PLATFORM HELPS NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACCESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

CASE STUDY: NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE COMBINED HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST

As one of the main providers of mental health services in England's West Midlands region, North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust operates approximately 30 sites to serve a population of 464,000 people, including thousands of children. With young people having to wait up to 14 weeks to see a mental health professional, the NHS Trust was committed to finding ways to provide critically needed services faster.

Among many initiatives, the NHS Trust wanted to provide better care by streamlining its referral process while increasing online self-help options. The NHS Trust turned to Dedalus to deploy an integrated digital care solution that provides young people with faster access to local mental health services while also greatly improving the collation and dissemination of patient information.

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DEDALUS' APPROACH DELIVERS

Previously, referrals would come in a variety of formats, mainly paper and fax, and were typically incomplete. This meant valuable clinician time was spent gathering missing information prior to triage, rather than focussing on providing care. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) unit worked with Dedalus to redesign services to shorten the lengthy referral process, as well as intelligently refer and triage patients to the appropriate service.

"We've been very much focussing on a digital-by-choice approach, which is about providing the digital solution that is the most appropriate to get the maximum benefit out of interactions," says David Hewitt, the NHS Trust's chief information officer.

Dedalus managed a process that helped CAMHS design and deploy an engagement and referral portal that is empowering patients to get the help they need online in an intuitive format. The system was successfully integrated with the NHS Trust's existing Dedalus Lorenzo electronic patient record solution, which has helped streamline processes and standardise clinical rules.

Using proven techniques, Dedalus developed the platform built on the NHS Trust's existing liaison work with local schools and colleges. The portal was built and configured with content created by CAMHS clinicians, using input from teachers and students at local schools.

The portal features a self-referral tool that has cut weeks off the typical referral process, enabling young people to get to the best health professionals faster than ever before. In urgent situations, young people and their parents can be referred immediately to a crisis care centre.

The portal also offers detailed, evidence-based self-help information so young people can access mental health information and understand that their difficulties are shared by others. Also, as part of its response to the COVID-19 crisis, the NHS Trust included a video consultation platform that has been well-received by clinicians and patients.

CHALLENGE

· Improve access to mental health services for young people

· Accommodate increased patient referrals while reducing service delays

· Enhance information gathering to help clinicians provide more effective care

SOLUTION

· A new engagement and referral platform to improve access to services and meet the needs of students, teachers, parents and care professionals

· Dedalus Open Health Connect, which includes a recommendation engine for practitioners

· Dedalus Lorenzo electronic patient record solution

RESULTS

· Accelerated access to the right care at the right time to speed up recovery and reduce recurrences

· Provided more complete, more relevant patient information that is easier for healthcare professionals to assimilate

· Implemented self-management tools to identify potential risks and communicate information

IMPROVING PATIENT ANALYTICS

The implementation has also helped the NHS Trust improve its analytics capabilities. Hewitt says a key focus for his team is how the NHS Trust uses data to make decisions and improve care.

"We are really starting to recognise the strategic value of data within the organisation and how we can use it in new and innovative ways to drive value for our services," Hewitt says. A primary goal is to use data to support front-line clinicians and inform model care pathways.

The portal also provides direction to schools. "There is a specific area of the portal for schools and referrers … that actually gives them some clear direction about potential ways of putting things in place to support young people and potentially raising their hands for people," says Samantha Mortimer, associate director, North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust.

At the core of the portal is a recommendation engine powered by Dedalus Open Health Connect, a platform designed to collect healthcare information from disparate sources to inform care decisions. The solution helps clinicians make triage decisions in a consistent way, based on information that is more complete, relevant and easier to assimilate.

Lesley Birkin, clinical systems manager for the NHS Trust, says Dedalus Open Health Connect collects information from referrers and aggregates data in ways they've never been able to do before.

"By using analytics, it allows us to see the real-time issues coming through based on the primary reasons for the referrals," Birkin says. "We can look to see if there's a problem in a school with bullying, for example, and plan services around that."

INSPIRING CREATIVITY

Birkin says the NHS Trust's strong relationship with Dedalus has been key to the success of projects they've collaborated on. "Dedalus has a clear understanding of our needs and understands the local processes, services and the people within the NHS Trust. [Dedalus helps] inspire great ideas within the creative process. [Its people] are also able to share their experience and provide essential insights."

Hewitt adds, "Dedalus' depth allows us to bring a resilience and a robustness to our technical solutions that aren't available at the NHS Trust level. In the future, we look forward to working with Dedalus on those real forefront technologies and how we can start using some of those newer systems and ways of working to enhance our care delivery services and derive maximum value from our digital investments."

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Chief Information Officer, North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust

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