

Medway NHS Foundation Trust

From outdated, admin intensive, paper based rostering to real time dynamic e-Rostering, driving efficiencies and a happier workforce.

About the Trust

Medway NHS Foundation Trust is a single-site hospital based in Gillingham, Medway Maritime Hospital, in Kent. The Trust employs around 4,400 staff and serves a population of more than 424,000 across Medway and Swale, providing clinical services to almost half a million patients a year.

Having successfully implemented e-Rostering across its nursing and non-nursing areas, the Trust was still operating on an admin intensive and time consuming paper-based system for the rostering of its doctors and consultants. This resulted in a lack of visibility when it came to shift planning, cover and overall resourcing.

Extending e-Rostering to include its team of doctors and consultants was the next logical step for the hospital in achieving the overall benefit of organisation wide e-Rostering. Between January and July 2018, Medway successfully rolled out Allocate's MedicOnduty, MedicOnline and LocumOnduty to its team of 550 medics, improving morale and enhancing patient and staff safety, while also reducing base spend on temporary agency locum staff.

Building on strong foundations

In 2014 and 2015, Medway NHS Foundation Trust had delivered a series of benefits following the rollout of Allocate e-Rostering systems to all nurses and other non-medical staff across its operations.

Supported by Allocate consultants, the Trust had moved nursing rostering from its previous paper-based system to the new online platform. This provided increased visibility on how wards were staffed, highlighting to the Trust that it had issues with ensuring the correct staffing levels; some wards were overstaffed and others understaffed. Using the Allocate systems, the Trust was able to rectify this, assuring patient safety while simultaneously reducing agency spend by optimising use of its own team.



The implementation of the Allocate systems was led by Alison Smith, Medway NHS Foundation Trust's Head of e-Rostering, and Georgina Lee, eRostering Implementation Manager.

"The main benefit was that teams could now report on leave and staffing, use the system to manage their staff better and get a complete resourcing picture. We could also, see exactly when people were working – whether they were coming in early and staying late – and gain an understanding of why this was."

Expanding e-Rostering to medics

In December 2017 the e-Rostering team were given the go ahead to expand e-Rostering to its team of 550 medics.

The Trust's doctors were using several different versions of paper-based medical rotas, making it difficult to understand team members' working patterns and streamline leave and sickness requests.

The move to e-Rostering aimed to address this, ensuring correct staffing levels on wards and safe working hours for medics.

"Moving our medics onto the system was a natural progression for us after we'd got the rest of the Trust onto e-Rostering. After doing our research and speaking with people, we identified that the biggest benefits would be realised by going with Allocate's MedicOnduty, MedicOnline and LocumOnDuty platforms."

This was a complex project; the assortment of paper-based systems in use made the switch to a single online system challenging.

The implementation team obtained copies of existing medical rotas so to gain a better understanding and help doctors and rota coordinators adjust to using the new system.

The Trust had an ambitious rollout plan, aiming to have all medics up and running on MedicOnDuty, MedicOnline and LocumOnDuty by the end of July 2018.

“The implementation itself was phased and we started off in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. The emphasis was on getting the junior doctors and on the e-Rostering platforms, but we also needed the consultants on the system to give them visibility of rotas and leave.”

To achieve this, the Trust gave every department, each of which has approximately 100 doctors, five weeks from data gathering to going live.

Between January and July 2018, the implementation team successfully moved all medics onto the new e-Rostering system. The Trust then took the decision to centralise the rota co-ordinators and bring them into the e-Rostering team in October 2018.

“That’s when we really started to see the benefits. The coordinators have been heavily involved in managing the medical rotas. Including them in the e-Rostering team allowed us to identify operational issues and areas for improvement. For example, one of the biggest achievements in the last six months has been in general medicine and their rotas.

By using e-Rostering, we can now ensure that when the consultants come in, they know which junior staff are going to be on their on-call board. Historically, medics would be on annual leave and the consultant wouldn’t even know. Having that visibility has helped enormously.”

Empowering the medical team

Following implementation of the Allocate platform, medical staff were empowered with a level of information and control that wasn’t previously possible. Medics could now view their own and others’ on-call rotas, record call outs, book holiday, study and sickness leave quickly, and integrate with their iCal for better visibility with personal calendars.

“The junior doctors love it because they can do everything on their phones so this has been a big win for us. We put all rotations on the system a year in advance so our medics now know exactly where they’re going to be and when. They can start booking their annual leave around this and this makes them feel like we’re taking care of them and putting them in control.”

By providing a fully integrated view of medic’s rotas and leave, the e-Rostering platform also allows the Trust to ensure fairness on shift allocation and ensure adherence of rules to safeguard patient and staff safety.

Delivering for patients, medics and the NHS

Using the Allocate platform for medics, the Trust has achieved significant operational, cost and staff satisfaction improvements.

“In terms of temporary staffing and the locum on duty piece, booking all of the shifts through e-Rostering has given us complete visibility of the staffing in all areas. Previously, doctors could be asked to come in and work, and there was no control over this.

We can now make sure that only the shifts that need to be covered are approved. This has directly resulted in a reduction in base spend in this area as a result.”

In addition, the introduction of LocumOnduty has eliminated the need for paper timesheets from temporary staff. Previously the rostering team used to receive 300 – 400 paper timesheets per week to process manually, these timesheets are now all added to eRostering and extracted electronically.

This has significantly reduced the administrative burden of manually inputting these and enabling 100 per cent accurate data extract to payroll.

The Trust reports that empowering its medics, better management of annual leave and the ability to clearly identify and fill gaps in rotas early on have all led to a happier workforce.

Elizabeth Nyawade, Deputy Director of HR & OD, explains the impact on the Trust’s overall workforce management:

“The eRostering roll out across the Trust has resulted in the level of transparency required to deploy staff effectively to deliver patient care e.g. Care Hours Per Patient Day. It has also resulted in supporting the allocation of absences; annual leave, study leave etc. in a way that ensures that patient care is not adversely impacted.

It has revolutionised medical workforce staffing allowing visibility of this particularly expensive workforce, allocating them accordingly and utilising them effectively by detailing all programmed activities. The team has received incredible support from colleagues at Allocate and this working in partnership will continue to drive further utilisation and implementation of all functionalities within the product for greater benefit of patients and staff.”

Next steps

The Trust is now beginning the final phase of its e-Rostering rollout with implementation of Allocate’s Activity Manager. This will allow it to use the platform to schedule any clinical activity, assigning a consultant lead and other supporting staff such as junior doctors, specialists and nurses to ensure that it is delivered to the patient with the correct team in place.

“As there are lots of ways to use Activity Manager, we’re taking a steady approach to its implementation, working collaboratively with our clinical leads to make sure that we get it right first time. Activity Manager will allow us to fully e-Roster our consultants and get a full picture of their activity along with the other medics.”

