

VOLUNTEER IMPACT AND OUTCOMES IN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUSTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

OCTOBER 2019



helpforce



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Authors

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1. Summary of Findings and Highlights

Volunteers

- Out of 132 volunteers the total number of patients they interact with or have had a patient interact with them in one shift, is on average 2,500 patients across all Trusts (19 patients to one volunteer).
- All volunteers reported that volunteering had an impact on the volunteer's health and wellbeing, that they felt part of their community, made new friends and developed new skills.
- All volunteers said that volunteering informed and offered understanding of different cultures and religions.
- All volunteers agreed that volunteering helped them develop trust and new relationships that they would not develop if they had not been involved in volunteering.
- Volunteers reported that there can be challenges and barriers that they have to overcome when volunteering with the Trusts.

Staff

- There are at least 30 roles that volunteers are involved in across the Trusts.
- Staff said that involving volunteers in their Trusts helps with their own health and wellbeing and supports them in the delivery of a quality service.
- Staff could show that volunteering informed and increased their understanding of different cultures and religions.
- All staff confirmed that they had developed new bonds of trust and developed new relationships through volunteers being involved in their area of service delivery.
- Staff were unanimous in their belief that volunteers were essential to service delivery.

Service user and patients

- 86 patients and service users interacted with 314 volunteers in one visit across all Trusts. This is on average 3 volunteers per visit per patient.
- All patients were able to say that volunteer involvement had helped improve their health and wellbeing during their engagement with the Health Service.

- Patients and service users were able to show that having a volunteer had informed and developed their understanding of different cultures and religions to service users/patients.
- All patients and service users said volunteers had helped make their experience a better one when engaging with the Health Service.
- Patients and service users were able to say that volunteers were really important to their experience and not just an extra add on service.

Wider community and partners

- All voluntary, community or official partners within the Health Service were able to evidence how volunteering impacts on their service.
- Partners and stakeholders agreed that volunteering within our Trusts can also support morale and wellbeing in their own organisations.
- All partners and stakeholders agreed that volunteering within our Trusts could raise awareness of different cultural and religious back grounds.
- All partners and stakeholders agreed that volunteering within our Trusts can create more cohesive communities.
- Partners and stakeholders reported on some challenges and barriers created through bureaucracy in relation to their volunteers in the Health Service.

2,066 volunteers
291,306 hours

30 roles
Return of investment £2,309,843

2. Summary of Stakeholders Involved

The findings from this report will provide the Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland with a snapshot of the impact of volunteering on volunteers, staff, service users/patients and the wider community/partners.

Volunteers

132 volunteers across the six Trusts responded to the questionnaire.

The volunteers that responded to this survey carry out a wide range of volunteer roles within the Trusts, there are approximately **30** different volunteer roles across the Trusts.

Staff

43 staff members across the six Trusts responded to the questionnaire. There was representation from all levels of staff across each of the Trusts.

Service User/Patient

86 service users and patients across the six Trusts responded to the questionnaire. There was representation from acute and community settings across each of the Trusts.

Wider Community and Partners

20 organisations from the wider community and official partners from across the six Trusts responded to the questionnaire. There was representation from Schools, Voluntary and Community Organisations and official partners working inside the Trusts such as Macmillan and The Alzheimer's Society.

The wider community and official partners are involved with Trusts for various reasons which are listed below for contextual purposes.

- **Schools** – young people become involved as volunteers within the Trusts.
- **Voluntary and Community Organisations** – may refer members to the Trusts as potential volunteers. They could also be working in partnership to deliver projects within the Trusts.
- **Official Partners** – based in the Trusts, may refer service users to receive the involvement of a volunteer. They may help with delivery of services within the Trusts.

3. Introduction & Background

This report offers a broad picture of the impact that volunteering is having across the Trust services. There has been the view for some time that the involvement of volunteers across the Health and Social Care services should be reviewed in order to understand the difference which involving volunteers is currently making and to inform future volunteer development across the Trusts. The Volunteering in Health and Social Care Forum offers an opportunity for the volunteer co-ordinator or person responsible for volunteering in each of the Trusts to come together to share information and discuss common issues in relation to volunteer management. The introduction of the HelpForce project into Northern Ireland, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and delivered by Volunteer Now, has been a strategic and operational investment from both organisations. This investment has enabled Volunteer Now to carry out an evaluation and provide this report.

Volunteer Involvement across the Health Trusts

There are six Health and Social Care Trusts across Northern Ireland. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSC), Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT), Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT), South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT), Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). Volunteers have been involved in assisting with the delivery of a range of services across the Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland for many years. Examples of the roles volunteers are involved are as follows:

- **Befriender**
- **Chaplain**
- **Church Wheeler**
- **Macmillan Support**
- **Mealtime Companion**
- **Activities Volunteer**
- **Meet & Greet**
- **Peer Support**
- **Ward Helper**
- **Community Support**
- **Daycare Volunteer**
- **Volunteer Reader**
- **Supported Housing**
- **SureStart Childcare Volunteer**



“As a teenager I have a lot of time to give.”

- **Psychology Department Volunteer**
- **Dementia Friend**
- **Breastfeeding Peer Mum**

There are approximately **2,066** volunteers involved across the Trusts in Northern Ireland. The involvement of volunteers in each of the Trusts varies in size and scope. Each of the Trusts has a dedicated volunteer manager/co-ordinator.



4. Methodology

A questionnaire led methodology was used in this piece of work, with volunteers, staff, service users/patients and the wider community/partners included as the four stakeholder groups of interest. Volunteers were given the option of completing hard copy questionnaires, electronic questionnaires or sitting down face to face with a member of staff. Trust staff were given the option of completing hard copy questionnaires, electronic questionnaires, or they had face to face sessions with the volunteer management staff. Service users and patients were taken through the questionnaire by a member of staff. The wider community/partners were given the option of completing hard copy questionnaires, electronic questionnaires or they had a face to face session with a member of staff.

Volunteer Now assisted the Volunteering in Health and Social Care Forum to design appropriate questionnaires. Questionnaires are included in the Appendices. Each stakeholder was asked one question on each of the five capitals. See below.

Categorisation of Impacts

The main ways in which stakeholders can be affected by volunteering have been grouped into five types of capitals which have been described below.

1. **'Physical capital'** refers to the concrete product or output for example number of training courses attended by volunteers or the number of hours provided by volunteers to the community centre.
2. **'Human capital'** relates to the acquisition of skills and personal development.
3. **'Economic capital'** describes the financial and economic effects that result from volunteering for example putting a market value on the work done by volunteers.
4. **'Social capital'** moves beyond concrete outputs and individual development to capture social impacts. It refers to creating a more cohesive community through building relationships, networks and bonds of trust between people. It is not an easy concept to measure, but several indicators can capture its essential features.
5. **'Cultural capital'** refers to assets such as a shared sense of cultural and religious identity. Due to the sensitivity of some of these issues within a Northern Ireland context, questions relating to 'culture' have focused on community identity and participation.

Volunteer Now then collated the information, analysed the results and wrote the report. The Trust staff responsible for volunteer management within each Trust took the lead on administering the questionnaires to all stakeholders.

The findings, although not based on a statistically representative sample of volunteers, staff, service users/patients and the wider community/partners, helps to give a snapshot of the

impact which volunteering has across the Trusts. Given that volunteers work across a diverse field of public service delivery, including hospital wards, reception areas, outpatients and day centres, it was important to collect the views of the four stakeholder groups.

Reporting

This report provides the combined findings from all the Trusts across Northern Ireland giving a broad overview of the difference that volunteering is making from the perspective of the volunteers, staff, service users/patients and the wider community/partners. Findings for each of the stakeholder groups are summarised for each question.

In considering the findings and reporting on the impact it was helpful to use an outcome-based accountability framework.

1. **How much are we doing?**
2. **How well are we doing?**
3. **Is anyone better off?**

“Volunteering at the Western Health and Social Care Trust opened the doors to the world for me!”



5. Volunteer Response

The questions, findings and a sample of the 132 responses are as follows:

5.1 How many patients do you interact with per shift and how many have interacted with you?

- Out of 132 volunteers the total number of patients they interact with or have had a patient interact with them in one shift, is on average 2,500 patients across all Trusts (19 patients to one volunteer).

5.2 How is volunteering impacting on your health and wellbeing, your feeling of community and social engagement? Tell us some skills you have developed during your volunteering.

- All volunteers reported that volunteering had an impact on the volunteer's health and wellbeing, that they felt part of their community, made new friends and developed new skills.

"Volunteering has improved my confidence and has helped me develop my interpersonal skills. It has also boosted my feeling of self-worth; I always leave the ward happier."

"Having been an organ transplant recipient last year, volunteering has given me an opportunity to give something back. I feel I am providing a mentoring capability for potential transplant patients who find themselves in a similar position to myself. I can answer some pastoral questions and concerns they may have. I can also act as a physical example of how such patients can have hope of recovery post-transplant. While I always was a good listener and generally someone who could act as a confidante, my volunteering has brought out deeper inter-personal empathies than I originally had."

"Volunteering has impacted me very positively, the place I volunteer is a busy environment, so always on my feet, keeps me healthy. I have made good friends with staff and patients and get great satisfaction in feeling that I have been supportive and helpful. I have developed listening skills and how to be sensitive to others needs, my communication has also improved."

"The impact on my health and wellbeing has been extremely positive and has helped me with my wellness. It has increased my feeling of being an integral part of my community and my social circle of friends has greatly increased."

"I feel I am of some use on the planet; it helps me a lot, I feel good when I have helped people in need, I can relate to the patient as I have seen myself in their situation, it helps me both physically and mentally."

"I am serving my community; I just love it."

5.3 Has your cultural/religious awareness been enriched through your volunteering?

- All volunteers said that volunteering informed and offered understanding of different cultures and religions.

"In the area where I volunteer, I meet many patients from different parts of the world. I often see both the cultural and language difficulties these people face, I try to be a friendly face and someone they can easily talk to. As many of these cancer patients are very anxious, they are often willing to talk about spiritual issues. I have been enriched both culturally and spiritually by my contact with these patients."

"I have become more aware of the differences between different cultures and religions regarding their views on breastfeeding, this has been very interesting, and I would never have been aware of these only for my volunteering."

"Yes, there are patients that come into the wards who have different religions and come from different ethnic backgrounds. There is a lot of multiculturalism in the hospital and I get to interact with many of them during my volunteering, so much learning."

"The meet and greet role give me the opportunity to meet a wide and diverse range of our population, I am amazed at how many different cultures there are however they are all just human beings to me, treat everyone as equals."

"Culturally I have learnt lots about religious backgrounds, beliefs and traditions, seeing people in their hour of need, turning to their religion has strengthened my own religious belief and helped me develop a respect for others."

"My cultural and religious views have been enriched as I can now fully understand and respect patients' different approaches to their beliefs and cultures."



5.4 Have you developed bonds of trust and new relationships through volunteering?

- All volunteers agreed that volunteering helped them develop trust and new relationships that they would not develop if they had not been involved in volunteering.

“Without a doubt, I volunteer through the liver support group, undertaking adult patient care, and having direct confidential conversations with liver disease patients on a daily basis, it is absolutely essential that those I come in to contact with are comfortable that I can be trusted unconditionally. It is especially important that they come to that opinion during my first meeting with them, I feel that I have achieved this without exception. In order to fulfil the role successfully I and the patients need to establish a relaxed, friendly and mutually supportive relationship, an ethos at the centre of our groups’ support.”

“The whole hospital radio team has developed a bond of trust over the years. We all know the important role we are doing, and it gives us all a sense of honour and pride by providing the radio service.”

“Yes, a lot of it with patients. I have had patients come back and specifically ask for me as we have a bond of trust and a fantastic relationship.”

“Staff and patients trust me, that is a great feeling.”

“The group of people I now socialise with is increasing, going to some calls you create a deep bond of trust with your patient, one of the volunteer community first responders I volunteer with is now my best friend.”

“Most definitely, I felt really lonely before I started volunteering, I am now involved with a wonderful group of people and even staff will say hello to you if you pass them in the street.”

5.5 Have you faced any challenges or barriers through your volunteering?

- Volunteers reported that there can be challenges and barriers that they have to overcome when volunteering with the Trusts.

“I do not feel that there is enough recognition for the work we do. People still do not know who we are - there are no distinguishing uniforms, and not enough posters to say what we do.”

“We would need a further increase in payment per mile to cover car expenses which are rocketing out of control.”

“Yes, sometimes I feel slightly isolated and taken for granted by the system.”

“Yes, sometimes people can be rude, but I understand they may be hurting or anxious being in the hospital, however once I speak with my key worker they listen and support me.”

“No barriers, challenges yes, sometimes you can come across certain situations that can be emotionally challenging.”

“I had to wait a very long time for an occupational health appointment, there are far too many hoops to jump through.”

6. Staff Response

The questions, findings and a sample of the 43 responses are as follows:

6.1 How do you involve volunteers within your team?

- There are at least 30 roles that volunteers are involved in across the Trusts.

“At our centre we have 2 volunteers who both attend on a Tuesday and help run our ‘Production Company’ this venture enables service users to experience all aspects of putting on a production/show. Our service users engage with our volunteers on a weekly basis.”

“Pastoral volunteers who visit patients in hospital wards. We have a specific recruitment process for pastoral volunteers as they have a high level of patient contact, often in difficult circumstances. It is estimated that in our Trust chaplains visit approximately 1,500 patients per week, 500 of these visits are carried out by volunteers. This means that more patients are visited by a member of the team and that some patients are visited more often.”

“In the Chemotherapy Unit, there are 2 volunteers based in the unit each morning, they chat to and support patients who are waiting for a review appointment or treatment. In addition, these volunteers support the delivery of information such as questionnaires to patients and relatives for a range of internal and external research and audit projects.”

“We have 5 volunteers in our day centre, each of them comes in one day per week and help out by supporting activities such as music, arts and crafts, mealtimes, bingo and flower arranging.”

“We involve volunteers across our hospital in number of areas, mealtime support, suppertime support, dementia support, meet and greet, we could not offer these services without their involvement.”

“Our volunteer drivers play a vital role; they transport around 48% of the patients in our locality to their outpatient appointments.”

6.2 How do volunteers impact on your health and wellbeing and your service delivery?

- Staff said that involving volunteers in their Trusts helps with their own health and wellbeing and supports them in the delivery of a quality service.

“Volunteers take pressure and stress off paid staff to complete and support the patients’ journey throughout their stay in hospital. It allows my staff to get on with the clinical support the patients require, they complement the staff in more ways than one.”



“The volunteers are a vital part of our ability to deliver a high-quality service.”

“The volunteers are invaluable to me and my colleagues, they take the pressure of me with being able to support our service delivery, especially when I am clinically busy with patients they support other patients by listening to them, having conversations with families and relatives and taking queries for the staff so when we have time we can deal with them, we couldn’t do our job to full effect if it wasn’t for the volunteers.”

“The volunteers provide a friendly face to the staff and patients; they are the first people you see on entry to the hospital. They provide support to all, especially the patients. They are the link in the huge chain that enhances service delivery.”

“Volunteers take the pressure and stress off very busy staff and allow them to get on with their clinical duties, this helps with the staff health and wellbeing and greatly supports high quality service delivery, the reason why staff join the Health Service to ensure quality for every patient, we couldn’t do it without them.”

“At the very start we were cautious of ‘Community First Responders’, this is because we did not know what to expect. Having got to know several of them over the years it is always a relief when you are on your way to a very serious call and you know there will already be a volunteer Community First Responder on scene. They will already be giving CPR and defibrillation. This takes the stress and pressure of me and can ultimately lead to a positive outcome for the patient. It is also beneficial for the patients and their relatives, they just don’t provide treatment, they provide support and reassurance at a very traumatic time which is a huge benefit.”

6.3 Has your cultural/religious awareness been enriched through the involvement of volunteers?

- Staff could show that volunteering informed and increased their understanding of different cultures and religions.

“We arrange several multifaith social gatherings to involve all cultures and religious backgrounds, all of these encounters are always positive and offer an insight to all the staff and volunteers that attend.”

“Each volunteer brings with them their own unique take on life experiences, and how they offer support to our service is always different, we all learn so much from one another. Sharing life experiences opens your eyes to different cultures and religious backgrounds and enhances the fact that we should all be non-judgemental.”

“The volunteers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and each of them brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding that we all learn from.”

“All diversity is always welcome, we are all human beings, when being involved in the Health Service everyone is a person, everyone deserves the same treatment and society can always learn from that.”

“It is nice to learn about new cultures and religions, having such a variety of staff, volunteers and patients on the ward allows information to be shared and experienced by all, it helps break down barriers.”

“I have recently had a volunteer from the travelling community on my ward and it has really helped me and other staff gain a better understanding of their community, extremely positive, as I admit in the past I was very wary of this community, just goes to show never judge a person by what you hear.”

6.4 Have you developed new bonds of trust and relationships through volunteer involvement?

- All staff confirmed that they had developed new bonds of trust and developed new relationships through volunteers being involved in their area of service delivery.

“Bonds of trust and new relationships through volunteers being involved in our service delivery have perpetuated and strengthened our connections with the community and this continues to do so.”

“Yes, an example of this relates to two volunteers undertaking additional training to help support a research project with Ulster University. I know these volunteers have such a good understanding of the patients that attend regularly, and I can trust them to approach the patients to complete surveys. They will always put the patient first and if

anyone is very vulnerable because they are a new patient or having a difficult day, they will ensure that those patients are not approached.”

“Yes, on a professional level. I offer the listening ear and a friendly chat to our volunteers when they need it. I try to be understanding and empathic to their needs. Having that understanding of their personal issues and making them feel supported and cared for has developed many bonds of trust and professional relationships.”

“Initially I was hesitant to accept volunteers onto my ward, following awareness training on what the volunteers can offer, I fully trust them to carry out their role efficiently for the benefit of the patients and their families. I would not be without the volunteers now.”

“I have developed very strong relationships with my volunteers, as I am their key worker, I meet with them on a regular basis to offer support and supervision. I learn from them through their experiences, so trust is a vital part of our relationship. I call them affectionately my BFF’s.”

“Yes, with each volunteer I have a great working relationship based on trust and mutual respect, they provide additional support to me and my staff and it has been very positive having volunteers in our service delivery setting.”

6.5 If there wasn't volunteer involvement, how would this impact your services – positive and negative?

- Staff were unanimous in their belief that volunteers were essential to service delivery.

“There would not be a positive impact, it would certainly be a negative impact if there wasn't volunteer involvement. The Health Service would not have the opportunity to have a service enriched by their ability, professionalism and enthusiasm, volunteers would also be unable to avail of new experiences with our Health Service.”

“Without volunteers involved in our service delivery, the health and wellbeing, support and skill sets they bring would be lost and not available to our patients. They support the development of great friendships; they bring knowledge and skills which are invaluable to our patients and service delivery. We would love to involve more volunteers as they bring an extra dimension and lots of enthusiasm which our patients and our service benefit from, they are invaluable.”

“Totally negative, this would result in us being unable to offer an individualised transport service to our patients attending for cancer treatment. This is very important during treatment when patients are often unwell and suffering from fatigue due to intense treatment regimes. This would result in these patients having to avail of an ambulance transfer which could result in them being away from home from early morning until late evening for an appointment that may only require 30 minutes. In addition, the provision of information and support would be seriously hindered, there are insufficient staff in the

service to sit with patients who are waiting for treatment to man our information stands, due to the involvement of volunteers we can offer a 5 day a week service.”

“Negative, we wouldn’t have that additional support for a female patient. By having peer support it’s getting the breast-feeding message out to our communities. The core service still continues but evidence from audits indicate that women who breast feed will do so for longer with the additional support provided by specifically trained breast-feeding peer support volunteers who have breast fed themselves and have a personal understanding of the challenges.”

“If there wasn’t volunteer involvement with our Dementia patients, I feel there would be more demands on staff. The volunteers have the gift of time and can sit and reminisce with patients, as staff are looking after their clinical needs. The patients benefit greatly, and their families are so grateful that their treatment is not just clinical based, they offer the human touch.”

“So negative, a lot more patients would not be given the very best chance of survival and life. Without the volunteers our communities could be that little bit smaller. Ultimately whilst not every call is a cardiac arrest and not every patient can be saved, the volunteers do save lives.”



7. Service Users and Patients Response

The questions, findings and a sample of the 86 responses are as follows:

7.1 How many times did you encounter a volunteer through your patient experience?

- 86 patients and service users interacted with 314 volunteers in one visit across all Trusts. This is on average 3 volunteers per visit per patient.

7.2 Did the involvement of a volunteer improve your health and wellbeing, if so how?

- All patients were able to say that volunteer involvement had helped improve their health and wellbeing during their engagement with the Health Service.

“The volunteer was there to take me to church in my wheelchair, practicing my faith is very important to me and if I am able to do this it naturally helps with my health and wellbeing, they are such an asset and they always have a smile on their face when greeting you, how could that not make anyone feel good.”

“The befriending service has had a dramatic effect on my child, and she is now exploring her outside world, she has even gone to the cinema with her Grandad, so they are both much happier. It has made a huge difference to my wellbeing and that of my daughters having the volunteer involved in our lives.”

“Yes, it cut down on my anxiety levels as I did not know where to go for my appointment, the volunteer, who at first I thought was a member of staff, was so professional and took me to the door of my appointment and chatted with me the whole way there, she put me at great ease.”

“The volunteer made me smile, that is good for anyone’s health, it was great chatting to the young person, it made me feel 18 again.”

“As an advocate for my parent, the dementia volunteer was brilliant.”

“Yes, living in Crossmaglen we are far away from the ambulances in Newry. The volunteers were here in minutes and were able to help me when I was having a heart attack, so did they improve my health and wellbeing, most definitely they helped save my life.”

7.3 Has your cultural/religious awareness been enriched through your engagement with volunteers?

- Patients and service users were able to show that having a volunteer had informed and developed their understanding of different cultures and religions to service users/patients.

“It is always refreshing to experience good will and definitely has an impact on my impression of humanity, I have engaged with volunteers from all walks of life and among all the negativity we face on a daily basis it is great that there are still people who put so much effort into positivity, that changes people’s mood, impressions and generally makes people so much more aware that we are all the same.”

“All volunteers that I have come into contact with regardless of their culture or religious background have been incredible. I cannot say if my awareness has been enriched but my quality of life has been.”

“I have met a lot of different volunteers from different backgrounds and have been enriched by all their attitudes to providing compassion and care, it restores my faith in humanity no matter about their background.”

“The cultural/religious awareness is always being enriched with the day centre, the staff and volunteers treat everyone with dignity and respect. Several of the volunteers have previously been service users and after rehabilitation they have wanted to return as they missed the centre so much. It helps keep them active and they can keep up their friendships with us from all race, cultures and religious backgrounds, we are all treated the same and it is fantastic, oh if the world could be like our wee centre.”

“Yes, they are all a blessing, I have faith in everyone of them, I don’t care where they come from because they always come when they say they are going to.”

“Yes, I started attending church while I was in hospital because a lovely volunteer offered to push me in a wheelchair to the service, he said, “you will meet new people and it will break the day up for you”, best thing ever happened to me, I have new friends and I now attend my local church on a regular basis.”

7.4 Do you think volunteers enhanced your patient experience?

- All patients and service users said volunteers had helped make their experience a better one when engaging with the Health Service.

“Yes, so helpful, they provided me with all the information I needed in a friendly and professional manner.”

“The volunteer provided the same quality of service that a member of staff would, so professional, caring, enthusiastic and friendly, we need more of them in our health service.”

“It was one of the best things about the service I received.”

“Yes, without a doubt. They have time that often the paid staff don’t have, time to talk to people and get to know them as a person not just another patient. I also believe they are more valuable because they are not being paid, they are there because they want to be there, and it is obvious they love what they are doing as do I. My patient experience has been delightful.”

“The volunteer was one in a million, ever willing to help and encourage me, her smile is a tonic.”

“Yes, the volunteer helped me with eating my meals, it was great to be able to eat and especially while it was still warm.”



7.5 How important were volunteers to you, during your patient experience?

- Patients and service users were able to say that volunteers were really important to their experience and not just an extra add on service.

“Without the volunteers I would have been unable to make it to church, I would have been missing out, they are so cheerful, chatty and helpful, without them I can’t walk so would have been totally isolated.”

“They made our experience and journey much easier and along with the staff from the Families’ Team they have been a great help in helping me get my daughter back, invaluable, priceless.”

“I told the young volunteer I needed to use the bathroom, she got a nurse straight away to help me, it is hard to get a nurse sometimes, huge relief.”

“At a time when I received devastating news the volunteer pointed me in the right direction to receive benefits advice and other support, she was so comforting and reassuring at the most difficult time in my life, a real shoulder to cry on.”

“Really important, without the volunteers I would have been alone for 40 minutes until the ambulance arrived, I could have died.”

“My volunteer driver picks me up each Wednesday and Friday to get to and from my day centre. As I live outside the catchment area the health service minibus does not pick me up. If I didn’t have this service, I would not be able to attend. The daycentre is my lifeline and I am so appreciative of my volunteer driver or friend as I would rather call him, as without him my health and wellbeing and my mood would be at an all time low. If the volunteer driver was taken away from me, I would just spend the rest of my life in bed as I would have nothing to get up for.”

8. Wider Community and Partners Response

The questions, findings and a sample of the 20 responses are as follows:

8.1 What impact does volunteers in HSCTs have on your organisation/partners?

- All voluntary, community or official partners within the Health Service were able to evidence how volunteering impacts on their service.

“Volunteering gives us the opportunity to extend training places into something more permanent. It is a great way for our clients to build their confidence and become involved in the community, it allows them to give something back after being unwell themselves.”

“Firstly, we give our volunteers who have been referred from the volunteer office a verbal induction, we then orientate them around the unit and introduce them to the staff. Furthermore, we tell the volunteers about the complexities of the children, introduce them to the children. We highlight the benefits of short breaks for the children and their families. We then encourage the volunteers to interact with the children and get involved in activities, for example play, walks to the park, feeding, the volunteers have a massive impact on these children, as they bring life experience perhaps from looking after children with complex health needs, through schools, youth clubs or even a family member.”

“We place clients as volunteers with the Trusts as part of our employability programme, the impact is that a significant number of our clients have gone on to achieve employment in the Health Service.”

“From the Police Service of Northern Ireland’s point of view the impact cannot be evaluated, it is an invaluable resource.”

“Reduces isolation, enables people with dementia to take part in activities and provides social interaction whilst they are in hospital, such as card games, dominoes, jigsaws, arts and crafts, listening to music and reading. It helps keep people with dementia active by creating opportunities for participation in leisure and social activities. It allows for continuity and offers the side by side service, as no matter where the person is on their patient journey, at home, in a nursing home or in hospital familiar face can be comforting, especially when faced with unfamiliar surroundings.”

“As a volunteer promotion and recruitment organisation, volunteering within the Health Trusts allows us to develop a wider range of opportunities within a very popular field i.e. medical, nursing, care and support. This attracts more people into volunteering with all the benefits that it brings to individuals and the people they volunteer with.”

8.2 What impact does volunteering have on the morale and wellbeing of your staff and the whole organisation as a partner/stakeholder?

- Partners and stakeholders agreed that volunteering within our Trusts can also support morale and wellbeing in their own organisations.

“By being able to signpost our clients to the Health Service to volunteer supports the stress levels of my staff trying to find something engaging, beneficial for everyone involved, somewhere we know our clients will learn new skills, help Trust Staff to reduce their stress levels and also help reduce the stress levels of our clients, so it is a win, win situation for all involved.”

“From a staff perspective, the children observed really enjoyed the involvement of the volunteers, especially during busy periods, they are able to continue socialising and playing. The volunteer service allows us to facilitate this as there an extra pair of reliable hands and this helps relieve our stress.”

“Volunteers in our team enrich the team dynamic, in our service they offer meet and greet, which enables the staff to keep on top of work and administrative duties. They are able to chat to the patients and visitors at length which enhances their experience and creates a positive and motivated morale for everyone.”



“I believe that the volunteers offering coaching support not only helped the patients try out a new sport for the first time but also helped raise their self esteem and confidence and aided their recovery.”

“Volunteering helps with morale in all organisations, it also increases wellbeing, it adds diversity to the roles within our Health Service and showcases the Trust by allowing members of the local community to volunteer in their service, it shows great community involvement and spirit.”

“The District Police Service of Northern Ireland have yet to set in place a mechanism where our staff can volunteer within our Health Service. When this changes I would make a professional judgment that it would be positive and a morale boosting initiative.”

8.3 Do you see volunteering with our HSCTs as a way of improving cultural/religious awareness?

- All partners and stakeholders agreed that volunteering within our Trusts could raise awareness of different cultural and religious back grounds.

“It gives our clients knowledge and understanding of the diversity of our local population, and how our religious and cultural differences may affect them or those they engage with while they are volunteering.”

“We have volunteers from other countries who have chatted about their cultures, which is really interesting, religion does not get talked about in our service, we are all the same, there for the patient’s wellbeing and care.”

“At the Alzheimer’s Society we welcome volunteers and service users from all backgrounds. Our equality, diversity and inclusion training for all volunteers encourages them to respect everyone regardless of their gender, race, or beliefs. Allowing more people to volunteer within a hospital setting can only improve awareness.”

“Volunteering opportunities attract people into positions which they would never have been able to apply for as a paid worker due to, age, education, language barriers and disabilities. Widening the demographics of the ‘staff’ team introduces more cultures and religions to employees, service users, clients and patients. Personal involvement with people from different backgrounds increases understanding and reduces fear of the unknown, well done to the Trusts.”

“Yes, the Housing Executives’ Employer Supported Volunteering Scheme helps bring our staff, our organisation and our local community together, increasing social awareness generally and providing a means to improve understanding of the cultures by connecting individuals and groups across our community through volunteering for our local Health Service.”

“Volunteering ensures we engage with a diverse range of groups and individuals from all backgrounds, when our clients are volunteering within the Health Service, they are all treated as equals.”

8.4 Does volunteering in our HSCTs support the development of more cohesive communities?

- All partners and stakeholders agreed that volunteering within our Trusts can create more cohesive communities.

“Having volunteers within hospital wards supports the development of more cohesive communities. It helps change people’s perceptions about hospitals in general but in particular, mental health wards. The volunteers report back to me that it is amazing to spend time with dementia patients and learn about their stories, ‘as they are just people like us at the end of the day’. They then go on to change their families’, friends’ and neighbours’ perceptions and talk about the benefits volunteering brings to them.”

“Mixing people from different backgrounds breaks down barriers and supports more cohesive communities at all levels, volunteering is an excellent way of instilling this in our communities.”

“Yes, volunteers can have a great impact on their community, often uniting the community as one...”



“Volunteering supports the development of more cohesive communities by ensuring local people are invested in our facilities and service delivery. We are all better off as I see everyone benefiting from volunteer involvement.”

“The connections made by our volunteers who come through the Trust and then also volunteer on our community-based projects ensure continuity of services with valuable insights into the different volunteer roles available both in the hospital and community. The fact that some of our volunteers also volunteer in the hospital ensures a more rounded approach.”

“Yes, volunteering is embedded in Trust ethos and volunteers are drawn and representative of all sections of our local communities. Asylum seekers, Ethnic Communities, hard to reach volunteers, Youth Justice, Travellers. It gives local people

an opportunity to be involved and have a voice in their community. Some volunteers sit on Trust groups and assist in decision making regarding the delivery and shape of future services.”

8.5 What are the challenges/barriers in relation to volunteers?

- Partners and stakeholders reported on some challenges and barriers created through bureaucracy in relation to their volunteers in the Health Service.

“The challenges to our volunteers are the barriers around recruitment and placement as it can take quite a while for the Trust to place them.”

“Occupational Health appointments for our volunteers and the bureaucracy of paperwork and red tape.”

“Lack of funding within our organisation and lack of funding within our Trusts to invest properly in volunteering.”

“The challenges and barriers we encounter on a daily basis is the protocol associated with statutory organisations and the time it takes to get a volunteer placed, these people just want to help and give something back to our fantastic staff within the health service and all those who have engagement with the service.”

“Getting buy in from the top down and the bottom up, there is an unfounded fear of an increased workload for staff, job substitution and resources. Volunteers are not free and need supported in terms of supervision, subsistence, travel, recognition and personal growth. A change in attitude to volunteering, there is often a perception that volunteers are somehow ‘low calibre’.”

“Breaking through the ‘them and us’ mentality. Sometimes it can be hard for staff to trust or respect volunteers when they are on their ward. We are there to help, not to criticize. Ultimately, we all have the same goal, to help patients on their journey through their illness and ensure they have the best quality of life possible. I know that’s what our volunteers want.”

9. The Economic Impact – 1 Year

Total Investment (Volunteer Infrastructure)

- Staff
- Training
- Volunteer expenses
- Other costs relating to volunteering

= **£778,000.00 (All Trusts)**

Total number of Volunteers = **2,066**

Total hours per year given to the Trusts = **291,306 hours**

Average per volunteer per year = 141 hours

Average per volunteer per month = 12 hours

Average per volunteer per week = 3 hours

Total value of hours given by volunteers to Northern Ireland Trusts based on the National Living Wage 2019 (**£10.60**) = **£3,087,843**

Minus

Total investment into Trust Volunteer Infrastructure (£778,000.00)

= £2,309,843

(Total Return on Investment)

For every pound invested in the volunteer infrastructure the Health Service is getting £4 return on investment. This is a regional estimation, obviously there will be variations across the various Trusts.



10. Conclusion

The primary aim and focus of this report is to see the impact of volunteering on all stakeholders within our Health and Social Care Trusts. Often when reports like this are commissioned or carried out, it is all about the numbers of people, the numbers of services provided, and the money spent. Does this really tell us about the **IMPACT** and **OUTCOMES** of involving Volunteers in our Health Service?

Helpforce, the Volunteering in Health and Social Care Forum Members and Volunteer Now, wanted to measure the true impact and uncover the real outcomes of involving volunteers in the local Trusts so our questions were designed to be open so as we got good quotes and real stories.

The report is still able to provide the numbers and the economic value of volunteering as we asked these questions under **'how much are we doing'?** and **'how well are we doing it'?** The results of how much are we doing are as follows:

- There are 2,066 volunteers involved in our Trusts, they are contributing 291,306 hours of their time per year to Health and Social Care.

The results of how well we are doing are as follows:

- 100% of stakeholders rated themselves as being **very satisfied** with the impact of volunteering in our Trusts

In terms of the question **"is anyone better off"** the responses recorded in this report speak for themselves.

- The evidence of improved health and wellbeing, increased skills, bonds of trust, understanding of other cultures and religions – all are very powerful. The personal stories and reflections speak of changed lives, even saved lives.

This report provides an excellent example of the skills, understanding, sensitivity and reliability that volunteers can bring to a vital public service. It also illustrates the huge contribution that volunteers offer their local community, this is also reflected in the very positive responses from all those involved.

Volunteers provide support and a personal touch that make patients feel better and this in turn helps the staff. Volunteers benefit in so many ways – personally and socially, as well as developing new skills and impacting their own health for the better. They clearly get a huge sense of satisfaction from helping others.

The benefits of volunteer involvement within our Trusts to service delivery, to patients, staff and the volunteers themselves should therefore be highlighted across all the Trusts.

The volunteer involvement is very well managed, volunteers are appropriately recruited, trained and supported and are very happy in their roles. It is clearly a vital service that volunteers are involved which meets an important need and given its success, it is worth considering if there is potential to expand the breadth of the volunteer involvement by creating new roles or extending existing roles into new areas.

The volunteer involvement works best when everyone knows about it and understands what it can and cannot do. Promotion of volunteer involvement is therefore essential - staff, patients and the wider community need to know about what is available so those who need it most can benefit from the gift of time being offered by volunteers.

There are of course some issues that need to be addressed in order to continue to support and develop volunteer involvement in the Trusts and some of these issues revolve around the length of time it takes to get involved as a volunteer.

It is encouraging to note that some challenges raised by both Partners and Trust staff (such as delays in volunteer placements, often due to Occupational Health Assessments) are already being addressed through work as part of the partnership between Trusts, Volunteer Now and Helpforce. Further information will follow early 2020. However, this issue was recognised in the last Regional Plan for Volunteering in Health and Social Care published in 2016 and the delays in recruitment have also been picked up in the past. The inability to resolve these issues speedily points to an underlying lack of consistent strategic leadership and value for volunteering.

Hopefully, with the clearer understanding of the impact of volunteering set out in this report, then a more focused effort will be put into addressing these bureaucratic challenges which are inhibiting the ability to involve volunteers in a timely way. There is a need for strategic leadership to help staff to break through when barriers are identified so that volunteering can reach its full potential.

Some of these delays in recruitment are also indicative of a lack of investment, for example, recruitment processes are paper based in an era where IT is at the heart of everything we do, a more efficient process needs to be considered. Staffing levels for volunteering across the Trusts are not consistent and this variation of investment also has an impact on how services are configured and delivered.

Given the diverse range of impacts evidenced in this report, in particular the benefits to the patients and volunteers it is not helpful to look at volunteer involvement in purely financial terms as the range of impacts, demonstrated above, that result from volunteering are worth a lot more. Volunteering in Trusts is more than returning the investment made in it and with a little more strategic focus it could do a great deal more.

This report truly reflects that **everyone is better off, due to the involvement of volunteers in our local Health and Social Care Trusts.**



October 2019

Appendices

- 1. Volunteer Questionnaire**
- 2. Staff Questionnaire**
- 3. Service User and Patient Questionnaire**
- 4. Wider Community and Partners Questionnaire**
- 5. Economic Impact Questionnaire**

Appendix 1 – Volunteer Questionnaire



The Volunteers'

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How Much did We Do	How Well Did We Do It?
<p>Is Anyone Better Off?</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many patients do you interact with and how many have interacted with you? 2. How is volunteering impacting on your health and wellbeing, your feeling of community and social engagement? Tell us some skills you have developed during your volunteering. 3. Has your cultural/religious awareness been enriched through your volunteering? 4. Have you developed bonds of trust and new relationships through volunteering? 5. Have you faced any challenges or barriers through your volunteers? 	

Appendix 2 – Staff Questionnaire



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**The Trusts' Staff
and Keyworkers**

How Much did We Do	How Well Did We Do It?
<p>Is Anyone Better Off?</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you involve volunteers within your team? 2. How do volunteers impact on your health and wellbeing and your service delivery? 3. Has your cultural/religious awareness been enriched through the involvement of volunteers? 4. Have you developed new bonds of trust and relationships through volunteer involvement? 5. If there wasn't volunteer involvement, how would this impact your services – positive and negative? 	

Appendix 3 – Service Users Questionnaire



The Service Users (Patient)

How Much did We Do	How Well Did We Do It?
Is Anyone Better Off?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many times did you encounter a volunteer through your patient experience? 2. Did the involvement of a volunteer improve your health and wellbeing, if so how? 3. Has your cultural/religious awareness been enriched through your engagement with volunteers? 4. Do you think volunteers enhanced your patient experience? 5. How important were volunteers to you, during your patient experience? 	

Appendix 4 – Wider Community and Partners Questionnaire



**The Wider
Community and
Partners**

How Much did We Do	How Well Did We Do It?
Is Anyone Better Off?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What impact does volunteering in HSCTs have on your organisation/partners? 2. What impact does volunteering have on the morale and wellbeing of your staff and the whole organisation as a partner/stakeholder? 3. Do you see volunteering within our HSCTs as a way of improving cultural/religious awareness? 4. Does volunteering in our HSCTs support the development of more cohesive communities? 5. What are the challenges/barriers in relation to volunteers? 	

Appendix 5 – Economic Capital Questionnaire



Economic Capital

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How Much did We Do	How Well Did We Do It?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total investment for Volunteer Programme Example staff, training, expenses 2. Total number of Volunteers 3. Total hours Volunteers contribute on a yearly basis 	<p>Will be populated when questions below are answered.</p>
<p>Is Anyone Better Off?</p>	
<p>LEAVE BLANK!</p>	





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