INTEGRATED DIGITAL CARE RECORD

Success Story
Safer Hospitals, Safer Wards Technology Fund

Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group

January 2015

THE CHALLENGE

NHS Trusts nationwide face significant patient flow challenges concerning patient referrals to appropriate areas of social care, community and mental health services. This is due to inefficient paper-based systems with no directories of services available to meet patient needs.

Cumbria CCG sought an innovative e-referral and resource matching system that would ultimately incorporate all health and care organisations across Cumbria. The objective was to have a single system that could integrate with providers' EPR systems and ensure a consistent approach to the sending and receiving of e-referrals. The ability to track e-referrals in real time, thereby enabling proactive management of blockages in patient flow and providing transparency between senders and receivers, was also a key component of the system.

The electronic referral system, Strata was the solution. Headed by Programme Director John Roebuck, Strata allows hospital staff to send off assessments to adult social care easily without submissions going unrecognised. They are the first to use this technology on such a wide scale.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

The procurement and implementation of the eReferral solution was funded by Cumbria CCG and first used February 2013 to send "Section2" eReferrals between University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay (UHMB) and Cumbria County Council Adult Social Care (ASC). Next, Strata was rolled out to Cumbria Partnership Foundation Trust who started using it in October 2013 for community and mental health referrals to ASC.

Safer Hospitals, Safer Wards Technology Fund provided resources for Strata's extension for a faster rollout. Full training ensured wards and ASC locality had 'super users'; staff knowledgeable of the programming to teach new clinicians and social care staff. Cumbria has also rolled out the technology so that UHMB can also send eReferrals to District Nursing teams. Other staff groups using the technology include Occupational Therapists, community hospital staff and continuing healthcare staff.

300 different sites are set up on Cumbria's directory of services with a similar number of active users across different health and care organisations.

"Prior to the eReferral system, we spent one morning a week going through errors and issues with referrals. Now issues are immediately highlighted, an audit trail ensures we can rectify these quickly and transparently."

Nick McCarthy
Team Manager, Cumbria Social Care

"The eReferral system provides a 24/7 service with interoperability through all our professionals' systems. We feed all data into Strata and have an even stronger hold on patient flow."

Dr. William Lumb
Chief Clinical Information Officer
NHS Cumbria CCG

LESSONS LEARNED

Cumbria learned that technology need not be complex and that staff embrace IT systems that demonstrate strong benefits. Integrated working across care communities improves inter-staff relationships and gives real benefits to patient care. Social care now want to refuse all referrals from non-electronic submissions.

FUTURE

At the end of November, health and care organisations were sending and receiving over 900 e-referrals per month. The system has been extended into Blackpool FT who provide community nursing services into North Lancashire. North Cumbria University Hospitals Trust is about to go live on the system, which will significantly increase the volume of e-referrals.

RESULTING BENEFITS TO PATIENTS AND STAFF

The eReferral programme demonstrates successful integration between hospitals, community and mental health services and social care. Patients experience faster assessment turnaround with Strata monitoring applications with every step.

Cumbria health and care organisations saved money in reducing the paper-based procedures. The solution's simplicity has led to improved quality of information in referrals with clinicians having more time to see patients; removing the need for follow-ups over incomplete referrals. This paperless agenda demonstrates real transformation to the service with standardised forms and clear audit trails greatly reducing error margins.

IN A NUTSHELL

SOLUTION:
Electronic referral and resource matching system across health and social care

IMPLEMENTATION:
Ongoing since October 2013

FUNDING:
Safer Hospitals, Safer Wards

PATIENT BENEFITS:
Faster turnaround of assessments in social care and community based health and care services

STAFF BENEFITS:
Quicker and easier referral system with peace of mind and audit trail

TRUST BENEFITS:
Improved data quality, timeliness of patient flow, effective use of resources and cost reduction

RESULT:
Over 900 e-referrals per month

"Strata will improve patient care by capturing comprehensive patient information on an electronic information system and communicating it instantly to the right clinician to take the right action to improve patient care."

Alison Kitson
District Nurse
Cumbria Partnership Foundation Trust

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