



Case Study in direct engagement – Allocate StaffDirect

Agency compliance assurance and staffing leads to savings of £13.2 million

Summary

Barts Health NHS Trust operates from four major hospital sites; The Royal London, St Bartholomew's, Whipps Cross and Newham and a number of community locations, including Mile End hospital. When Barts Health NHS Trust was created as the result of a merger in 2012 a five-year plan identified financial savings and this included direct engagement with staffing agencies. With support from RL Datix, the trust launched Allocate StaffDirect and has since saved 13.2 million in agency staffing costs while at the same time improving payment compliance in line with NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) guidelines.

Direct Engagement was key to financial stability of newly created trust

Following the 2012 merger, Barts Health NHS Trust developed a five-year plan to create robust measures ensuring effective financial savings and efficiencies across all its sites.

Direct engagement was identified as a quick win that would provide financial stability across the trust which, at the time, was the largest within the country.

Discussions began around implementing RL Datix's Allocate StaffDirect system. Research around other platforms had shown RL Datix's system was easier to use, more intuitive with larger savings than other direct engagement systems.

Good communication helped to resolve implementation challenges

The trust realised it would face challenges when it came to the implementation of Allocate StaffDirect, and planning was needed to get agencies and health care professionals onboard.

Agencies feared they would have less control over the staff they were supporting. There were concerns that staff would need to go back to the agency for timesheets to be finalised and to collect payslips. Healthcare staff were concerned that they would not receive the same rates of pay through direct engagement.

Through a series of myth busting meetings and guidance on contracts, the trust was able to provide accurate information to ensure agencies and agency staff properly understood how the system worked.

Head of Temporary Staffing, John Simon, says the relationship with agencies, though a concern in the early days of the roll out, has changed and they now work well together. He says: "We initially experienced some hesitation towards the system and the process but this was overcome by providing the facts and communicating effectively."

"Every agency committed to using Allocate StaffDirect and we've since seen a vast improvement in the culture. Agencies now understand that if a worker is booked with Barts Health NHS Trust, they have to be booked through the direct engagement system."

The direct engagement journey - adoption rates (%)

	Direct engagement	Non direct engagement
Year 1 (2014)	85.79%	14.21%
Year 7 (2020)	99.58%	0.42%

The benefits of a single direct engagement system

The financial savings have been significant. For an investment of £565,000, the trust has saved a total of £13.2 million since the launch of the system in 2014.

Thanks to data provided by the system the trust also has deeper insight into agency staffing. Through Allocate StaffDirect, the trust receives a full and transparent evaluation of costs, readily available at any time. Under the previous non-direct engagement processes, the trust would receive an invoice without any breakdown of payment. Reports from the system also provide assurance on the NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) compliance of payments.

Improving quality assurance

Confidence in agency staffing has improved across the trust and managers feel assured that the system and processes in place result in the correct payment of capped rates. A HMRC visit highlighted how robust processes were.

John says: "HMRC came to visit the trust for a review of our process in 2019. We took the team through all the processes, the Allocate StaffDirect system, data and insights, including everything around IR35. HMRC stated that it was 'well assured that Barts Health NHS Trust was compliant'. HMRC also requested a copy of our processes to share as best practice, as it found them to be incredibly robust."

The Covid-19 impact

On initial deployment, the trust received a high volume of questions around furlough payments and shielding. Throughout this challenging period, the RL Datix team continued to provide advice and support which John describes as a "real value add".

"I am so grateful that during our busiest times with Covid-19, this is the one area where we have never experienced any issues. It works perfectly - nothing misses a beat. It's one less thing to worry about, leaving us to focus on the critical care beds," says John.

RL Datix support is a bonus for busy staff

The easy to use and straightforward platform, combined with excellent guidance and communication from RL Datix has made life easier for the trust's booking's team.

John says: "Outside of Allocate StaffDirect and in other experiences, I find that issues often drag on for months. The one technical issue that we experienced over the years was nipped in the bud instantly, which is a testament to RL Datix's customer service. If I do need guidance, I know I can turn to the customer success team and Katie Milligan in particular. I cannot fault the customer service. The responses are immediate and are always above and beyond. This is exactly why we would stick with RL Datix and their Allocate StaffDirect solution."