

SHEFFIELD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL HITS TARGET

The climate of change within the NHS is placing increasing pressure and demands on core IT services. Meeting national targets for the delivery and quality of patient care is proving to be a real challenge for clinicians and IT managers alike. One example is a hospital that is optimising its resources is Sheffield Children's Hospital. When Sheffield Children's Hospital completed an internal review of processes and procedures, a number of issues were highlighted. One of them was the amount of time and resource spent in compiling reports from disparate systems about the delivery and quality of patient care at the hospital. Another was the way the IT Support Department responded to calls and requests. Over the last year, Sheffield Children's Hospital has been working with Datawatch International to not only tackle these two issues but to match its IT infrastructure more closely to clinical procedures - an objective fundamental to achieving national targets of patient care.

Sheffield Children's Hospital first called upon Datawatch for information capture and manipulation and then for assistance with the hospital's internal IT helpdesk. Calls to the helpdesk were not being dealt with in a systematic manner and no escalation or monitoring procedures were in place. Consequently, it was proving difficult to compile accurate reports on the calls to the helpdesk, in terms of the nature of the call, who took ownership for responding to it and how long it took to resolve the problem. As a result predictive and trend analysis was very time-consuming to produce. QSM from Datawatch was first introduced into the helpdesk in September 2000. In essence, QSM is a suite of integrated modules that provides a base server system, a process driven service management portal and a browser interface for enterprise-wide call management. It is deployed by the IT team to support

users of IT and Telecoms in the hospital and also those in other connected NHS Health economies in South Yorkshire, South Humberside and North Lincolnshire. Utilising the net-enabled capabilities of QSM, calls to the helpdesk are logged and managed via the hospital's own Intranet, enabling users to track the progress of their call without contacting the IT department every time they want an update. The asset management feature of QSM also provides a complete overview of the technology used by the hospital. For example, when the helpdesk enters the caller's name onto the system, the caller's IT configuration (such as a desktop PC, printer and scanner) pops up on-screen, enabling the helpdesk to move quickly to the nature of the call without first having to ask for basic configuration details. Priority calls are assigned automatically and different departments and users within the hospital have different Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in place with the helpdesk, depending on the urgency of response required. Russell Banks, IT manager at Sheffield Children's Hospital, is delighted with the Datawatch service management solution, QSM and believes it has not only made his team more productive but also improved staff morale throughout the hospital.



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'For the first time on the helpdesk, we now have customer satisfaction processes in place and targets to achieve. QSM can give me an hour-by-hour account of our activity in any one day, in one easy-to-read report, and that capability has been tremendously useful in preparing budgets, allocating resources and identifying areas for staff training.' He added 'The quick implementation time and the benefits (both perceived and actual) derived to date have so impressed the Trust that plans are now in place to roll-out QSM to the rest of the helpdesks within the Trust group.'

Success breeds success

During discussions with the technical consultants from Datawatch, it became clear to Russell and Dr Derek Burke, medical director of the Sheffield Children's Hospital NHS Trust, that other elements of the Datawatch product range might prove helpful in overcoming the challenges involved in meeting national guidelines on the delivery and quality of patient care. 'We try to take a proactive approach to issues, whether they be IT-related or a problem with procedure,' says Derek. 'We are not afraid of asking difficult questions and changing internal processes that historically everyone has taken for granted. If patient care is to remain our key driver, then we need the tools and full co-operation of everyone within the hospital to help us succeed.' It was on this premise that Derek spoke with Datawatch about the Triage system within the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department at the hospital. During the internal review it had been noted that information on the same patient was often entered up to three different times - for example, with reception, with Triage and with X-Ray. In addition, Triage was highlighted as a bottleneck for processing patients, because of the manual paper-based procedures in place and the inability of the Triage Unit

to communicate effectively with the rest of the A&E department. In light of these issues and of the national targets laid down by the government (Patient Charter Assessment Time and the National Triage Scale guidelines), plus internally generated targets, QSM Care4 from Datawatch was considered as a viable working solution. QSM Care4 takes key functionality from QSM and combines it with features specifically identified as being of crucial importance to the successful delivery of patient care within NHS Trusts. For the Triage Unit, QSM Care4 will be used to monitor patient waiting times and to track patients once they have booked in with reception and Triage. As with QSM, there is a comprehensive reporting module and this will be used to proactively manage waiting times and particular periods that are always busy. The increased availability of information via the browser technology on offer from Care4 means that information can be shared and delivered within different care groups within the hospital, the end result being a much reduced dependence on paper-based processes and, ultimately, reduced waiting times for patients.

Enhanced communication with other parts of the NHS

Following on from the success with QSM, it has been identified that Monarch ES, the report mining solution from Datawatch, could bring a number of tangible benefits to the GP Referral Unit. It is anticipated that Monarch ES will monitor the waiting times of patients in the Unit and supply performance and trend analysis to clinicians. Furthermore, MES will also be used to automatically generate documents, such as the GP Discharge Summary Report, which will be either faxed or e-mailed directly to the patient's GP, cutting out a number of manual processes and creating a channel of communication between the Hospital and GPs. Russell Banks is confident that the benefits gained

Maximising doctors output

from implementing QSM and Care4 at the hospital will soon be shared with other departments and units across the Trust. For example, Day Care and Surgical have already expressed strong interest in installing solutions to facilitate their own data capture and information delivery. The ease with which QSM and QSM Care4 have been deployed at Sheffield Children's Hospital proves that solutions to historical procedural problems do not have to be expensive or proprietary, nor do they need a long time to be implemented. One challenge that illustrates the need to closely match the IT infrastructure with clinical procedures is the gradual reduction in hours worked by junior doctors. By the end of 2003, the guideline will be down to 48 hours per week, which presents managers such as Dr Burke with the challenge of maximising the output from these doctors whilst treating growing numbers of patients. In the commercial climate that the NHS now operates, it is easy to see how IT will play an increasingly important role redefining processes, meeting stringent new targets and standards and delivering improved levels of patient care.



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