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CHELSEA AND WESTMINSTER HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST USING MOBILE APP TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE AGENCY SPEND

The organisation

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (CWHFT) comprises of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital and West Middlesex University Hospital.

The trust offers a range of general and community services, including award winning sexual health and HIV clinics across London.

With 5,000 staff caring for nearly one million people from the local area, regionally, and nationally, the trust provides a range of specialist services as well as general hospital services, including emergency medicine and maternity at both hospital sites.

CWHFT currently spends approximately £22 million on agency spend each year for doctors and nurses.

Background

The NHS spends in the region of £3.7 billion a year on temporary staffing solutions.

A protracted national staffing shortage has led to increased use of temporary staff. Despite financial restrictions, such as capped rates which were introduced by NHS Improvement in Spring 2016, agency use remains an issue impacting on safe levels of staffing across trusts.



The case for change

The trust HR department was under sustained pressure to safely staff wards and departments. Barriers included:

- HR departments not having access to available clinicians.
- Poor relationships between HR and trust bank staff and clinicians recruited outside of the organisation.
- High staff turnover and pressure to fill gaps being stressful.
- The temporary staffing office often being reliant on agencies, despite the high costs incurred by the trust.
- A negative perception about the existing bank – sign up times and bureaucracy.

On many occasions where agency staff were used, a bank locum could have filled the shift at a lower cost. Locums were frustrated by their experience with agencies i.e. cold calling, slow processes. They welcomed the notion of a more engaged and efficient staff bank.

How we did it


To help address the issue the trust introduced a new doctors staff bank called Flexistaff+ which was developed by Dr Anas Nader with support from Chris Scard, temporary staffing transformation lead. Dr Anas realised that there was an opportunity to reduce the need for agencies and save money by maximising use of the trust bank and improving its internal processes.

Flexistaff+ was designed to:

- Minimise the need for agency staff by utilising resources from the bank.
- Make it easy for existing clinicians within the trust to book extra shifts.
- Improve the recruitment of external clinicians to the staff bank.
- Enhance the experience for clinicians.
- Save the trust money.

It soon became clear that the new staff bank had technical limitations in terms of logistical application and required a purpose-built digital platform that could support the staff bank and bring in further service efficiencies.

This resulted in the development of LocumTap, a cloud based platform for HR teams to manage temporary staffing, accompanied by a mobile app that enables clinicians to book shifts on demand. LocumTap manages the entire locum shift cycle.



Features include:

- Recruitment to the staff bank.
- Managing and posting vacancies.
- Push notifications as and when vacant shifts become available.
- The facility for locums to self-book, using preferences.
- Electronic timesheets.
- Real-time data analytics.

Results and next steps

Since Flexistaff+ was introduced in November 2016 and the adoption of LocumTap in the summer of 2017, the trust has significantly increased the pool of available clinicians in the staff bank with an additional 300+ recruited internally and externally.

There has been improved engagement and communication with locum doctors across all grades and specialties.

This has resulted in:

- Increased bank use from 30 per cent to 70 per cent (in some departments up to 95 per cent).
- Improved engagement and communication with locum doctors across all grades and specialties.
- Cost benefits of around £40,000 per month (around £500,000 per annum) for junior doctor shifts alone.
- Enhanced visibility over all locum activities for accurate data reporting.
- Improved clinician experience with the staff bank service resulting in improved staff morale and better recruitment and retention of locums.

Top tips

- ✓ Better engagement with clinicians is key for an effective staff bank
- ✓ Innovative digital technologies can help super charge the staff bank and improve the utilisation rate of bank locums.

Further information

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