



Improvement : Reducing the time taken to drop off blood samples

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Problem statement:

As part of the QI Collaborative (QIC) which ran from Autumn 2022 to Spring 2023, the Canterbury Community Nursing Team identified that a lot of time was being spent driving to GP surgeries and the local hospital to drop off blood samples. This created stress within the team with finding parking, having to wait in queues to drop off, or having to walk through the hospital to get to the pathology department and then getting back in time for team handover.

SMART aim:

To reduce time taken by the team to drop off blood samples from 1,452 minutes (24 hours) per month to 60 minutes (1 hour) by August 2023.

Measures to track improvement:

The overall target within the SMART aim supports our We care ambition of “a great place to work”, specifically the objectives of increasing the “we have a voice that counts” score in our staff survey from 7.26 (2022/23) to 7.46, and reducing working unpaid hours to less than 20 per cent compared with average across 2022/23.

It also links with the sustainable care ambition and incorporates the target of reducing emissions by 80 per cent by 2028, through a reduction in additional miles driven.

Programmes of work:

January 2023- QI collaboration workshop three, the team identified that changing how blood samples were dropped off might help ease stress on team and release time for adequate lunch breaks.
March 2023 - the team established that a blood collection could be arranged from their base Monday to Friday.
April 2023 - data collection to support effectiveness of daily blood collection was requested.
May 2023 - baseline data collection completed for one week.
June 2023 - SBAR written and presented by team lead. A one month trial was agreed for Monday to Friday blood collection from the base.
July 2023 - data collected over the four week period including usage of base blood collection service and comments from the team.
August 2023 - data analysed and a summary of the trial was written up.

Data:

Baseline data collection extrapolated out over a four week period:

Number of colleagues submitting data	Number of blood samples taken	Number of additional journeys	Additional miles travelled	Time taken dropping off the bloods (minutes)
9	104	116	200	1,452 (24 hours) over 4 weeks

Summary of data from the four week trial:

Number of colleagues using the drop-off	Number of blood samples taken	Number of drop-offs at base	Estimate time saving (minutes)
22	129	71	1,080 (18 hours) over 4 weeks

Results, what we learned and what’s next:

“100 per cent saves a lot of time due to coming back for handover (1pm)”
“...it has made my working day much easier as I no longer have to travel out of my way and have waiting times in surgery to drop bloods.”
“It has been extremely beneficial. It has sometimes meant that I have had extra time, that I would have usually spent dropping off bloods, to stop off and get some lunch on my way back to the office.”

Over the four week trial period, **no additional journeys** were made to GP surgeries and only two urgent samples were dropped off at the acute hospital. This is an estimated average time saving of 4.5 hours per week for the team and should result in a reduction in non-pay budget for the five months the service is in use. At the end of August 2023, the team presented the trial data to the service lead and daily blood collections were agreed for a further three month period until a new phlebotomy post is filled.

What’s next?

The team are now looking at other ways to make sure everyone has time for a break and in a comfortable location during their shift.