

Supporta Professional Services Healthcare Consulting team assisted Milton Keynes Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to pursue a new approach for their health records management, through development of a business case.

The Background

Milton Keynes Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is an ambitious and high performing Trust with a vision to become 'the hospital of choice' for the local population, and to develop its services to meet the needs of the growing population, as close to home as possible.

The majority of the Trust's services revolve around information about the clinical care of patients, as recorded in their health records (paper based records that may also be known as medical records or "casenotes"). Health records assist with the effective care of patients and document each episode of care for future reference.

They include information on:

- presenting symptoms;
- results of diagnostic investigations;
- diagnosis;
- record of treatment.

Health records provide a vital communications channel between different professionals in the hospital and in the community.

The Challenges

Several issues result from Trusts health records being held on paper and used by many people. SPS aimed to address the Trust's challenges of:

- Large, expensive storage areas;
- Storage areas becoming disseminated & disorganised;

- Locating records and filing was complicated;
- Records being disorganised and potentially incomplete;
- Inability to share records across the Trust (extra number of specialty notes may be created).

Our Solution

Supporta Professional Services worked alongside the Trust's project team formalising a business case to determine a health records management solution that covered.

- **Effective resource utilisation** – Cost of resource on search, delivery, retrieval, plus physical storage space, can be re-deployed for direct patient care. Efficiency, cost effectiveness and flexibility of service provision are key to achieving high healthcare standards whilst remaining in line with national strategy. Also, the growing population of Milton Keynes and the increased activity of the Trust will lead to the need for additional storage capacity if paper records have a continued use.
- Value for money - The pressure to make cost improvement is likely to increase as governments continue to control public sector spending. Effective resource utilisation and measured service delivery obligations are therefore essential. There is also likely to be an increasing demand for quality indicators regarding service provision.
- Improving the quality of health records – Areas of concern regarding incomplete or 'misplaced' documents, document structures, general tidiness, coding processes, storage and retrieval of records. A particular aim was to improve the availability of records for outpatient clinics. It is also expected that healthcare professionals should take responsibility for producing clear statements of diagnosis and procedures and should participate in validating the coding process.

- Helping to provide the best possible patient care
- Bringing together comprehensive, accurate and current patient information supports day-to-day patient care and the continuity of care.

There are opportunities for effective multidisciplinary management of patients and, in general, waiting time reductions.

- Sharing information - Further improvements in the co-ordination of activities between departments and the ability to review and discuss records concurrently with other clinicians in different physical locations.

Effective working partnerships can be formed with the other healthcare providers, social services and the local authority, to share information and promote the joint provision of care.

- Providing a pathway towards electronic information
- Using an incremental approach towards a full Care Records Service (CRS) will greatly assist migration towards replacing paper records completely.

Key improvements in the quality of health records, the elimination of poor record keeping, and the capability of the electronic document management system to integrate fully with a CRS are all key benefits.

- Improving confidentiality - Meeting legal requirements, including requests from patients under Access to Health Records legislation (1990) and the Data Protection Act (1998).
- Reductions in litigation risk - With the compensation culture of today, successful claims can be between £7,000 and £3 million per case. Consequently organisations need to rely on improved documentation and ease of access to their information.

The Outcome

Seven potential options for a new health records plan were identified and each was then subjected to a detailed evaluation by the project team. The preferred option was determined through analysis of the benefits, risks, the costs as identified by prospective suppliers of services, and the Net Present Value over a seven year period of operation. The preferred option (Electronic Document Management of all Health Records) is a solution that provides some distinctive benefits for the way forward with health records, whilst taking account of a low risk factor. The service includes an online retrieval facility for requested records and, at an appropriate time, their inclusion within the CRS processes.

A substantial number of qualitative and quantitative benefits are expected from the implementation of the preferred option. The quantitative benefits show the investment to be substantially beneficial with approximately £5 million savings over the seven year period following implementation.

The Proof

Jacqui Page, Head of Patient Services, Milton Keynes Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was pleased to comment that:

'Supporta Professional Services produced an excellent report which was invaluable in educating the Trust's decision, and generally enhancing the decision making process. We look forward to full implementation and the raft of benefits that this new approach to health records management will demonstrate for the Trust and its patients.'