

Western Health and Social Care Trust

SMART generates efficiencies in response to
Comprehensive Spending Review

Major NHS employer in Northern Ireland relies on e-Rostering to boost productivity and maximise the potential of 3,000 nursing staff

Established in April 2007, Western Health and Social Care Trust provides health and social care services to approximately 290,000 residents. A major employer in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland, the organisation's mission is to deliver high quality patient and client-focused care through well trained staff with high morale.

As part of a two-year programme to further maximise employee performance and productivity, the Trust set about deploying SMART's e-Rostering solution in September 2010. Although the project is not yet fully complete, the new web-based workforce management system has gone live at Altnagelvin Hospital, a district general hospital offering 460 beds. The system has begun to deliver tangible time savings. Longer-term, it is anticipated that the SMART technology will cover other hospital premises throughout the Trust to support the organisation's junior medical, social care, domestic and catering staff.

According to Brendan McGrath, Assistant Director for Nursing at Western Health

and Social Care Trust, the ward sisters and charge nurses in Altnagelvin Hospital are beginning to realise the benefits of automated e-Rostering. The new SMART platform has gone a long way to driving efficiencies across the board, fundamental to meeting the ambitious targets set by the government's Comprehensive Spending Review."

The Challenge

Before SMART, Western Health and Social Care Trust relied entirely on manual processes to record staff time and administer shifts. This approach was labour intensive and placed additional burden on ward sisters and charge nurses whose management and administrative responsibilities had expanded rapidly over the past few years. At the same time, increasing pressure came from central government to drive efficiencies across the Trust which typically spent around £5 million every year on overtime, bank and agency staff across all staff groups. The time had come to switch to an electronic solution with e-Rostering at its core that could maximise the Trust's skills and resources.



Fast Facts

- 5,000 staff to be covered by SMART e-Rostering Workforce Management solutions
- 3,000 nursing and midwifery staff at many sites including the largest 460-bed acute hospital are already reaping the benefits of e-Rostering
- SMART e-Rostering now provides efficient rosters and ensures the right staff with the skills are always on duty
- SMART halves the time spent on creating staff rosters
- Powerful management information facilitates proactive, cost-efficient approach to bank usage
- Efficiencies generated by SMART support the government's Comprehensive Spending Review

"Approximately 3,000 ward sisters, nurses and midwives will ultimately benefit from automated e-Rostering. The new SMART platform has gone a long way to driving efficiencies across the board, fundamental to meeting the ambitious targets set by the government's Comprehensive Spending Review."

Brendan McGrath, Assistant Director for
Nursing at Western Health and Social Care Trust

The Solution

After presenting a solid business case to the Trust's Corporate Management Team (CMT), Brendan's department conducted a thorough review of the marketplace in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Procurement & Logistics Service (PaLS) before selecting SMART as their vendor of choice. Western Health and Social Care Trust chose SMART for its simple, clean screen layout, robust functionality bundled into an easy-to-use, cost-effective package. The Trust purchased SMART's e-Rostering system in June 2010 and began deploying the software in September 2010, initially focused on rolling it out to 3,000 nurses and midwives.

Before SMART, Western Health and Social Care Trust had no effective mechanism for monitoring the use of bank and agency staff. Poor management information left the Trust potentially exposed to spending valuable public funds on expensive external resources whilst neglecting the talent already on their payroll. SMART e-Rostering now provides efficient rosters that ensure that nursing and midwifery staff, with the correct mix of skills and experience, are on duty for each and every shift. The Trust's Corporate Management Team receives 6-monthly updates on progress with the implementation, and on the efficiencies being realised, to instill confidence in the investment.

Benefits

One year on and halfway through the project, Western Health and Social Care Trust has already yielded significant benefits from the SMART implementation with very positive feedback received from ward sisters and charge nurses.

Automation – The implementation of e-rostering reduces the amount of time taken to develop new rosters for the workforce. For example, when ward sisters and charge nurses are trained and have had a period of time to become confident in the use of the SMART software, they can create 4-week rosters in less than 1 hour compared with 2-3 hours before the introduction of SMART.

Streamlined processes, greater efficiencies – Longer-term, Western Health and Social Care Trust expects SMART to generate a series of tangible efficiencies especially in terms of time, with projections of 0.5-1.0 full-time equivalent per ward going forward. Other benefits include:

- Full utilisation of available contract hours
- More efficient deployment and better utilisation of in-house skills
- Better management of annual leave



Managing staff requests more effectively has been particularly successful. By using the SMART system, staff can not only log a request but can assign it a priority enabling managers to tackle urgent issues quickly.

Catalyst for change - Traditionally, nurses at the Trust have worked the 'long-day' or 12-hour shift pattern, with many wards and departments choosing to operate a roster of 3 long-days one week followed by 4 long-day shifts the next week. In theory, the long-day shifts are deemed to be the most efficient because they negate the need for frequent hand-overs and more staff. The SMART system – in matching skills and availability of staff at any one time - has revealed a flaw in this approach and has unearthed the impracticalities of dealing with traditional shift patterns. SMART is being used as a strategic tool to further streamline and improve processes, a real catalyst for change across the organisation.

With a 5,000-user licence, the Trust plans to build on the success of the current SMART system and expand it to other parts of the workforce, such as domestic, catering, social care and junior medical staff.

This ambitious approach is appreciated by the whole trust, because like the rest of the public sector, the Trust is looking to generate time and cost savings by being as efficient as possible.

Brendan concludes, "SMART wins hands down in terms of product functionality and commercial approach. From the very beginning, I have been impressed by their professional attitude and business integrity. Their openness, commitment to finding solutions to our needs and after-sales support are second to none."

SMART

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