

SWAR: Social Work Assistant's Role Redesigned



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Background

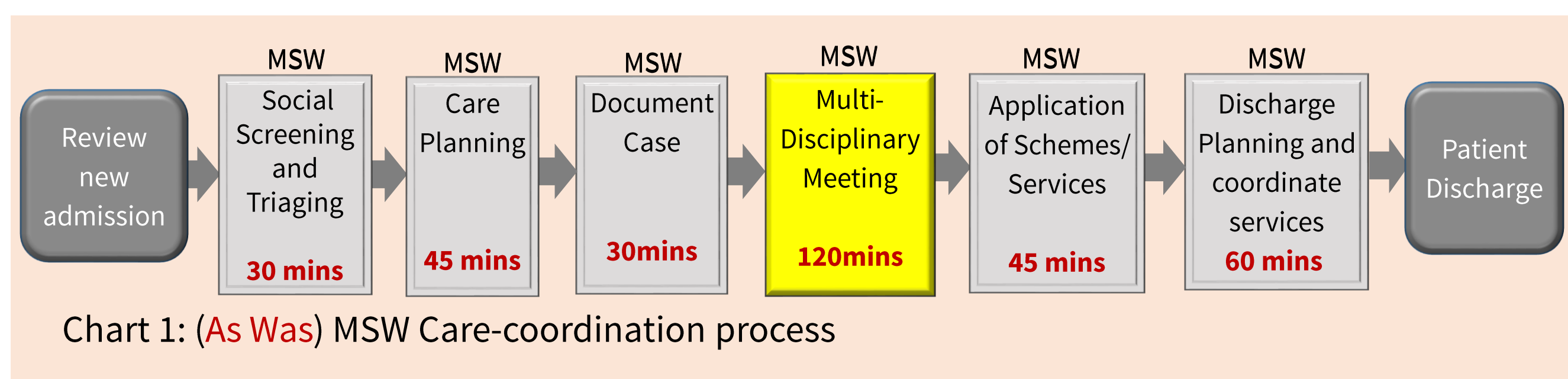
Medical Social Services (MSS) in Yishun Community Hospital (YCH) practises blanket social screening and care coordination for all subsidized patients. Since the hospital opened in 2016, there has been increasing demand for social services and intervention. Before this project, Social Work Assistants (SWAs) were tasked with mostly administrative duties. The team re-evaluated the job roles of SWAs and found much **hidden potential** in Social Work Assistants (SWAs) awaiting to be harnessed.

Aim

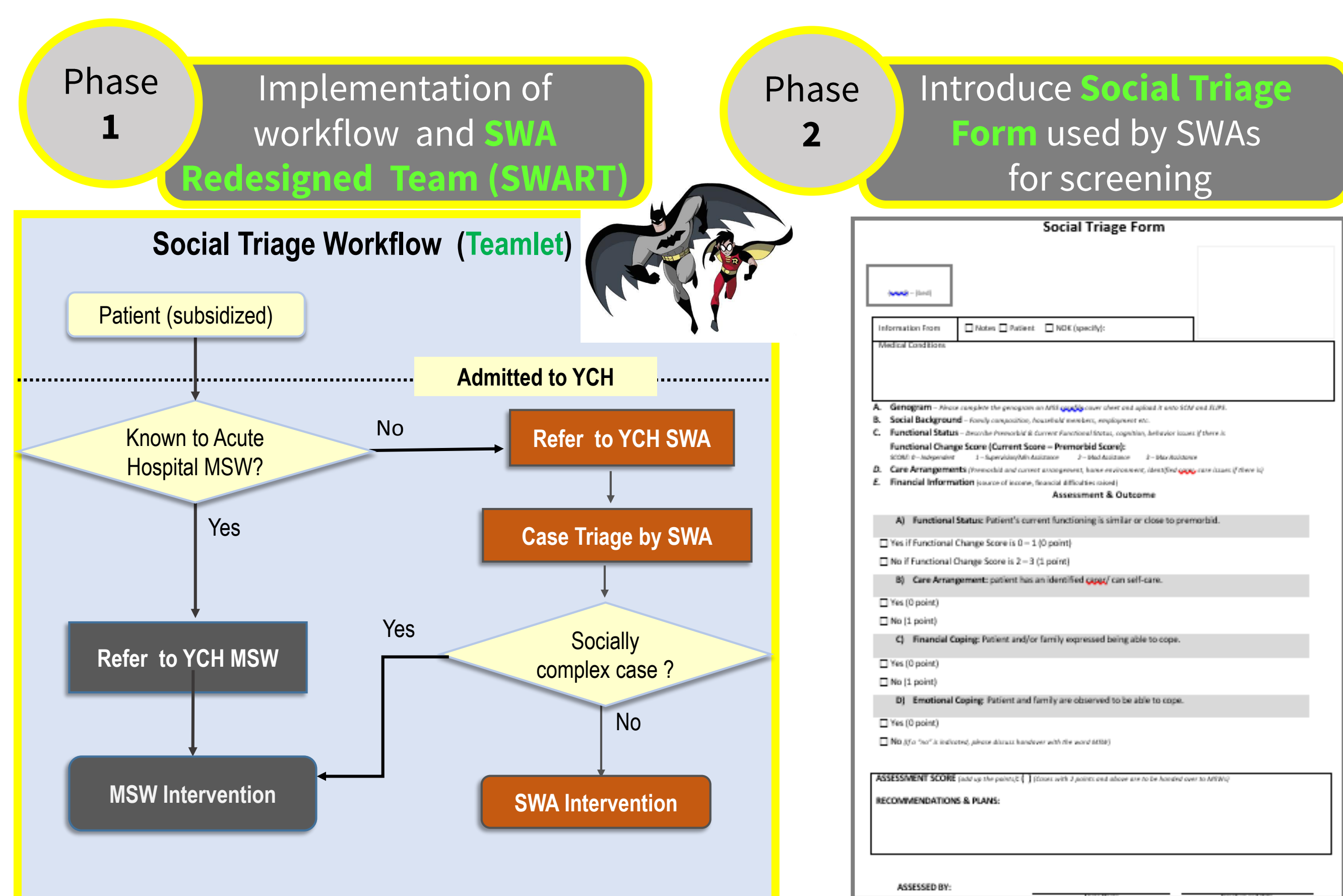
The project started with the aim to **re-design** SWAs' roles to create a new model that effectively leverages on SWAs' capabilities and capacity. This effort concurrently led to the creation of a new social care model in community hospital setting.

Methodology

The team evaluated MSW role and found that MSWs spend an average of 3.5 hours per patient on discharge care planning as indicated in Chart 1. This leaves MSWs with less time for counselling, mediation work and liaison with multiple agencies for socially complex cases.

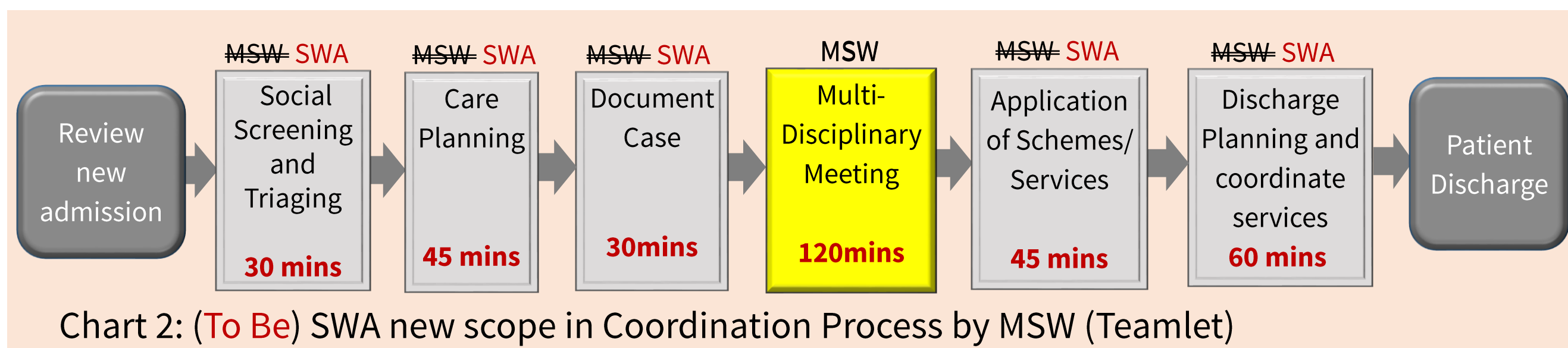


The team then utilised the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle to test job redesign duties before fully implementing the role changes. Implementation of **Teamlet Model** and workflow:

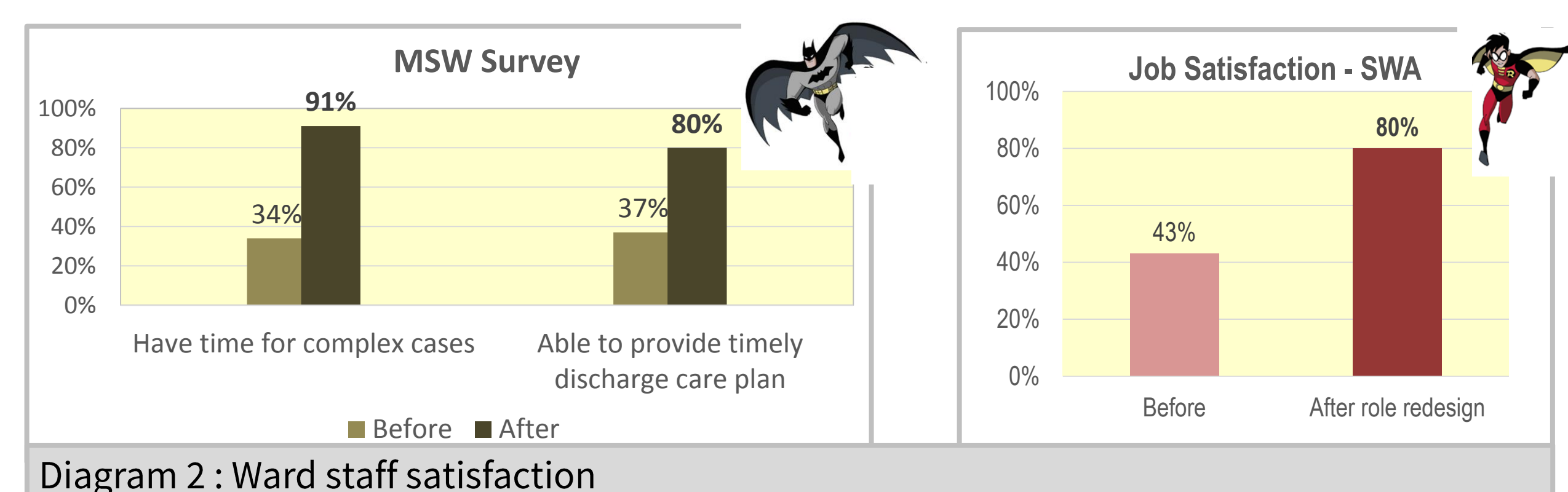
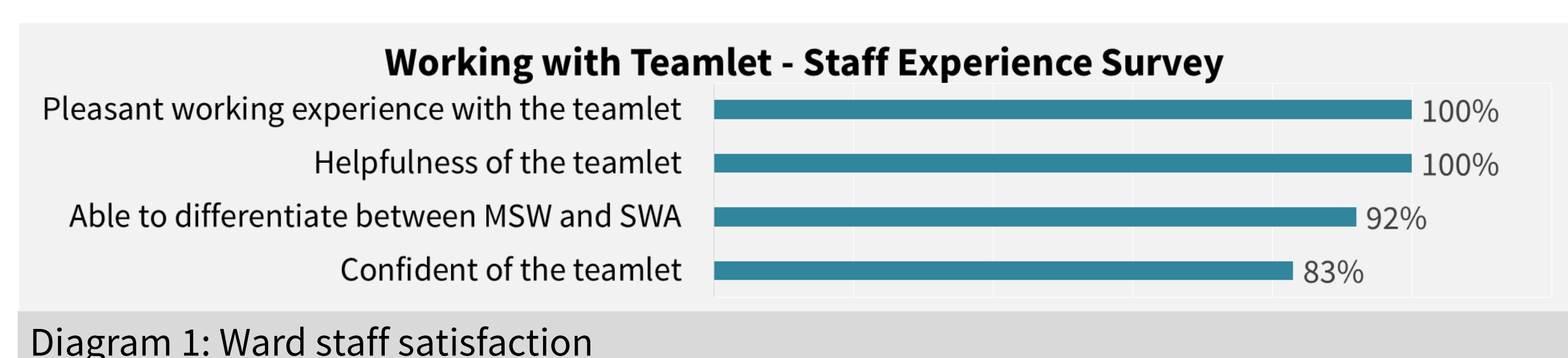


Results

Time Savings of **1.3 hours/day** was incurred for MSWs (Chart 2). Time savings incurred also resulted in annual **cost savings** of **\$5250.96** for each teamlet.



Ward staff provided **positive feedback** on working with SWAs and teamlet (diagram 1). MSWs and SWAs also provided **positive feedback** on the effect of role redesign on their work (diagram 2).



Project Impact

1. Improve Efficiency/Effectiveness

Time savings incurred allow MSWs to have more time for advocacy, mediation, counselling, violence work, community networking etc.

2. Create Joy At Work Environment

Both Ward staff and MSWs showed positive experience with the teamlet model (Diagrams 1 and 2).

3. Promote Staff Development

SWAs felt empowered as their role re-design provides opportunities for them to put theoretical knowledge and skills learnt from ongoing degree programmes into practice, under MSW supervision.

Sustainability & Follow-up

- The team has developed SWA in-service training to standardize SWA work practices, and has formulated standard work instructions to guide practices. This teamlet model (**SWART**) has been implemented in **all subsidized wards in YCH and has sustained** amidst changes in manpower.
- To improve and understand outcomes of this pilot project further, project team will delve into the impact of model on patient outcomes by conducting patient/ family satisfactory survey in July 2019.

Conclusion

"The answer lies within"

The project, in its bid to increase productivity within department and staff job satisfaction, has taught us that there is no need to search far and wide for external resources. There is often hidden potential amidst existing manpower/staff within departments waiting to be harnessed.

Role re-designing creates a work culture of continuous improvement and flexibility so that staff/services are able to adapt to new changes and rising needs.

The implementation of SWA role re-design has also impacted MSW 's role -- to include coaching for SWAs. As a result, the new Teamlet model has also enhanced communication between/amongst the MSWs and SWAs through the **daily huddles which have helped build closer working relationships within the team.**