

Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Understanding the impact of “hand-holding volunteers” providing theatre support during surgery - The patient perspective

Background

The majority of cataract, and some glaucoma eye surgeries is undertaken using local anaesthetic and can be uncomfortable for patients and make them feel anxious. This can be very unpleasant and cause anxiety in patients. Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust uses volunteers in a “hand-holding” role to provide comfort and support to patients undergoing operations. This role was introduced in 2019 and by 2020 there were twelve trained volunteers working for the trust. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic most of these volunteers stood down from the role, but there has consistently been at least two volunteers providing “hand-holding” support since the role was introduced. The variation in the number of available volunteers over time has meant that it hasn’t always been possible to provide those who request it with volunteer support. Where volunteer availability is low, access is determined by whether, or not, an operation takes place in a theatre where a volunteer has been placed. To help evaluate this volunteer intervention data collection was introduced during the Volunteering Innovators Programme (VIP)¹ and has continued ever since. This paper includes analysis of patient survey data collected up to June 2021.

About the survey

The patient survey analysis set out below is based on the VIP Patient outcomes survey² and includes both the data collected as part of VIP, described as “2019/20” and more recent data collected by the service, described as “Jun-21”. In order to compare outcomes for patients who have requested and received volunteer support with outcomes for patients who have not received volunteer support Moorfields gives the same survey to both groups of patients as they wait to return home after their operations.

Responses included in the analysis

This analysis covers responses received between the following dates:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Date of first survey response: | 10/12/2019 |
|--------------------------------|------------|

¹ [Volunteering Innovators Programme | Helpforce](#)

² [Helpforce | Theatre Support Patient Survey](#)

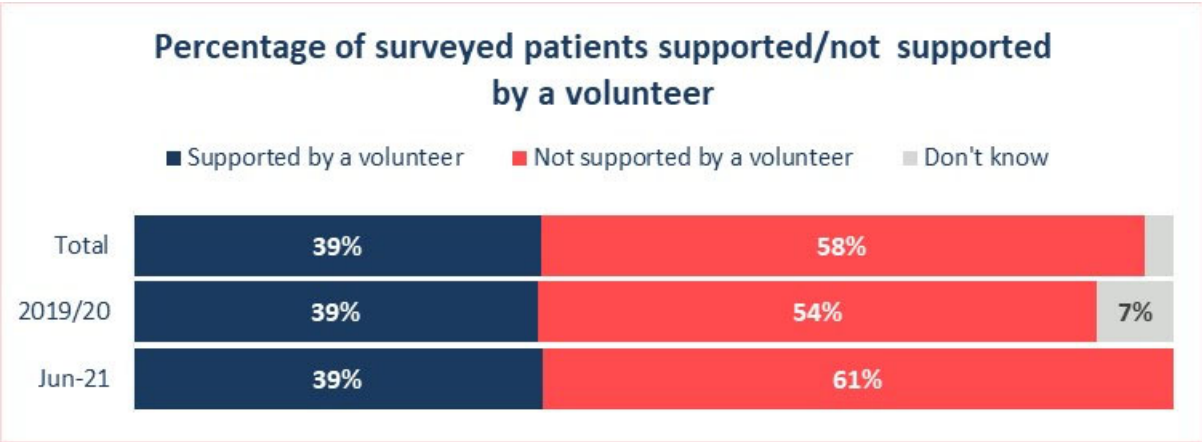
Date of last survey response:

28/06/2021

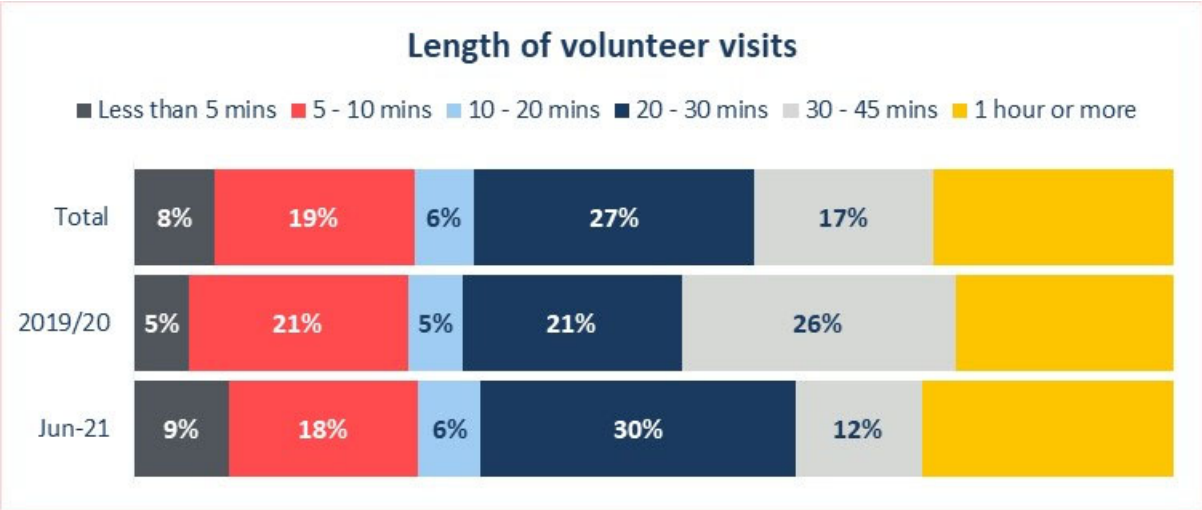
Respondents were predominantly female (68% of the total) and aged 65 or over (82% of the total). Responses were received from 54 patients who had received volunteer support and 80 who had not.

Were you supported by a volunteer during your hospital stay?

| No. | Total | 2019/20 | Jun-21 |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Supported by a volunteer | 54 | 21 | 33 |
| Not supported by a volunteer | 80 | 29 | 51 |
| Don't know | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Total | 138 | 54 | 84 |



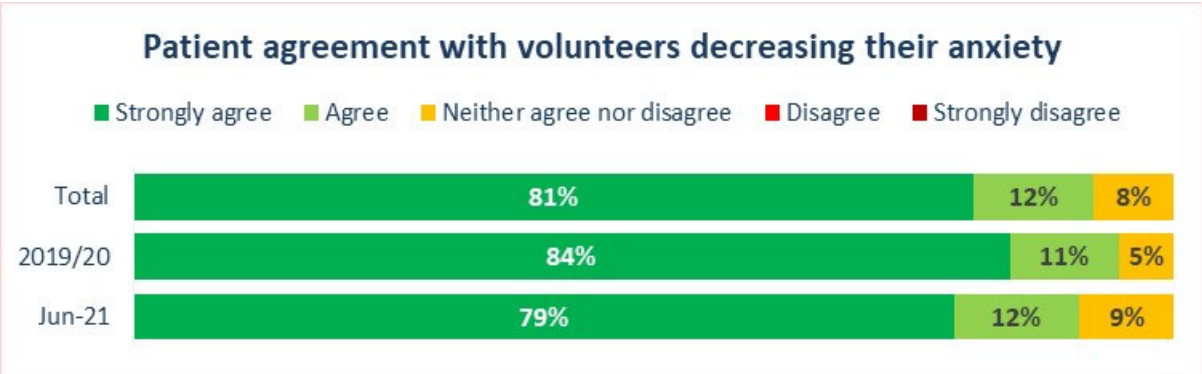
Those patients who received volunteer support were asked how long the volunteer had spent with them (the length of the “volunteer visit”). As can be seen from the chart below responses were quite varied, but the average amount of time spent with a volunteer was approximately half an hour across the 52 responses received to this question.



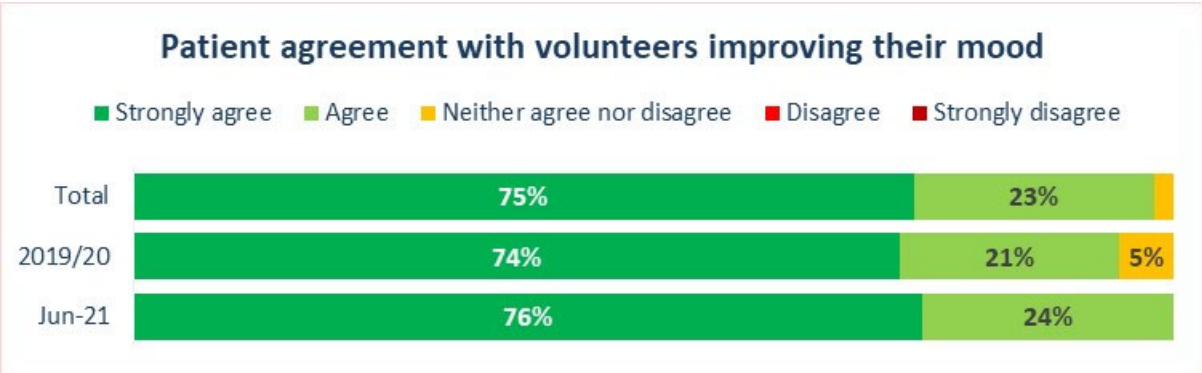
Do patients feel that volunteers have a positive impact on their anxiety levels and their mood?

Those who received volunteer support were asked to reflect on the difference that having volunteer support had made to them in relation to helping them feel less anxious and in relation to cheering them up and improving their mood.

The overwhelming majority of respondents 92% believe that volunteers have helped to reduce their anxiety and none of the respondents view the impact of volunteers on their anxiety level negatively.



The volunteer impact on patient mood is similarly positive. Ninety-eight percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that volunteers improve their mood.

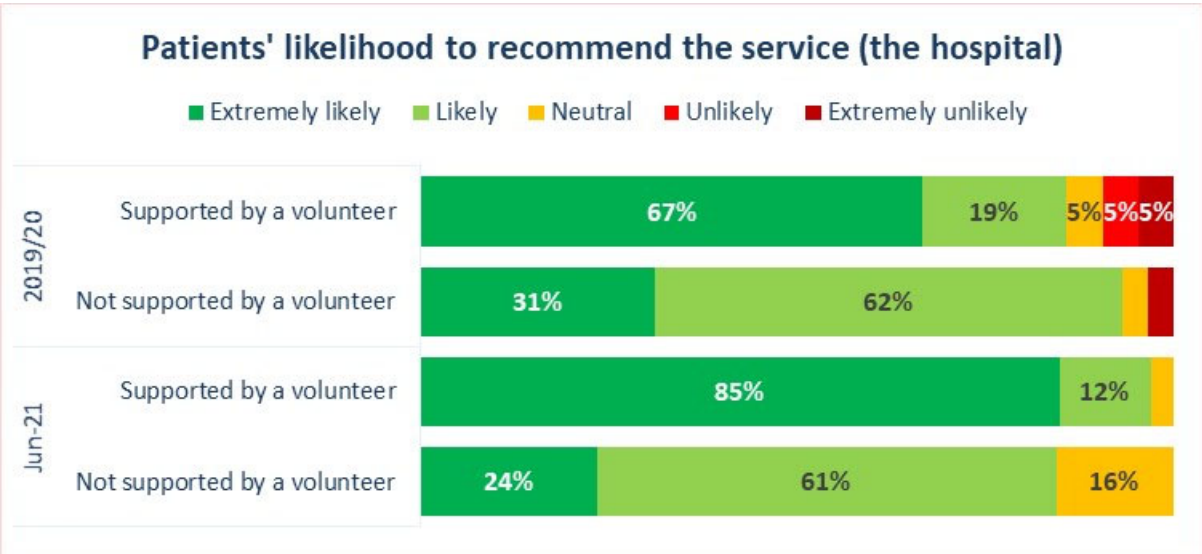


What impact do volunteers have on the likelihood that patients will recommend the hospital?

Both the patients supported by volunteers and those who did not receive volunteer support were asked about the extent to which they would recommend the service (the hospital). Since responses to this question are likely to reflect the hospital experience as a whole rather than just the experience of interacting with volunteers, response variations may not be attributable to the volunteers alone. Nonetheless it seems safe to assume that the frontline nature of this role means it could be a factor in how people choose to answer the question.

As can be seen from the chart below there do appear to have been some negative responses to this question from those who received volunteer support during the earlier days of introducing the intervention. This may reflect some early issues in the volunteer offer or, as noted above, may have nothing at all to do with the volunteers, but from a hospital perspective it is good to see that negative responses have not been repeated in the more recent data.

Given that most patients who responded to the survey appear likely or extremely likely to recommend the service the most interesting variation between the responses from the two groups is the proportion who are extremely likely to recommend the service. Whilst 78% of those who received volunteer support were extremely likely to recommend the service only 26% of those who did not receive volunteer support were extremely likely to recommend the service.



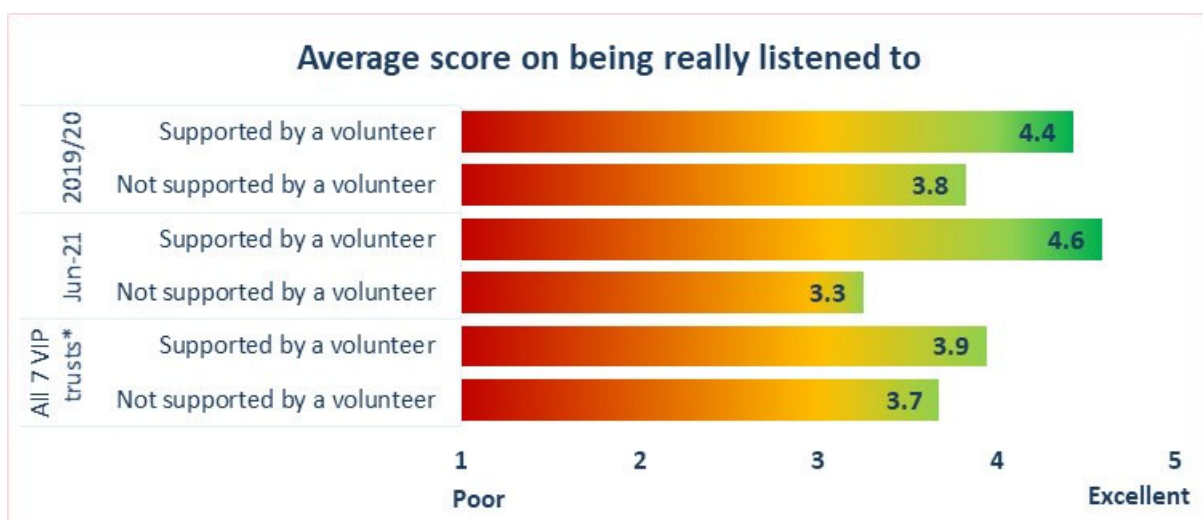
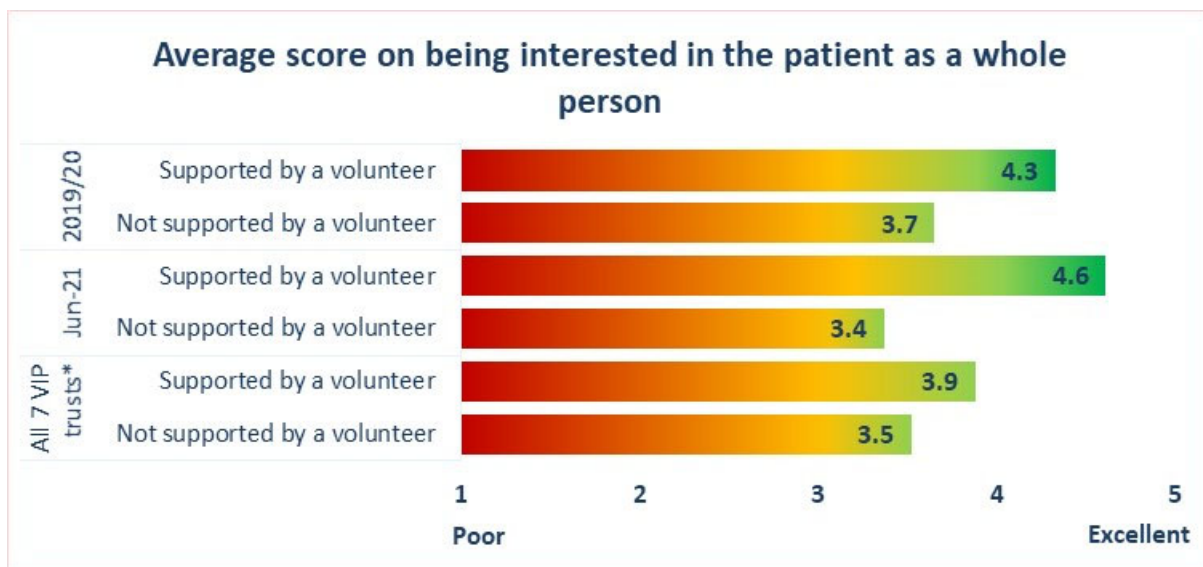
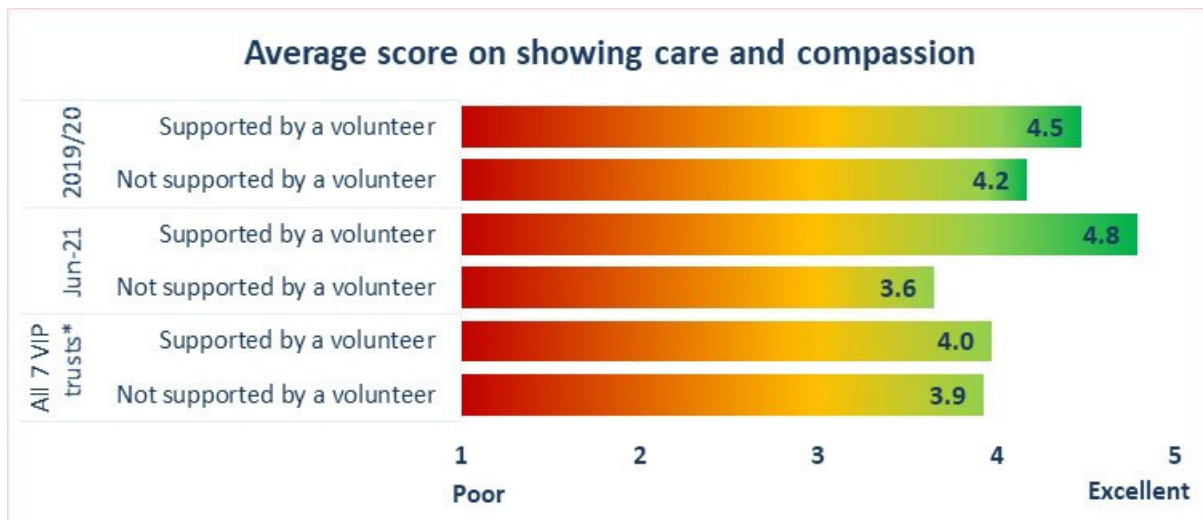
What impact do volunteers have on patient centred care?

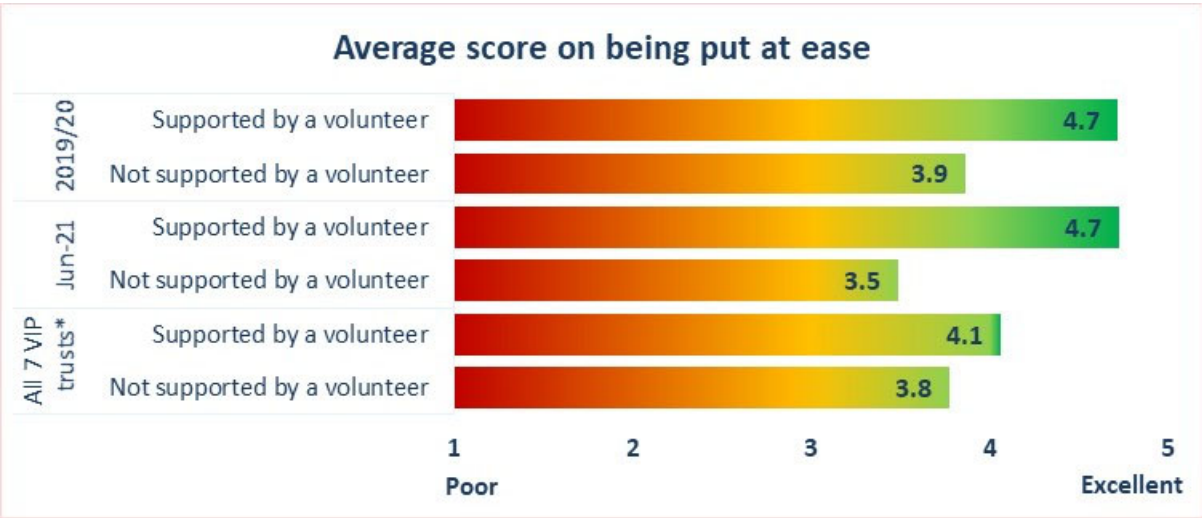
Survey respondents were asked to rate their healthcare provider in four areas based on their current hospital stay or support:

- Showing care and compassion
- Being interested in you as a whole person
- Being really listened to
- Being put at ease

As can be seen from the four charts below, patients supported by volunteers at Moorfields are more likely on average to provide positive feedback in relation to these indicators of patient centred care than those who have not received volunteer support at Moorfields.

It is also worth noting that in each of these four areas, the average scores recorded for Moorfields are higher than those recorded for the seven trusts involved with VIP that also captured this data.





**The other 6 VIP trusts besides Moorfields with relevant data included different volunteer roles, including mobility roles, nutrition and hydration roles, counselling skills volunteers, and emergency department volunteers.*

Data quality notes

A review of the demographic data collected as part of this survey suggests that the more recent responses were provided by a slightly different cohort of patients than was the case during the VIP (2019/20):

- The patients whose data is labelled “Jun-21” in this data were more likely to be female than those whose surveys were collected during VIP, but the gender distribution was roughly the same across patients with and without volunteer support in both time periods.
- The June 2021 patients were somewhat older than the VIP ones, especially amongst those not supported by volunteers.

It is unclear if these variations are purely a reflection of changes in the cohort of patients undergoing surgery, perhaps there are certain groups within the community who have been more likely to decline their surgery during the pandemic, or if these variations reflect a lack of consistency in the distribution of surveys. Whatever the reason, it is important to take these variations into account when looking at the comparisons made in the analysis. The relatively small sample size also means that the findings set out here should be treated with a degree of caution.