

Engaging staff in challenging processes

Many hospitals are finding it increasingly hard to identify and implement further efficiency savings at the levels now needed. One crucial factor is to empower individuals and teams. Steven Bliss looks at how one trust is doing this

The NHS Improvement/HFMA **NHS efficiency map** is designed to help provider organisations in the health service deliver their savings plans. One way is by sharing good practice – in this case, by involving staff.

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust has been an FT since 2006 and has a strong record of delivering savings. It provides general acute and emergency services to a local population of some 240,000 and specialist services to a much larger population. Its total income is more than £200m and it employs more than 4,000 staff.

Like many trusts, its surplus in 2016/17 was achieved only with non-recurrent funding, and its savings target in 2017/18 is about 4% of patient care income. When facing this sort of financial pressure, it is crucial that all staff see the need to improve processes and eliminate waste without compromising the quality of care.

Salisbury's Save 7 programme is designed to involve all staff in change, giving them the chance to be involved in exciting and innovative change projects that simultaneously deliver financial savings, cultural change and service improvement.

The aim is to have champions of the

project at every level within the trust. Staff are said to have 'bought into' the project when they recognise concrete benefits that aren't purely about saving money but also maintain or improve the quality of care for patients and make it easier for them to do so.

Examples of savings

Essentially, Save 7 expects all staff to ask, continually: 'How could we improve our processes to avoid waste, use our time better and, if possible, improve the patient experience at the same time?'

Even small things can save time and money. As one example, the appointment reminder for laser treatment was slightly too long for one SMS message and was split in two, with a small extra cost for the additional messages and inconvenience for the patients of receiving two messages for one reminder. A simple re-write of the message solved this problem.

Here are some of the savings more directly related to patient care:

- Pharmacy previously supplied pre-filled **morphine syringes** for use post-operatively, at a cost of £7 each. But it only costs 40p per syringe if they are filled when needed. This saves £12,000 a year.
- Larger savings have been made on **dressings** – £14,000 has been saved by changing the pressure garments (using evidence from literature reviews). Also, in the past, patients



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were sent home with multiple dressing packs, when community nurses already carried packs and used their own when caring for patients in the community and not those supplied by the hospital (wasting the ones the trust supplied). Now the trust no longer supplies multiple packs, except for specialist dressings. This has provided an immediate cost saving and patients no longer have to store bandages they do not need and which have an expiry date.

- There is a review under way to potentially change clinical practice for patients who undergo

appendectomies, to use sutures instead of an endloop device. It is being quality impact assessed and a full training programme is being scoped. This has the potential to save £17,000.

- The eye clinic has reviewed the patient journey in the new **cataract clinics**. This restructure increases the number of patients seen in the clinic each week, reduces the need for unnecessary tests and utilises non-doctor members of staff more efficiently.

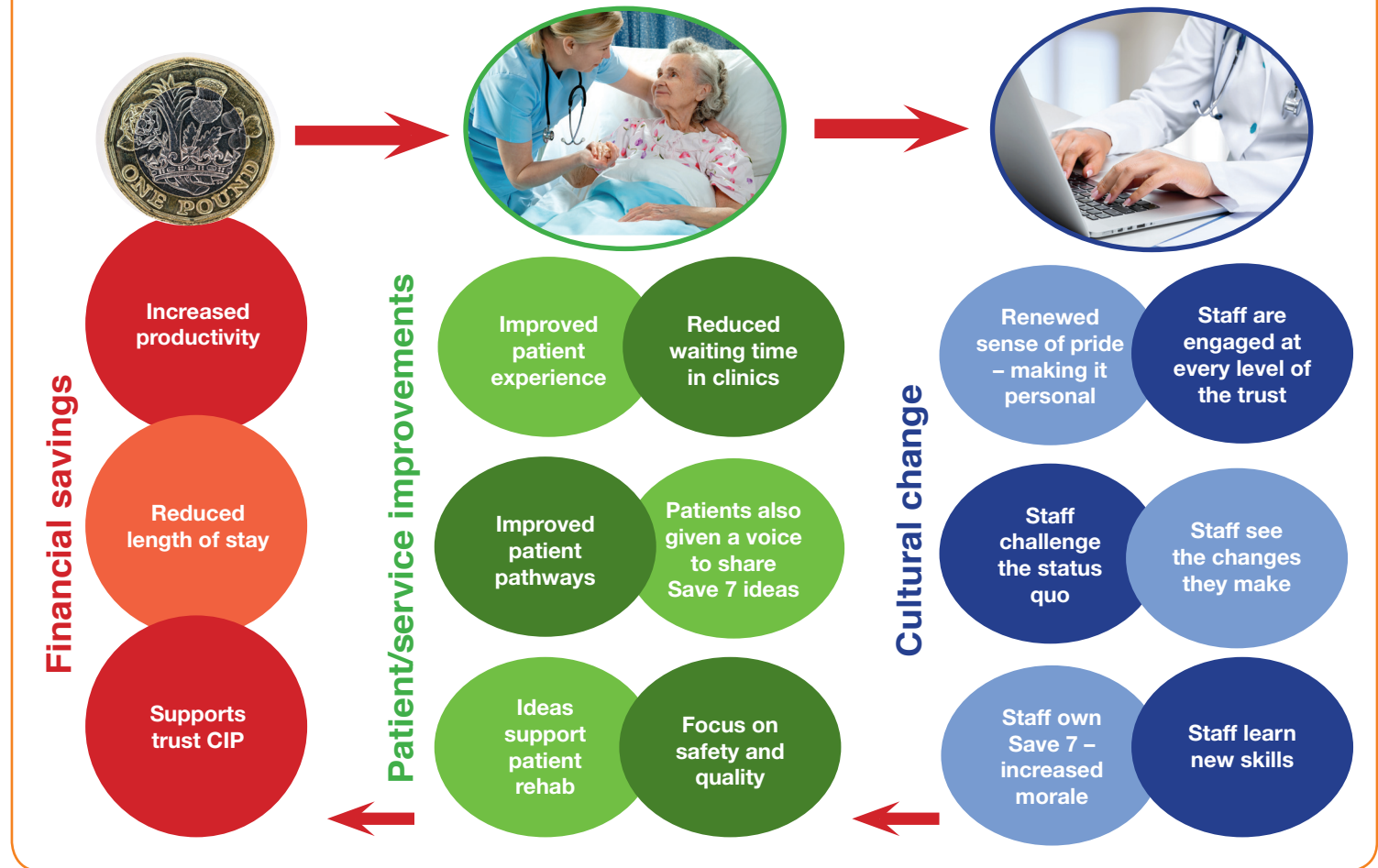
Benefits from the approach

Save 7 is not a standalone project. It links directly into each directorate and service's overall savings targets, so that each sub-project within Save 7 clearly fits the overall plans. Savings on each sub-project are often small, but staff know that all their ideas contribute.

These are some of the key benefits in addition to financial savings:

- Staff feel more **engaged** in the financial position and are empowered to make changes, which improves morale
- The project required better **communications** with staff, which is in itself a good thing
- Successful **ideas** are celebrated, both within the trust and nationally (Save 7 was shortlisted for an HSJ value in healthcare award). People who come up with ideas feel appreciated, and people in other departments can adapt their ideas to their own uses. Currently the programme management office works with 77 Save 7 champions as

Benefits of the Save 7 programme



ambassadors for change.

- Save 7 encourages staff to think constantly about saving energy and time, and to find more **efficient** ways of doing things.
- Staff make the link between **work and home**. They wouldn't leave lights or equipment on in an empty room at home, so why should this

be tolerated at work?

- Ideas that staff develop themselves seem to get implemented more **quickly** and **enthusiastically**. This makes staff keener to be involved in the next initiative.

The chart above summarises the benefits from this programme. ○

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