

How University Hospitals of North Midlands achieved 99% job planning compliance in one year



Summary

University Hospitals of North Midlands (UHNM) has two hospitals - Royal Stoke University Hospital located in Stoke-on-Trent, and County Hospital located in Stafford. It is also home to Staffordshire Children's Hospital at Royal Stoke.

From these hospitals the trust provides a full range of general acute hospital services for approximately 700,000 people living in and around Staffordshire and the surrounding areas. The trust also provides specialised services, such as Trauma, cancer diagnosis and treatment, cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, renal and dialysis services, neonatal intensive care and paediatric intensive care in a wider area, including neighbouring counties and North Wales.

Historically, the trust had struggled with effective job planning, too often finding that its agreements were inconsistent and misaligned with the needs of the service. Following a comprehensive audit, trust leaders implemented an improved, technology-enabled job planning capability. This new structured approach made use of RLDatix's JobPlan in order to relaunch job planning annually in a way that better aligned with wider business planning needs.

This refresh also saw the creation of divisional consistency panels and a medical workforce committee. The committee now receives regular performance reports, which hold clinical leaders accountable for each plan's completion. Thanks to a focus on technology and clear objectives for reform, job plan compliance rose to 99% from 41% within a 13-month period. This helped to better align workforce planning with service demands, while ensuring that job plans directly correlated with pay and service delivery.



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The challenge

It had been acknowledged that variability in job planning processes was leading to inconsistencies in service delivery, inefficient use of resources and burnout within the workforce.

A further cause for concern was the fact that, in certain cases, pay was not being aligned to the responsibilities outlined in job plans. All these factors were negatively impacting effective patient care and overall health outcomes.

An audit carried out by RSM UK highlighted a range of challenges within UHNM's job planning processes for its medical staff. The audit found that job planning was not aligned with service needs and was not standardised across the trust's different divisions. It served as a prompt for the trust to revisit job planning compliance and take bold action to overhaul its job planning system to ensure plans were better integrated with overall workforce and service needs, while also improving accountability in the planning process.

The solution

The team behind the overhaul began by targeting a series of 'quick wins' to establish a greater level of consistency with regards to job planning processes with the creation of a corporate consistency panel. Once completed, the created a standardised job planning framework to inform all future annual job planning rounds.

The framework created clear guidelines, objectives and, crucially, timelines for the annual planning process. The framework itself was consistent enough to ensure uniformity in processes and expectations, but pragmatic enough to be adaptable to different departments within the organisation.

Implementing RLDatix's JobPlan gave the trust access to a robust digital platform to facilitate the new, more consistent planning processes. It did this to enable

real-time updates and ensure better tracking of both the job plans themselves and their alignment with service needs.

Importantly, at every stage of the development of the standardised framework and new job planning processes, key stakeholders were engaged at all levels, including clinical leaders, operational managers and human resources professionals. Regular communication and training sessions ensured all parties were aware of their roles and responsibilities, while underlining the importance of effective job planning.

The engagement process was vital for helping staff across the organisation understand the need for change. Diane Poulson, UHNM Assistant Director of Resourcing, says: “As with any kind of process change, there will always be some resistance and bit of a battle. There was a view around comparing different clinical specialties and hopefully that’s not the case now. Thanks to the changes we implemented all additional contractual payments are standardised with a rate card that we apply.”

What our clinicians say

Dr Matthew Lewis, UHNM Medical Director says: **“The analysis that we get at the back end of the platform is very useful. Being able to search for categories and then break that down by different departments and teams helps a great deal, as it helps us understand where the money is going and how the job plans influence that is really useful. I find it easy to sign off job plans, as I can see the information that I want.”**

“Now that we have a more focused approach to job planning, I feel like I have a much clearer view on my roles and responsibilities. Importantly, I can see how my pay is related to the responsibilities agreed in my job plan, which wasn’t the case before.

Dr Andy Haynes,
Executive Medical Director,
Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS FT

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Benefits and next steps

By reimagining the job planning process with a more structured and data-driven approach, the trust saw several key improvements. These included:

- Improved compliance rates: Feedback from further internal audits and performance reports following the adoption of the technology-enabled process showed a major increase in job planning compliance. Prior to the project, compliance was around 41%. Post-implementation, job planning compliance improved to 99% over a 13-month period. The increase was praised by clinical and operational managers for providing greater transparency and alignment in job planning.
- Financial and operational improvements: Finance managers and senior operational staff highlighted the alignment between job plans and financial budgets. The improved accuracy in job planning ensured that resource allocation was more closely matched to actual service needs, leading to better financial management and reduced discrepancies between planned and actual activities.
- Feedback from clinicians: Medical staff, including consultants and SAS doctors, reported that the enhanced job planning process made their roles clearer and expectations more transparent. The emphasis on job plan sign-off before processing pay changes was seen as fair and motivating, ensuring that pay was accurately aligned with job responsibilities.
- Positive feedback from operational teams and clinical leaders: Surveys and feedback from both clinical and operational staff have highlighted improvements in clarity and satisfaction with the job planning process.

To build on the positive momentum that has come with these changes, trust leaders are regularly reviewing and refining the job planning process based on the feedback received from a wide range of internal stakeholders and on performance data generated from the JobPlan platform itself.



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