better impact

CASE STUDY

North London Hospice

North London Hospice

Since 1984, the North London Hospice (NLH), a registered charity, has provided urgent and specialised care to residents faced with life-limiting conditions. Serving the boroughs of Barnet, Enfield, and Haringey, NLH warmly supports patients and families, friends, and caregivers with physical, emotional, and spiritual care. "The best of life, at the end-of-life, for everyone," is what NHL envisions and strives to uphold.

Debbie Usiskin is the Volunteer Engagement Officer for North London Hospice. After a brief career in social work, she moved into training, including representation on the working party developing National Occupational Standards for Managers of Volunteers. She was one of the founding Directors of the Association of Volunteer Managers (AVM) and was elected Chair. She has always been curious about her peers' approach to volunteer management. "I feel as though I've seen volunteer management grow, develop, and change over the years, which is exciting. I moved into hospice, almost by accident. And I love it! I came to North London hospice in 2013," recalls Debbie.

Although she thought her time at NLH would be brief, one of the things Debbie set out to accomplish was the implementation of a proper system to manage volunteers.

CHALLENGES

The use of **spreadsheets was very limiting** for Debbie and her team. She remembers, "we could use it for rostering, keeping people's contact details, what their role was, and recording whether they had a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check, but we couldn't scan anything and add it. So, it was just a tick box yes or no." Not having all the info in one place meant time was spent going between various systems to pull the full picture together.

Apart from their antiquated system, NLH's big challenges were mostly related to **cost and data protection**. Operating inefficiently is an expense to the organisation and the lacking security controls with the way things were operating was a problem that needed solving.
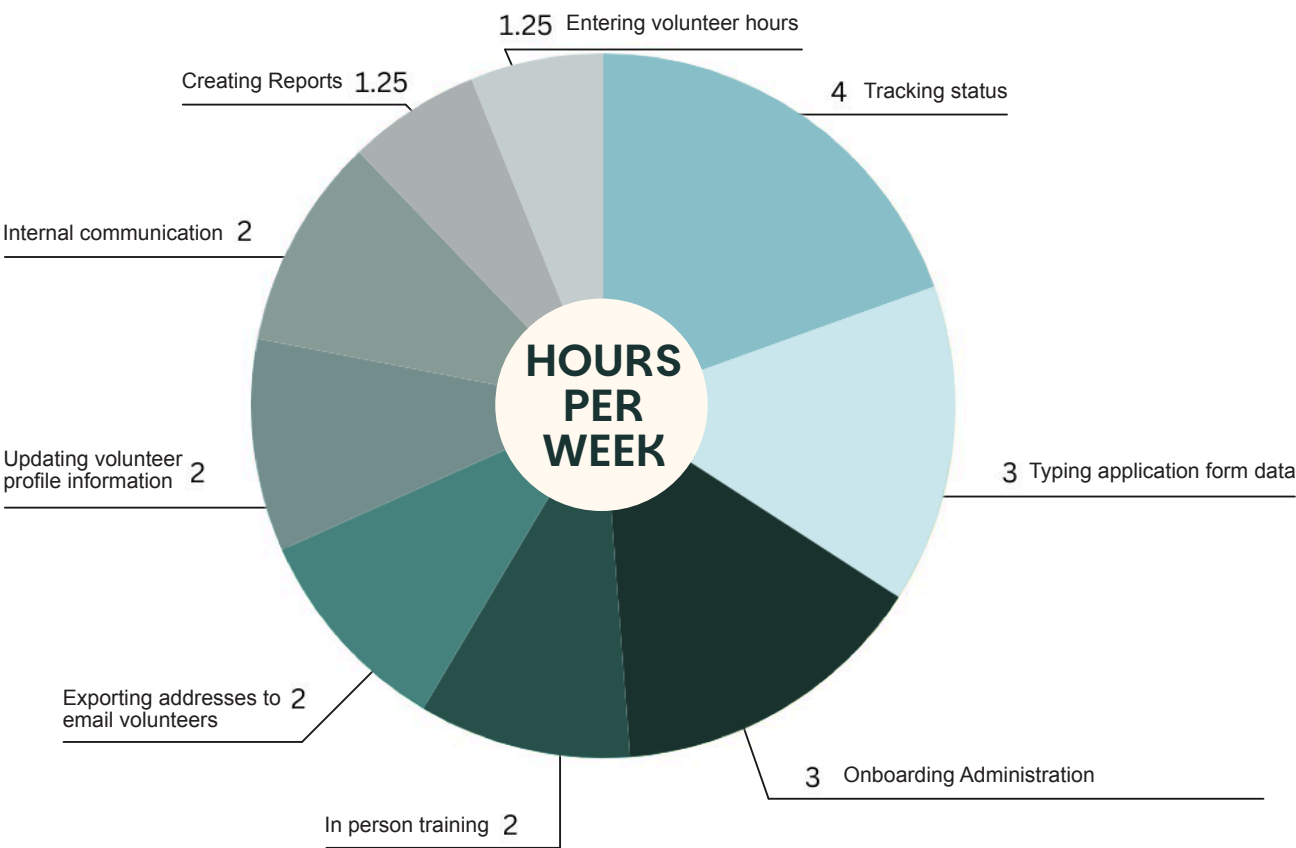
Key Pain Points:

• **Using a system not designed for volunteer management**. "As a hospice we used a medical patient system which records clinical symptoms but it's not great at storage of the 'human' information. It was a system created for clinicians and not for volunteer managers!"

• **Lacking control over system customisations and configurations**. "We couldn't make any changes to custom fields."

• **Inability to clearly report on and tell the program's story**. "The system was conflated; you couldn't get an overall picture of what was happening."

*"Before Better Impact we had a bespoke system that was little more than a spreadsheet and was **not fit for purpose**."*
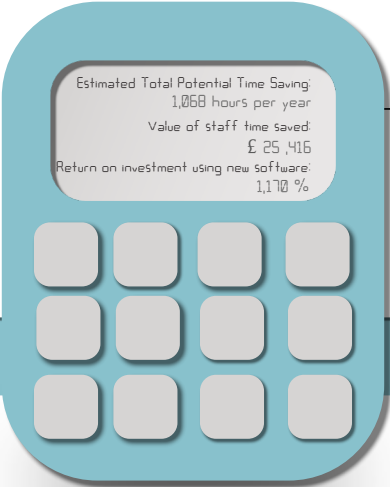
- Debbie Usiskin

When Debbie used the ROI Calculator to determine how much time was being spent operating in this manner, it revealed that her team was going to save around 1,068 hours per year on tasks that could be automated via a volunteer management software solution.

Here's a breakdown on how much time was spent in various tasks before using Better Impact:

1.25 Entering volunteer hours

Creating Reports 1.25

4 Tracking status

Internal communication 2

HOURS PER WEEK

Updating volunteer profile information 2

3 Typing application form data

Exporting addresses to email volunteers 2

3 Onboarding Administration

In person training 2

ROI Calculator Data

Estimated Total Potential Time Saving:
1,068 hours per year
Value of staff time saved:
£ 25,416
Return on investment using new software:
1,170 %

Hours Saved	Value of Time	ROI
1,068	£ 25,416	1,170

Before starting her assessment of Volunteer Management Software (VMS) systems, Debbie was already familiar with Better Impact. She had previously spoken with and met Tony Goodrow, Better Impact CEO, at conferences. "I was impressed with the company and product" she reveals, "but what really impressed me was how the people using the software were included and permitted to contribute to its growth and development."

Although Debbie was leaning towards Better Impact's solution – Volunteer Impact – she had to present a strong case to her Board. "I looked at other systems as well. I did an **analysis of all the other software systems** that were available to us at the time and what their benefits were together with their costs, so that I could **build a case** for choosing Volunteer Impact," she says. She also relied on **peer feedback and reviews** when visiting organisations that were already utilising Volunteer Impact.

Debbie had her **list of software needs**, of which finding an extremely cost-effective system was one of them – and a major priority at that. According to Debbie, "Volunteer Impact was less expensive than so many others". Keeping volunteer data well-protected was of utmost importance as well and Better Impact was able to check all the boxes. "Our information governance lead had to go through a process until he was reassured," recalls Debbie.

*"I wanted a proper system, so **I turned immediately to Volunteer Impact**, as it was the best suited for what we needed."*

- Debbie Usiskin

Implementation

North London Hospice has been using Volunteer Impact since November 2015. They decided to start with Volunteer Impact, later adding [Client Impact](#).

As Debbie didn't think she was that technically savvy at first, she asked for **software training**. She recalls "I thought I was not going to pick this up that quickly. But within four hours, I had it. And that means **it's not that difficult a system to use**."

The most important piece of advice from Debbie is to not attempt it alone and to **implement the software across the organisation as a team.**
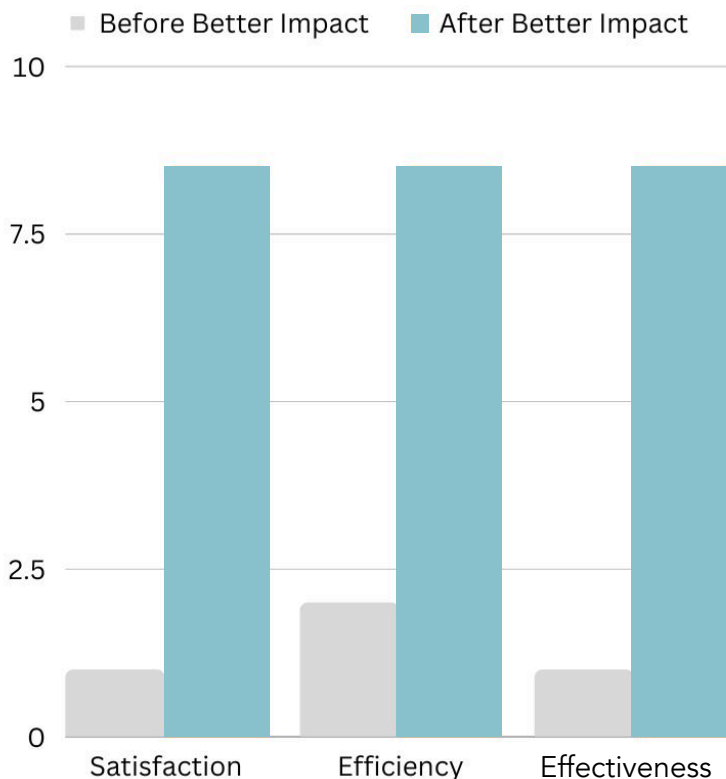
Why Volunteer Impact

Here are some of Debbie's favourite Volunteer Impact features:

• **Ability to ringfence access to personal data**. "We collect demographic data about all our volunteers and, because of the way permissions can be managed in the system, no one can see it other than me and my colleague."

• **Volunteer hours and feedback**. "When a volunteer clocks in to log their hours, they receive a little message from us. Volunteers can also complete our survey questions, in real time, about the work performed and feedback. I love how this helps us measure impact."

• **Committees**. "I love the fact that we can create committees, group volunteers together on these committees, and utilise such data to select who we're sending emails to. There's also the option to text. The system provides flexibility, which I really like."

• **E-learning modules for volunteers**. "A lot of our online training for volunteer is going into Volunteer Impact because it allows us to set up e-learning modules. Instead of having to email things to people, volunteers can log into their own account and undertake their own training.

Volunteer Impact has completely changed the way that NLH manages its volunteers and how the team operates. The gap that's been closed from this systems switch is immense and **empowered the team to execute at a higher level.**

Since moving to Volunteer Impact, Debbie and her team have **saved time**. She can now devote that time to things like focus groups with volunteers and employees. **Building stronger connections has strengthened the stability of their volunteer program.**

Volunteer Impact is also helping Debbie have a **clear overview of volunteer activity**. "Volunteer Impact helps us to assess whether we've got the right number of volunteers in each part of the organisation. It helps us to ascertain if we've got the right skills/mix. All that gives an illustration of how much time we can save in terms of future planning," she explains.

*"Volunteer Impact is a system that saves us a lot of time from those little admin tasks which gives you time to instead **manage the quality of relationships with our volunteers.**"*

- Debbie Usiskin

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