

Effective multi-stakeholder engagement to implement NHS Improvement rate caps

Reducing agency staffing spend whilst maintaining patient care standards



Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has an on-site procurement team provided by NHS Shared Business Services (NHS SBS).

The Trust had a significant challenge to address with regards to temporary agency staffing and engaged with the NHS SBS on-site team to implement a solution to improve visibility and gain control of agency staffing spend and bring the Trust in line with NHS Improvement capped rates.

The challenge

NHS trusts use agency staff in a range of situations as a way to quickly fill difficult gaps and to ensure that services continue to be delivered.

Policy guidance published by NHS Improvement consolidates all the rules on the procurement of agency staff, including a ceiling on agency expenditure and introduction of maximum hourly wage rates.

The use of agency staff still represents a significant cost to trusts however, and an organisation wide approach is needed in order to develop a more flexible and responsive workforce which controls costs.

Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust was no different and their use of agency staff to maintain service levels were also on an upward spiral. Clear visibility of framework and non-framework spend and varying rates for the same roles (some significantly above NHS Improvement capped rates) were also a concern at the Trust.

The solution

The on-site NHS SBS procurement team began a non-committal exercise with de Poel health+care to understand the true baseline position for the Trust; from framework and non-framework spend to the number and variety of roles required, the rates and the terms and conditions in use.

Upon completion of this analysis, de Poel delivered a proposal that demonstrated how the Trust could save money and realise efficiencies through their neutral vendor approach, utilising the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) frameworks for multi-disciplinary staffing and non-medical, non-clinical staff..

Key points

Client: Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Project: Reducing agency staffing spend

Timeframe: January 2016

Result: A single agreement is now in place with one set of rates and terms and conditions.

£190,000 cost savings achieved in the first seven months since project 'go live'.

An increased and compliant talent pool of GPs, prison nurses, physiotherapists, practitioners, pharmacists, IT engineers and administrators.

40,000 hours of quality care delivered so far whilst maintaining patient safety.

The proposal evidenced how a single supplier could provide an efficient and effective method of meeting the Trust's temporary staffing objectives and managing resources effectively whilst also reducing costs to meet NHS Improvement capped rates.

Following Trust Board level approval, the NHS SBS on-site procurement team, together with project managers from de Poel began a period of engagement with key Trust staff including the Director of People and Workforce, the finance team and the Trust temporary staffing group.

The solution from de Poel health+care provides a web-based time sheet and invoice processing system, e-tips®, which virtually eliminates transactional costs, reduces administration and provides users with increased visibility and control over agency spend and staff usage.

Engagement with Trust staff was essential to ensuring that the implementation process ran smoothly. To enable quality reporting of agency staffing via e-tips®, new cost centres and hierarchies needed to be created on the software.

Joint communications regarding the new contract were created by the NHS SBS on-site procurement team and de Poel and then issued via the Trust communications team, with inclusion in global staff emails, the Trust bulletin and in team briefs.

All staff with authority to book agency staff were provided with training on booking agency staff going forward and using e-tips® or via de Poel's 24-hour support team.

The result

Seven months after “go live” the results of the partnership have been outstanding.

Over 40,000 hours of quality care have since been delivered (8,000 a month on average) whilst achieving a saving of £190,000 in cost savings. More importantly, this has not been at the expense of patient care.

An estimated £900,000 could be saved during the life of the agreement if savings continue at the present rate.

The amount of non-framework spend has reduced dramatically and there is a commitment throughout the Trust to eradicate this practice completely.

de Poel's e-tips® system enables hiring managers to contact multiple framework compliant agencies in seconds. Hiring managers at the Trust now have access to an increased talent pool of GP's, prison nurses, physiotherapists, practitioners, pharmacists, IT engineers and administrators from more than forty compliant agencies.

A recent analysis against 9,000 worker hours recorded a fulfilment rate of 92% with the majority of rates now compliant with NHS Improvement April cap rates. This control and visibility would not have been possible without the reporting function in e-tips®.

Compliance is managed via e-tips® and meets NHS Employment Check Standards and framework compliance requirements. Workers cannot be added to the booking system without undergoing validation. In addition, rigorous supplier audits are carried out on behalf of the Trust by de Poel. A recent audit carried out by the Trust confirmed that they now have significant assurance on the compliance of their agency workers.

e-tips® has delivered visibility and control of temporary staffing spend, enabling the Trust to forecast efficiently with access to real-time management information.

The system has also reduced thousands of invoices to one consolidated weekly invoice which saves a considerable amount of time and resource.

Since implementing the de Poel model, the Trust has achieved cashable savings of 7.88% on previous costs. Efficiencies with hiring managers not having to ring several agencies to find candidates to fill shifts and to back-office processing have also delivered savings.

The next phase of this project will be the launch of an online staff bank management system which the NHS SBS on-site procurement team and de Poel are developing in conjunction with the Trust.

This will help build the Trust's bank of workers with the aim to increase bank usage and reduce the use of agency staff. Phase One of this project will be rolled out with community and district nursing.

In addition, the NHS SBS on-site procurement team and de Poel are currently scoping and planning a locum “direct engagement” model to reduce unnecessary VAT expenditure.