

Achieving critical performance improvements using e-Learning

NHS trusts are under increasing pressure to improve their performance in a number of crucial areas. The glare of the media spotlight only serves to heighten the need to address issues such as infection prevention and control and safeguarding children.

Trusts themselves - and their employees - naturally want to do all they can to minimise risks to patients and have an obligation to meet statutory and mandatory training requirements. Infection prevention and control and safeguarding children are arguably the two most topical issues that frequently receive high levels of negative public attention.

Infection prevention and control

Hospital acquired infections have been the subject of a recent report by the National Audit Office claiming that although Department of Health targets to reduce MRSA bloodstream infections by 57% and *C. difficile* by 41% were met, other HAIs are not being addressed in the same vein and compliance with good practice is still 'not universal.' The Care Quality Commission has also vowed to 'keep up the pressure' on the NHS to continue to improve HAI standards.

With the estimated cost to NHS hospitals of caring for people who acquire a HAI over £1 billion a year, more forward thinking trusts are embracing new and innovative ways to achieve HAI targets within the time and budget constraints forced upon them. This ranges from the use of modern equipment and processes to



more efficient methods of providing the appropriate level of training to employees.

Increasingly popular is the use of e-Learning to provide trust employees with quick, easily accessible training to ensure compliance with HAI infection control mandates. For example, an infection prevention and control e-Learning module makes it easy for any trust to demonstrate, to the powers that be, that employees have been fully briefed on mandatory procedures to prevent HAI, incident management and can show a basic technical insight.

Safeguarding children

A recent inquiry into NHS failings conducted by the CQC concluded that doctors and other health professionals could have identified that Baby Peter was being abused if they had been 'particularly vigilant' and gone 'beyond what was required' by the system. The CQC has urged NHS trusts to improve staff compliance in the area of safeguarding children as its

Is e-Learning the solution?

e-Learning is undoubtedly changing the way the NHS approaches the training and development of its employees. It enables any trust to create, deploy and distribute organisational learning to staff with speed and ease.

It is ideal for providing a basic level of training to large groups of employees who can access it anywhere, anytime, even before they begin employment if required. When coupled with a learning management system to distribute the courses, a trust has an auditable record of the employees who have completed the e-Learning and passed any online tests that may have been provided.

Whilst never likely to remove the need for more in-depth, instructor based or practical training, e-Learning should be used as part of a blended learning approach for clinical based employees.

e-Learning is an invaluable addition to the training mix, helping trusts to be fully compliant with statutory and mandatory policy requirements, respond to external pressures to improve areas of critical performance, avoid negative publicity and potentially even legal action. Perhaps most importantly, though, a uniformed approach to basic training can help to minimise risks to patients.

recent review showed that there are worrying shortfalls in the number of staff up to date with their mandatory training. In fact, only 54 percent of eligible staff across all trusts actually had up to date basic training.

The CQC says that trusts should monitor the training of staff and ensure their people are up to date. Guidance issued by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health says all healthcare staff should have basic training in child protection. With public outcry, intense media attention and the glare of the CQC on their backs, trusts are looking at ways of getting basic training rolled out to employees as a matter of urgency. Once again, e-Learning is being turned to as this quick, accessible solution to ensure compliance with mandates and ease the intensifying pressure from above.

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cupd.org.uk) reported that 57% of respondents indicated that e-learning was being used to support training delivery with the expectation that a significant increased use in application was expected.

However, when asked about the effectiveness of e-learning, the majority of respondents indicated that it was only fairly effective in meeting learning needs. Respondents stressed the need for e-learning to feature as part of a blended approach to learning.

In the context of health, this is particularly apt given that much of health education draws on social interaction for personal and team development. The implication of this is that care is needed in determining the most appropriate application and model of use. Just because you can use an e-learning application to meet a training need does not necessarily mean that you should do so. Like all effective learning interventions care and consideration will be needed to ensure its appropriate use in relation to the intended learning outcomes, the needs of the target audience and the robustness of the learning environment.

Certainly, on the experience gained to date if e-learning is to flourish within the NHS the common strategic actions for e-learning remain to:

- Build capacity and readiness in the leadership and skills for understanding, planning and using e-learning
- Develop capacity in the design of e-learning materials which impact positively upon work place performance
- Promote the skills needed by NHS tutors, trainers and learners to use e-learning effectively
- Ensure the quality and relevance of resources
- Increase programme efficiency - reducing time and cost for programme development and delivery.
- Ensure access to programmes and resources.

E-learning and managers

Managers can be a tremendous

influence in supporting the development of their staff and given competing priorities will be challenged in supporting development. Managers will therefore need to be open to the potential that e-learning could offer in helping their staff develop the knowledge and skills for effective performance.

If e-learning is to be an effective adjunct in supporting the development of their staff then managers will have a critical role in liaising with their learning and development colleagues to shape developments relevant to local needs. This will include helping to define the priorities, focus, content and skills that any programme will need to address. Encouraging a learning culture where tolerance for the use of new learning technologies is actively encouraged and integrated into organisational processes will be vital. It remains that the lack of engagement with, and perhaps commitment of, IT services and the availability of IT infrastructure within the NHS remains the biggest barrier to the use of e-learning. Managers can and must influence developments if this barrier is not to be allowed to thwart the use of e-learning.

The use of e-learning within the NHS is on the rise and while some organisations are beginning to realise benefits through its use, it remains that e-learning is just one of a wide range of approaches that can be used to help meet training and education needs. A sense of balance is therefore needed about its use. However in seeking a balance in application it is also imperative that the NHS fully exploits the potential of e-learning to ensure effective use of resources, time, effort and investment, enable more flexible access to learning and set a expectation for more rapid programme developments. In this way we are then more likely to have an approach to e-learning that is capable of being delivered, sustained and is more relevant and responsive to the requirements of the NHS.

New approach to inductions at GSTT

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust has introduced the use of e-learning to improve mandatory and compliance induction training for new employees

E-learning is an increasingly popular way for NHS trusts to train their employees. A flexible learning solution, it is an ongoing resource that can be reused as often as required at no additional cost. It is quick and easy to update content as and when required, ensuring that employees always have access to the latest information available.

In order to comply with the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust has introduced a suite of e-learning modules and online assessments, developed by Premier IT. These have improved compliance of new doctors with mandatory and clinical training as part of their induction. Training must happen before employment commences in order for employees to be included on the trust's payroll system and to reduce the time spent on inductions post-employment.

The e-learning modules and online assessments customised for GSTT include:

- Induction - documentation, prescribing, blood transfusion, consent issues, infection control, major incidents, incident reporting, deaths and communication
- Manual handling

- Health and safety
- Fire safety
- Equal opportunities
- Safeguarding children

Premier IT hosts the content on a SCORM compliant learning management system. This enables employees to access all relevant e-learning to be completed, track their own progress, communicate with other employees and receive news from the trust. GSTT can also run bespoke management reports on employee progress. All updates to e-learning modules are completed by Premier IT although it is possible to train a trust to create and update the e-learning themselves.

320 junior doctors completed the e-learning induction initially with approximately 50 new employees now completing it every month. The introduction of e-learning has drastically reduced the time and money GSTT spends on employee induction training and they are now exploring opportunities to roll it out for all employees across the trust.

To see a demonstration of induction e-learning please visit www.premierit.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on how you could use e-learning in your trust, please contact:

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