

Creating Your HelpForce IMPACT CASE STUDY

A HelpForce Impact Case Study is a core way for volunteer services teams/ managers (VSTs/VSMs) to gather a narrative about the qualitative impact of volunteering in an accessible way. They tell a human story within the context of a high impact volunteering intervention. They can be a powerful tool to help VSTs/VSMs highlight the difference volunteering services make to patients, staff, and volunteers.

What makes an Impact Case Study different than a 'regular' case study and/or capturing quotes?

An Impact Case Study is a structured and systematic method of capturing case studies which highlights impact in a way that's clear (e.g., follows SMART guidance) and logical (e.g., follows the PROVE framework). See more detail below.

A strong Impact Case Study will tell a story, but do it in a way that's informed by robust details and data.

When taken as a collective, case studies reveal what makes an intervention successful so that it can be replicated at scale; and mobilise other Trusts to replicate your successes.

Writing for your audience

The Impact Case Studies you generate could be read by:

- Colleagues at your Trust;
- Peers at other Trusts;
- By the public through HelpForce media (e.g., HelpForce Annual Report, on HelpForce's website); and,
- As an influencing tool in HelpForce to galvanise support and Trusts' participation across the NHS long-term.

Word Count

To keep a case study punchy and data rich, the maximum word count for your case study is 600 words.

The Impact Case Study checklist

Before you start writing your case study, it's helpful to keep the following tips in mind:

- Prioritise the positive effect of the intervention on your key stakeholders: patients, staff, volunteers
- Think about your Theory of Change and the links between your volunteer activities and the outcomes you hope to achieve. Your 'impact narrative' should be consistent.
- Make the impact that you describe SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited. Use this guidance in the way that you describe the intervention that you are celebrating.
- In addition to quantitative impact data that you are able to collect and present, also link your data to the wellbeing of your stakeholders.

Let's get started:

How to create a strong Impact Case

PROVE your Impact:

The PROVE method provides a simple structure for writing your case study:

P - POINT

Get to the point of your case study quickly. In one or two sentences, state the change that your intervention has made for the main stakeholder and one key piece of evidence to grasp the readers' attention. A quote or testimonial can help to personalise your point in an engaging way.

The Dementia Activities Volunteers restore moments of identity to patients who may otherwise lose their hobbies and interests whilst in hospital or through their disease. Our programme led to a 28% improvement in the mood and wellbeing of patients with dementia.

"An angel arrived in the form of a volunteer who invited my husband to a Memory Lane Lunch Club...in that moment, my husband was my husband again in a way I never thought possible."

R - REASON & O - OPPORTUNITY

Imagine you are a playwright and this is Act 1 of your story. State the reasons i.e. the need or gap that the intervention helped to address. The opportunity is the wider context that made the opportunity timely and achievable. Consider:

- What was the stakeholder experience before the intervention?
- What was ward life like for patients before the intervention?
- How was the situation before the intervention affecting patient care?
- Why did you choose this time to introduce the intervention?

To continue the earlier case study example

Prior to the Dementia Activities Volunteers, elderly patients often relied on nurses and health care assistants for companionship. Staff reported feeling frustrated that they could not do more, however their priority remained the day to day business of nursing care. Patients and carers did not have a clear place to discuss the psycho-social needs of their loved ones, or an opportunity to continue with the types of activities that patients enjoyed in their own homes. Our evidence has demonstrated that the hospital missed an essential opportunity to increase the mood and wellbeing of patients and enhance the dementia care they provided.

V - Verify

This is Act 2 of your story. You want to define how the volunteering service intervened and the problem was solved.

- How did you go about introducing the intervention or change?

This is your detailed narrative and may have more technical information about how and why the intervention works. Be sure to break it down so that the reader truly understands what you did.

We recruited over 50 Dementia Activities Volunteers from our local community. They received expert training from a range of clinical professionals, including Speech & Language Therapists, Dieticians and Physiotherapists in order to understand the existing standards of Dementia Care and the toolkit of techniques and approaches that clinicians felt were appropriate for volunteers to provide. The focus of training was to equip volunteers with techniques such as reminiscence therapy and a range of media including art, music, communal meals and talents that volunteers brought from their own lives, such as beauty therapy to create opportunities that actively invited patients to participate at a level that was possible for them. Given the challenges and emotional maturity that this role required, volunteers received regular support through 121 mentorship with the ward psychologist and group support in order to reflect on their practice and take an action learning approach to enhance their skills and comfort-levels in the role.

E - Evidence & Echo

This is the final act of your story and the messages that you want to leave with your reader. Use real numbers, statistics and facts to back up the impact of your volunteering intervention. Try to incorporate data that evidences the impact of the role on each stakeholder, the patient, carer, staff members and volunteers as well as the day to day life of the ward or hospital.

Our work with HelpForce has enabled strong evidence (outlined below) that the Dementia Activities Volunteers is a scheme that genuinely impacts the lives of patients and day to day efficiency of nursing time on the ward. We found that Dementia Activities Volunteers:

- *Achieved a 28% improvement in patient mood and wellbeing (The Social Innovation Partnership 2016; a pre-post analysis of mood and wellbeing on a 10 point scale)*
- *Consumption of prescribed snacks increased by one third when served at a Memory Lane Lunch Club compared with those prescribed for patients to consume at bed-side.*
- *Health care assistants reported each hour of group therapeutic activities doubled the amount of time they were able to spend with patients with the most complex needs*
- *Volunteer satisfaction led to a 86% volunteer retention rate after one year; the highest for volunteers in any role at the Trust.*

E - Echo

Leave your reader with an echo of the original point of the intervention and the strongest results that you saw. Use a quote or specific example to humanise your data if you can.

Dementia Volunteers therefore demonstrably increased the mood and wellbeing of patients, released time to care for more complex patients and resulted in volunteer satisfaction levels evidenced in the retention rates for this role. In one carers' experience, she states "My husband ate his meal and chatted for the first time in his three-week hospital stay." This role restores the best possible level of functioning for patients who may otherwise have deteriorated in their mood and wellbeing through the daily stressors of a hospital experience and unfamiliar environment.

Help and Support

If you want to talk through which interventions make the strongest case studies, or if you need help with your first draft (or indeed a second pair of eyes to edit a 3rd draft!), contact your HelpForce Trust Engagement Lead who will be happy to help.