

Implementing eCommunity to help support the delivery of community care



About the Trust

Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) is an integrated care organisation that delivers healthcare to the people of Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin. As well as providing inpatient care, MPFT also provides care to their patients via community care services across these areas, that focus on delivering high quality care to patients in their own homes.

What were the challenges before eCommunity?

Before implementing the first version of eCommunity in 2015 MPFT were using a paper system to create daily staff schedules and to allocate staff to patients. This slow, and sometimes inaccurate process had to be repeated on a daily basis, costing clinicians time on a labour intensive system that produced inefficient rotas, led to duplication of schedules, and was difficult to track or report.

This paper-based system provided no live overview of staff as they completed their daily schedules, hindering MPFT from responding to emerging patient needs or redeploying staff in an agile manner. Additionally, staff could be given complex schedules that they were unable to complete during their daily visits, which could lead to increased stress and the necessity to reschedule visits to treat patients. Due to these issues stemming from the lack of a system designed to support workforce allocation, MPFT were looking to implement solutions to help combat these issues and improve their community care delivery.



“We used to use paper to RLDatix patients on a daily basis, so 6 years ago we decided to implement QES (the previous version of Allocate eCommunity), which worked really well. Then the new version of eCommunity was introduced to us, which had more functionality, is faster and easier to use and has a companion app for district nurses as well.”

Suzy Keeling,
Operational Lead MPFT

Why did MPFT choose eCommunity?

In 2015, MPFT made the decision to implement eCommunity to help make the scheduling process more efficient and accurate by integrating smart workforce scheduling software into their trust, allowing for a reduction in the time and money spent on admin and an increase in patient facing hours.

After three successful years of eCommunity supporting the trust’s delivery of community care, the decision was made to implement the latest version of eCommunity, due to its enhanced functionalities and speed. As of April 2021, the trust has successfully rolled out to all 45 rostered units, totaling around 700 staff, who are now using the community workforce scheduling software designed to support their schedule creation and their delivery of care to their patients.

We spoke to Trish Nolan, the Head of Digital Skills and Business Change for implementing eCommunity and Suzy Keeling, the Operational Lead for Rugeley and Great Haywood District Nursing Team, to find out why MPFT decided to implement the new version of eCommunity during the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and to see in what ways the software has been supporting them to deliver community care to their patients.

From December 2020 to March 2021, MPFT have scheduled and completed 44,273 patient visits on eCommunity.

The Implementation Process

MPFT's decision to implement eCommunity during the Covid-19 pandemic was made in the knowledge that the new updated system would help support them in delivering the highest quality community care to their patients both during and after the pandemic, and by 1st December 2020 the system was successfully rolled out to Rugeley and Great Haywood District Nursing Team, the first rostered unit to be live on the new version of eCommunity.

The upgrade and implementation process was completed primarily remotely via virtual meetings to adhere to the strict Covid restrictions for safety reasons. While this proved more challenging than normal, the pandemic served as motivation to ensure a swift and successful process. A robust action list was created and virtual meetings were held regularly between RLDatix and MPFT to ensure all processes were followed correctly and that the project was completed as quickly as possible and was a success.

How is eCommunity supporting MPFT?

eCommunity is the only scheduling solution designed specifically for community care, supporting the entire workforce allocation process from creating daily schedules all the way through to redeploying staff and high-level reporting. After implementing eCommunity, MPFT have quickly begun to realise benefits in a number of places across their community care service.

The solution integrates seamlessly with Optima, allowing for all information inputted in one system to be instantly and accurately updated. This saves MPFT on average upwards of 3 hours a month per Administrator in each team manually inputting rotas on both eCommunity and Optima.

eCommunity helps to combat the challenges faced by community health and care providers.

“It's got rid of a lot of the duplication. Previously, on the old version of eCommunity, you'd have to put all the rotas on Optima, then put them in eCommunity.

This saves Administrators on average 3 hours a month as they now don't have to put them on both systems, plus additional time savings as any changes are pulled through from one system to another.”

Trish Nolan
Head of Digital Skills and Business Change

eCommunity's integration with Optima has also minimised MPFT's need to reschedule patient visits if staff found they didn't have the correct skills to treat the patient. The system is automatically updated with all staff competencies and will automatically flag and stop allocations of patients to staff without the correct skills to treat them. The smart allocation system will also show estimated travel time between patients as well as showing patient acuity and needs ensuring MPFT have all the information they need to create the safe and efficient daily schedules for clinicians, while spending less time on this administrative task.

RLDatix recently partnered with the Access Rio EPR (Electronic Patient Record) system that MPFT use to manage their patient data. Through this partnership, eCommunity and Rio is completely interoperable, allowing for data to be accurately and quickly updated in both systems, saving MPFT time and reducing the risk of duplication while ensuring patient confidentiality and safety regulations are met.

“The integration between eCommunity and Rio is a real gamechanger. With an average of 227 referrals a day, across 39 teams, the time spent duplicating information across the system takes up to 10 minutes per referral. Now, with the integration in place, it's saving a total of 38 hours per day - that's an hour, per team, per day...”

Supporting safe and efficient community workforce planning



“The connection between the systems is eliminating human error and ensuring no patient information is missed. In addition, the system allows us to safely plan our staffing needs around the demands and complexities of our patients. It has revolutionised how we provide care, saved time and made our care safer”

Trish Nolan
Head of Digital Skills and Business Change

eCommunity is also paving the way for a culture shift at MPFT by changing the way district nurses work with technology. Previously district nurses would carry paper schedules, a system open to misalignment that provided no overview from team leaders.

Through eCommunity’s mobile app, MPFT’s district nurses can view their daily schedules and see information such as the estimated travel time to the next patient, their patient’s needs and acuity and even update their progress throughout the day, making it easier for staff to focus on delivering high-quality treatment to patients.

On average, eCommunity saves MPFT 233 hours a day across clinicians, as visits are actualised through the mobile app quickly and efficiently.

As District Nurses complete visits in the field they can actualise visits via the mobile app, giving staff a live overview of progress throughout the day. This provides the Lead Nurse with an overview of staff daily progress, allowing them to support staff and reassign patients where necessary. This has the additional benefit of massive time savings. As staff actualise their data throughout the day, this saves every district nurse between 15-30 minutes daily. In April 2021 MPFT had around 700 staff live on Allocate eCommunity which, when accounting for an average of 20 minutes saved on a daily basis, adds up to just over 233 hours saved each day across all clinicians.

“To be able to see where staff are in real time and see how they’re doing with their workload is incredibly useful, as it gives us a full overview and we can see schedules being completed as the day progresses.”

Suzy Keeling
Operational Lead MPFT

Improve workforce productivity, patient safety and staff wellbeing through the intelligent scheduling of home visits and capacity and demand management.

eCommunity has also supported MPFT during the pandemic through ensuring operations have been able to continue as staff needed to self-isolate. As all information is safely stored in the cloud, clinicians have been able to work from home via eCommunity from their laptops and mobile devices, a process which would not have been possible in the old system and could have led to staffing challenges and teams facing increased pressure.

Summary

The community workforce scheduling software is proving to be a success at MPFT. eCommunity is helping to save time spent on administration, give visibility over District Nurses as they complete their daily schedules, create attainable, fair schedules, and ensure patients are only treated by staff with the skills to meet their complex needs. All of these benefits and more, are working to support MPFT to deliver high quality care to patients in their own homes across the Midlands.

“It’s been an absolute pleasure as the Project Manager to lead the project as I know Allocate eCommunity is going to make a huge difference and make it easier for us to care for our patients in the community.”

Trish Nolan
Head of Digital Skills and Business Change

“I have enjoyed the challenge of embedding a new version of eCommunity within the trust, being the initial implementer site in my team and supporting other teams onto the new system, knowing this new version will have positive impact on the day to day running of the teams, supporting workload demands, ensuring quality care provided and able to demonstrate capacity/demand and workload through availability of robus reports.”

Suzy Keeling
Operational Lead MPFT

