



## Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

# Real-time view of the workforce and patient acuity

Body During the Summer of 2016, Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust implemented Allocate BankStaff and Allocate Optima to electronically manage their bank staff processes and roster the nursing and midwifery workforce.

Since then the Trust has gone on to roll out Employee Online and Allocate SafeCare across wards and departments.

This has been jointly led by Sue Hodkinson, Director of People and Organisational Development, and Alison Kelly, Director of Nursing and Quality, which gives the project support from workforce planning and service needs perspectives. They and their teams continue to work closely together throughout the implementation journey.

Alison Kelly says: "This has been a cultural change as much as anything, which doesn't happen over night. We are encouraging our nurses and midwives to look at their role differently, with more of a focus on patient care hours rather than traditional shifts."

Sue Hodkinson explains: "This work has been part of a Trustwide acuity based workforce project aimed at putting the patient first. We have been focused on ensuring the software makes our staff experience of rosters better and is in keeping with Countess values of being Safe, Kind and Effective."

### Safe

Through the effective combined use of Allocate SafeCare and Allocate Optima, the Trust has transparency of the nursing and midwifery workforce that it did not have before. Sue says:

"Previously a lot of our systems were paper-based and not joined up. We now have complete visibility around staff and patients."

This is a powerful tool for the Trust as they can view staff availability against patient acuity in real time.

Alison explains: "Acuity based live rostering means we have a real-time view of nurse staffing and are able to better support our teams to ensure the deployment of our workforce is aligned to our patient need."

"For this to happen we had to engage staff in understanding what the needs of our patients are and aligning our resource have that need."

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**Sue Hodkinson**  
Director of People and Organisational  
Development  
Countess of Chester NHS FT

### Kind

The live data generated by these solutions being embedded within the Trust's workforce process has facilitated improvements in staff deployment. As Sue explains: "The data enables us to have open conversations with our nurses and midwives. Meaning we can do the right thing for them on a real time basis."

For example, before implementing RLDatix's workforce solutions, staff would only receive two to three weeks notice of their shifts. Now most receive rosters six weeks in advance, which gives staff autonomy and control over their work life balance.

### Effective

The Trust now have a view of the workforce from several perspectives: financial, operational and strategic. Therefore, they can identify discrepancies in their workforce planning and take action to most effectively deploy staff.

Alison says: "We are more confident with the data and can make real time and strategic decisions based on our analysis of it. It is about making sure we have the right people doing the right job."

### Through the acuity based workforce project the Trust has:

- **Reduced nursing agency spend by 41%**
- **Reduced overtime by 9%**
- **Released approximately 4 hours per week of ward managers' time from administration**

### Interoperability

The Trust has incorporated the solutions within the central command centre allowing them to have visibility of operational flow, staffing and patient acuity in one place. This enables a consistent approach to decision making that was not possible before.

### The future

Most nursing and midwifery staff are using the solutions now and so far the Trust has received positive feedback.

Julie Dixon, Ward Manager, says: "Now that it is up and running, I love it. Staff like that the rota is very clear, viewable far in advance.

"As a Manager it is already allowing me to see at a glance the patterns in staff requests and I can be more equitable in how I support the team."

However, the Trust is looking to evolve their use of the solutions to improve workforce deployment and help staff manage their lives better. For example, they are testing open rostering, looking at how to extend Allocate BankStaff across the region and identifying how the solutions can be used across other staff groups.

Alison says: "We are looking at our workforce and processes in a more radical way to plan care and teams for the future. We haven't cracked it yet, but we have the tools we need to do it."

