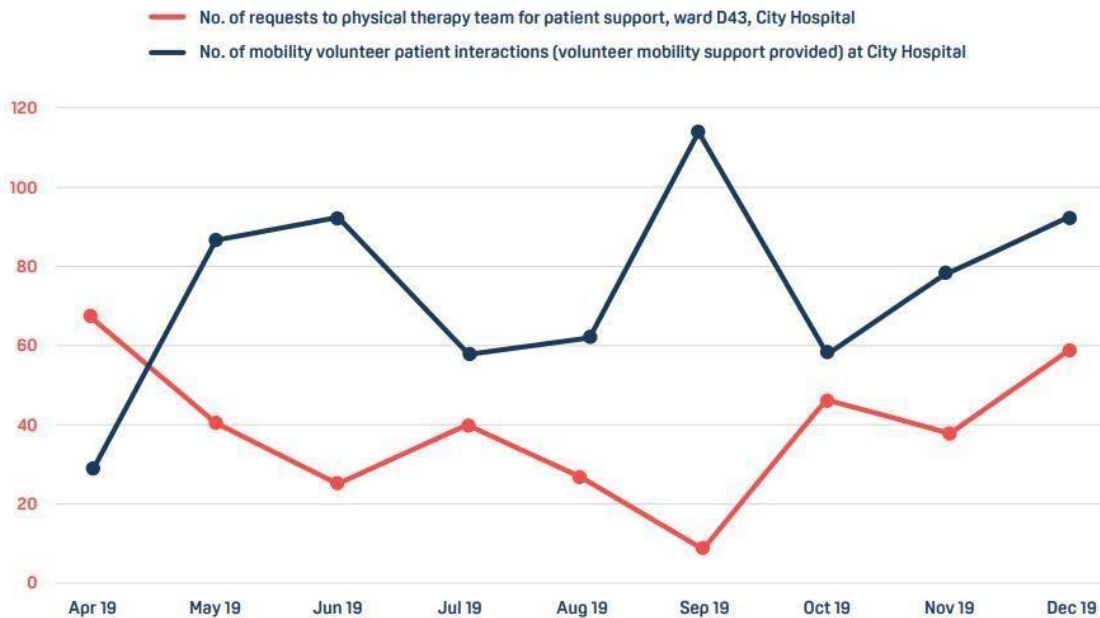
The evidence collected during the VIP suggests that these, and other related volunteer activities, have contributed to:

- **Greater job satisfaction amongst staff** assisted by the service when compared to the corresponding data for the whole trust recorded in the NHS staff survey (higher for all five related statements)²
- Between 5 and 60 minutes per day in **time savings for Allied Health Professionals**
- **A decrease in the number of re-referrals to the therapy team** on a ward for patients who have been assessed as medically and physically fit for discharge from hospital. Such re-referrals usually occur when there has been an unexpected deterioration in the patient's condition.

There was also some evidence, worthy of more long-term investigation, of a relationship between the deployment of volunteers and an increase in the number of frail elderly patients discharged to usual place of residence.

² The five statements are: 1) I am satisfied with the quality of care I give to patients/service users, 2) I feel that my role makes a difference to patients/service users, 3) I am able to deliver the care I aspire to, 4) I would recommend my organisation as a place to work, 5) If a friend or relative needed treatment I would be happy with the standard of care provided by this organisation

VOLUNTEER AND THERAPIST CONTACTS WITH PATIENTS ALREADY ASSESSED AS READY FOR HOSPITAL DISCHARGE, CITY HOSPITAL (APRIL - DECEMBER 2019)



When **volunteers support patient mobility**, patients are less likely to be re-referred to physiotherapy

Based on trend analysis in discharge ward (Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust)