

Streamlining communication – a way **forward** >>> for the NHS

Kirsty Duncan from Ascom discusses how streamlining communication systems has helped University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust with its auditing and overall efficiency.



Ascertaining where a clinician is within a hospital can be a task in itself; paging, calling and tannoy's all add up to time, noise and overall inefficiency of staff time.

Now add in the fact that they could be anywhere in one of the many different hospitals within a trust – what do you do then? What is the most efficient way to communicate with them? How can there be a standard way of communicating in different hospitals? What if there is an emergency?

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust was in such a situation.

It comprises three hospitals – Royal Lancaster Infirmary, Furness General Hospital and Westmorland General Hospital – with the furthest two hospitals being 45 miles apart. With 6,000 staff spread across all three sites and 806 beds the trust wanted to streamline its communication process; first it had some issues it wished to have addressed:

1. The trust wanted one secure common communication platform between and across all three of its hospitals.
2. The plan was to centralise its switchboard services into one main call centre.
3. There was a need to provide roaming clinicians who had multi-site working responsibilities with the ability to go from

site-to-site with one standard communication device that was easy to use.

4. Develop an auditable paging system and change cultures into standardising call groups, eliminating the human element.

Ascom helped the trust streamline its communication equipment from a three-system paging, two radio systems and wi-fi voice system to one custom-built Ascom communication platform.

Kirsty Duncan, healthcare account manager for Ascom, said: "It's all about flexibility and we set out with the aim of providing various ways in which staff could communicate their need for help."

Ascom provided the trust with a single web-based communication platform, NetPage, which could be used at a ward and department level across all three sites. This enabled staff to send messages to colleagues themselves; a task previously undertaken by the switchboard, now alleviating the call load.

The switchboard were provided with reassurance that all of their paging communications were being logged as evidence of paging requests undertaken in very critical situations. Previously the switchboard sent out one-way broadcast speech and data with no way of knowing the message was being responded to and even received. Their switchboard

runs 24/7 and can now receive calls and send critical messages immediately with the peace of mind knowing their messages have been acknowledged via Ascom's DURAsuite solution.

With the Ascom solution they were able to provide junior doctors who roamed between sites, and those doctors from receiving sites, safety and consistency in ease of operation by standardising the communication equipment.

Ascom's solution provided a key feature which is critical in healthcare establishments: logging and tracking for auditing. This allows the trust to record its service level agreements, monitor KPIs and help in service investigations. This addressed a critical issue that is prevalent in all hospitals; logging and tracking of alarms and pagers from the start to finish of an incident – key for litigation purposes.

The solution has streamlined the way in which the trust works, alleviating call loads from its switchboard and empowering staff to communicate directly with colleagues wherever they may be.

The trust's Barry Rigg said: "We, the whole trust, view Ascom and the Ascom equipment as a communication platform which has been and will continue to be an integrated part of how we maintain our full range of staff to be in the right place at the right time, every time."

This technology is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to streamlining processes within the NHS; it's all about improving patient flow, increasing patient safety, furthering patient experience and enhancing staff satisfaction and efficiency.

As technology moves on solutions will develop. A solution taking off at the moment is apps that sit on clinicians' own phones, eliminating the need for an additional communication device when off and on-site. Ascom's Unite Axess is one of these applications: let's what else the future holds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more on this case or an integrated wireless communication solution for your hospital contact Ascom:

T: 0121 353 6151

E: NHE@ascom.co.uk