



Optima
Case Study

Leeds Teaching Hospital



Sue Dodd, Senior Sister on the Infection and Travel Medicine Ward, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust talks of achieving fairer, safer shifts for staff through e-Rostering.

“It’s hard to imagine an organisation with 13,000 staff across six main sites, tasked with delivering critical services to over one million patients per year, reliant on paper-based systems. And yet this was the case with Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust. Despite being one of the biggest trusts in the UK, our rostering processes were rudimentary to say the least. Until recently, that is, when we implemented Optima, an e-Rostering tool.

According to RLDatix, up to 4% of nursing hours are lost across the NHS from inefficient management of the workforce; which is certainly an issue I can identify with. However, by introducing e-Rostering, I can say with absolute certainty, not only are we running our wards efficiently and within budget, but we’re actually setting examples of best practice for other hospital trusts to follow. This turnaround is invaluable in today’s marketplace. With Government cuts creating a demand for new ways of working, and reforms coming to the fore to encourage greater competition from the private sector, modernisation is a necessity for all hospitals.”

Why e-Rostering?

The impetus for turning to e-Rostering was the sheer complexity of organising staff rosters. As an acute medicine department, our priority has to be on patient care and yet we used to spend at least two and half hours doing timesheets manually. Today we can update the system on a daily basis in just a couple of seconds. We’ve also done away with repetition. Whereas before we had to complete the off duty roster, weekly attendance management forms, monthly sickness and absence statistics and monthly time sheets, any changes made to one roster now cascade to the rest, including payroll. This also means that we can be certain that our pay is 100% accurate.

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The benefits

The hospital replaced disparate paper-based systems with Optima to drive out inefficiencies and significantly improve transparency of the workforce to achieve improved performance across all areas of the hospital. The solution has been implemented

across all clinical units so far, and is now effectively working across the entire workforce process to deliver multiple benefits on a hospital-wide scale.

“With e-Rostering, we can put the onus on the system to make the right judgement, which invariably leads to fairer and more popular outcomes for the staff.”

Sue Dodd,
Senior Staff
Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

So for example, rather than having to negotiate who should and shouldn’t work Christmas Day, we can quickly pull up historic records and let the system make the decision for us, based on having all the relevant information to hand. The same applies to the most popular shifts, like Bank Holidays, which offer double pay. We now have a league table of requests which we can share with the team to demonstrate that cover has been awarded on an equitable basis.

Another benefit to the system is that we can easily keep track of overtime, which means that staff can easily claim back for additional or long shifts worked. Conversely the same applies if staff have worked too few hours.

Electronic rostering has also helped us balance annual leave across the year. Each member of staff can go into the system to check their holiday allowance for the rest of the year, making it easier for them to plan ahead. And from a management point of view, we can check that holidays are evenly spread over a period of time, rather than having to cope with the common scramble at the end of the year. Electronic rostering effectively puts control back into the hands of the nurses, while ensuring that patient care comes first. It also protects front line staff in particularly intense times of the year. It’s no fun dealing with a flu pandemic for example when 35% of your staff are on annual leave. With the system, we can anticipate and prevent that scenario occurring, even if the outbreak itself is unforeseen.

The system has also equipped senior nurses with valuable new skills. While the system is intuitive and easy to use, mastering a modern piece of technology is a valuable experience, particularly for nurses in positions of responsibility, and with aspirations for management. To get the most out of the system, a select number of people on the wards attended a

raining course. In fact, from using it on a day to day basis, we keep discovering new functionalities and deriving more benefits from the system.

Summary

Based on success to date, we're now planning to extend the system to all wards and departments. There's no looking back now. With this fairer, safer and more efficient system in place, we've managed to save money by using our workforce more effectively and reduce our reliance on bank and agency staff, which is a real bonus in this economic climate.

We still have the flexibility to exercise our own judgement but we now have the visibility to identify gaps in the rota and address these shortfalls accordingly. So for example, when two nurses got married at the same time last year, the system was flexible enough to allow for the additional leave, even though it overlapped, but it also preempted us to consider our staffing options well in advance.

With the current focus on improving frontline services, ensuring that the correct mix of skilled staff are on the wards at all times is crucial to our record for patient safety. The new rostering system gives us that certainty, while allocating shifts in a fair and constructive way. Not only are we provisioned for top-notch patient care, but our staff are happy too.

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