

Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

BACKGROUND

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (SATH) is the main provider of hospital services for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, and North Powys in the United Kingdom. They've had a voluntary scheme for the past 14 years and currently have over 300 active volunteers. Their 30 or so voluntary roles range from ward-based volunteering, administration, meet and greet, end of life care to roles in the labs.

Poppy Horrocks has been Volunteer Project Manager at SATH since 2019, working on specific volunteer projects and supporting the voluntary services in general.

For many years SATH made use of paper applications for volunteers to express interest in getting involved and manually entered this data into Engage – a member engagement software (MES) solution. Upon the onset of the pandemic, and a switch to working more remotely, a change to systems and processes became evident as requiring prioritisation.

CHALLENGES

Trying to make use of Engage for volunteer management was akin to fitting a square peg in a round hole, given that it's a system not designed with volunteer management in mind. The SATH team found this system to be out-of-date and not very user-friendly.

Throughout the pandemic, the SATH team attempted to pivot in their operation by making use of Microsoft Teams to share a spreadsheet to manage the volunteer applications and placements. However, what was perceived to be a possible solution to the challenges of communications, data access, and program operations while working remotely, only turned out to perpetuate the problems.

Key Pain Points:

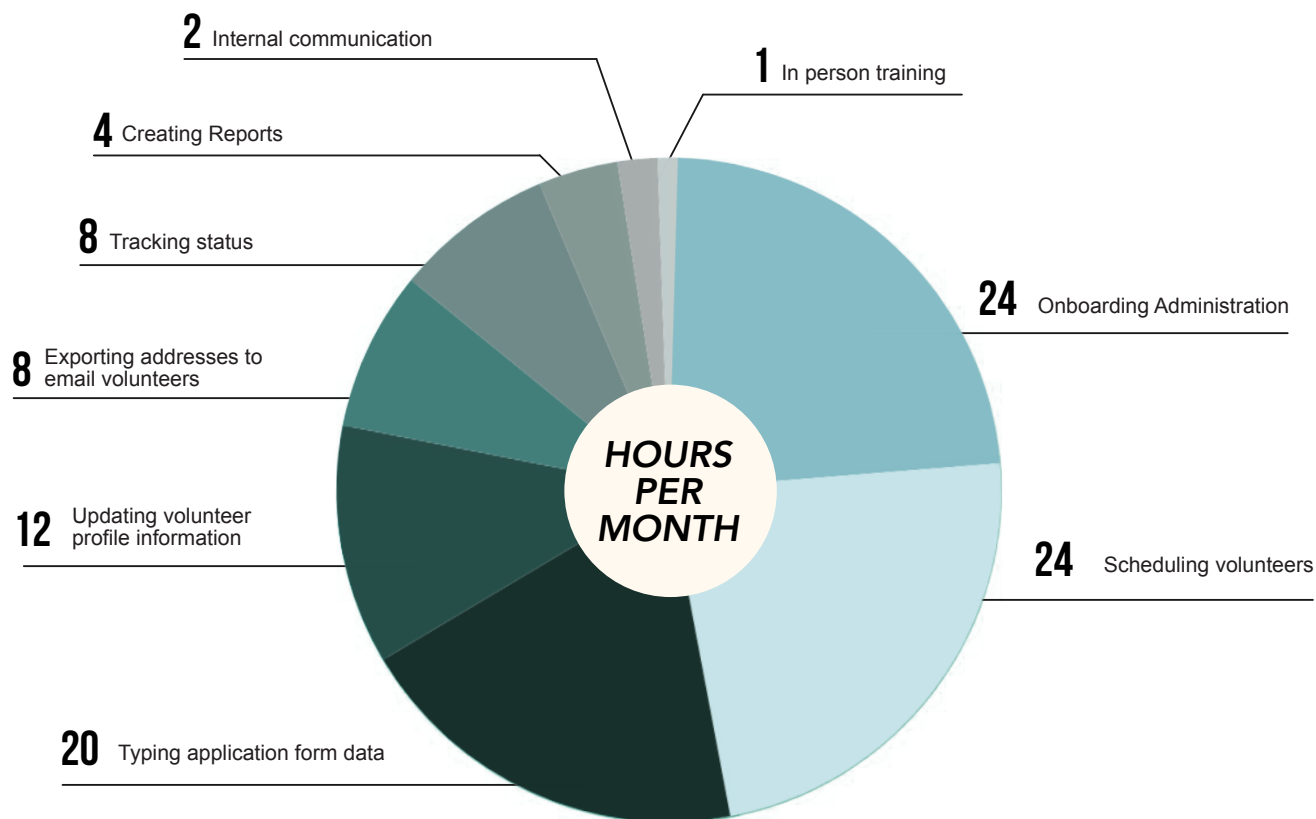
- **Data entry** of all paper applications into Engage was extremely **time-consuming** and became an **impossible task to complete** when staff were directed to work from home.
- Spreadsheet use led to an incredibly **complex process** which was **prone to errors and unreliable data**.
- **Inadequate systems** led to an **overwhelmed team** when receiving an influx of volunteer applications to try to process during the pandemic.
- **Data wasn't tracked in one centralised space** for staff to access which led to a lot of confusion and difficulty for the team.

*"During the pandemic, as our volunteer numbers grew, it became very apparent that our **systems and processes needed updating**; we couldn't cope with the numbers coming in and we were seeing more and more errors coming up. This triggered us into looking for software to manage our volunteers."*

– Poppy Horrocks




When Poppy used the [ROI Calculator](#) to determine how much time was spent operating in this manner, it revealed that her team was going to save around **1,332 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:



ROI Calculator Data



Hours Saved	Value of Time	ROI
		
1,332	£ 35, 541	3,454

JOURNEY

In July 2021, Poppy and the Head of her Department began their quest of finding a better solution to their volunteer management challenges.

Quite a bit of research was performed on the volunteer management software (VMS) category, along with leaning on various forums where team members were able to read and gather **feedback from others already making use of a VMS**.

SATH reviewed two VMS solutions, using a thorough approach, that included a **demo, trial, quote, IT clearance, and information and governance clearance**.

Data protection was of key importance to SATH. A total of six months were spent in this phase to obtain approvals for privacy and security of data. Poppy acknowledges that it was worth it in the end.

During the trial phase, Poppy was clever to **include volunteers in the testing phase** of Volunteer Impact by engaging them to use the volunteer portal – the part of the software where the volunteer can update their own profile info, sign up for roles, log their own hours, and so much more. She gathered their feedback from this experience. By involving them in this 'try-before-you-buy' phase, it **aided with volunteer buy-in** with the looming change and Poppy's confidence in selecting Volunteer Impact.

Implementation

Poppy recalls the configuration phase lasting a couple of months. Although it was a fair-sized project for her team to embark on, **"it was fairly easy**, and the benefits plentiful."

SATH spent time setting up their application in Volunteer Impact, in preparation to have a Better Impact Member Success Advisor transfer their volunteer data into its new home.

Once initial set up was completed, the team appreciated the independence to further customise and progress the system's configuration, to adapt over time, as processes or needs change for the program.

Why Volunteer Impact

Three main reasons SATH chose Volunteer Impact:

1. Value for money
2. Functionality and customisation
3. All-in-one platform

SATH found Volunteer Impact to be a **less expensive solution, yet powerful in capability**.

Benefits of utilising a more robust system were attractive, such as in times of communicating with volunteers. They could **email and text volunteers** through the system very easily. Being able to filter volunteers by various criteria to **target communications** to specific groups of volunteers is a feature well-utilised. Poppy and team also enjoy the time-saving benefits of creating **email templates**. Volunteers could also make use of their **volunteer portal and app** to find relevant information, particularly during the pandemic when changes were occurring daily, weekly, and monthly.

Volunteer Impact also appealed to SATH as **everything is in one place**. Accessing data for the team is simplified and, with daily logins, they are fully committed to utilising the system. The team can regularly review program reports, how applicants are progressing in the onboarding process, create or improve email templates, and update other info.

Poppy also acknowledges that being able to **generate many reports** at the drop of a hat has been beneficial too.

Lessons Learned

SATH's move to Volunteer Impact has been a **team effort**.

While there were fears from management and volunteer program members about changing to a new software, as there was a lot to learn, **consistency and communication** has been key.

Guides and processes have been formulated to **mitigate human error** in the system. Poppy stresses the importance of assigning someone to maintain an overview of the system to ensure it is kept up to date and people are not making silly mistakes. The data maintenance efforts of the team have been critical to managing the volunteer program and having confidence that the numbers in the system are accurate.

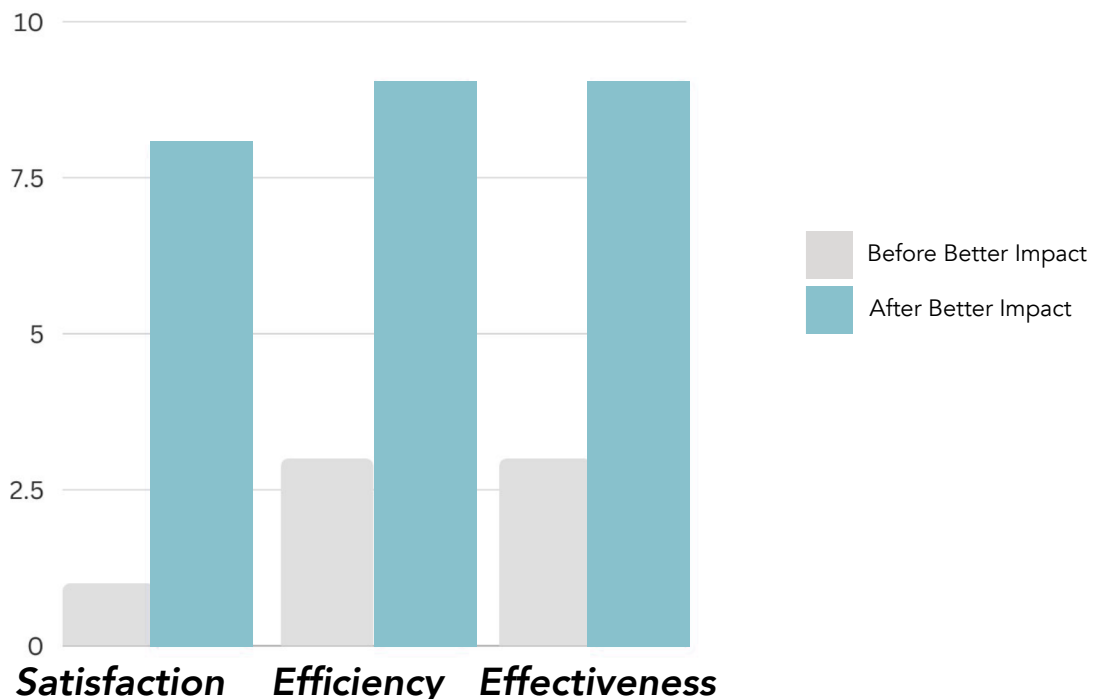
*“There were lots of lessons learnt throughout our journey but the biggest is being **open to change and pivoting** along the way”*

-Poppy Horrocks



RESULTS

The switch to Volunteer Impact has vastly improved how the team at SATH operates their volunteer program. They are more satisfied with the tools being used now, more efficient, effective, and feeling confident in the security of their data, as evidenced below.



It can be easy to get lost in the numerous responsibilities of a people-management operation and have important aspects like engaging with volunteers fall by the wayside. Poppy is so pleased that the team enjoys much **better engagement with volunteers** thanks to the **time savings** experience with Volunteer Impact. Additionally, “we have been able to **increase application volume** and provide **more engagement opportunities**.”

SATH currently boasts 330 active volunteers, and 127 volunteers are in process (with the aim of processing all within two months). The team uses Volunteer Impact to be **well-informed of a volunteer’s progression through the recruitment process**. Poppy highlights how they can better understand if volunteers have not completed their registration process, review if a volunteer is accessing their volunteer portal, what is stopping them from completing the process and, if they are not committed to completing the process, they can archive the volunteers in the system.

“We have created a **better volunteer community** from using Volunteer Impact. Our volunteers are kept up to date with information and have an open channel to contact our team. For our team, it has put **everything in one place**, and we can easily manage applications and placements. It has also provided us with a tool to **measure volunteer impact** at the Trust. We now report on volunteer hours and the number of volunteers giving hours,” adds Poppy.

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