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case study

Salford ICES and Wheelchair Service

in brief

To support the provision of equipment and wheelchair loans from a single site, Salford City Council looked to integrate the two services more closely through the implementation of a shared IT system

With Ethitec's ELMS2 already delivering tangible service benefits for Salford integrated community equipment service (ICES), the decision was made to roll the system out to wheelchair loans

The introduction of ELMS2 to Salford Wheelchair Service has increased the efficiency of resource allocation, enabled the production of detailed management information reports, and ultimately helped to reduce equipment loan and clinic waiting times

the challenge

Striving to provide the highest standard of care to some 220,000 residents, Salford City Council is currently responsible for meeting the requirements of 4,500 wheelchair service users and 15,000 equipment loan clients.

Whilst the equipment loan service has always been run as a local operation, wheelchair loans were historically managed regionally through Withington Hospital in South Manchester. With waiting times for a standard wheelchair at 30 weeks, Salford devolved wheelchair service provision down to local level in a bid to improve standards. Once equipment and wheelchair loans were provided from a single site, plans were put in place to integrate the two services more fully. As part of this, Salford looked to implement a shared IT system.

Peter Sandiford, operations manager for Salford City Council integrated community equipment store (ICES), explains: "The long term aim had always been to establish a fully integrated service by combining the activities of equipment loans and wheelchairs as much as possible. Providing the two services from a single site was the first step to achieving this, the second was naturally to use a common IT system."

Since 2002, Salford ICES has used Ethitec's ELMS2 system to support its activity and to help it meet government D54 targets of delivering equipment loans within seven days. The IT system has been proven to deliver real service benefits, including better stock control, increased efficiency and ultimately improved the service users' quality of life in the community. As a result, Salford investigated bringing the wheelchair service on board with the introduction of the relevant ELMS2 wheelchair, clinical and appointments modules.



the solution

ELMS2 is a robust software solution designed to support the efficient running of wheelchair, prosthetic, orthotic and community equipment services. A patient-centred system, it records a comprehensive set of demographics, together with a record of all clinical activity, loans and contacts.

The system enables the management and triage of referrals into the service, coordination of clinics and appointment waiting lists, as well as the scheduling of new appointments and follow-ups. Assessment, clinical, and staff activity data can be collated in an intuitive 'workflow' based manner that will closely mirror the working practices of its clinical users.

With optional bar coding functionality available, the system provides users with detailed information on the location, service, repair, and issue history of individual items, providing greater traceability and control. Electronic communication with external Approved Repairers is also provided.

To ensure that the migration of Salford Wheelchair Service to ELMS2 from an existing system ran smoothly, Ethitec collaborated closely with the service's own IT department. The transfer was completed in a single weekend, with staff trained and prepared for 'go live' the following week. Barbara Boland, Salford wheelchair service manager, explains: "I have experienced many IT transitions throughout my career, but I can honestly say that the migration from our previous system to ELMS2 was one of the smoothest and best managed."

the benefits

By introducing a shared IT system to manage equipment and wheelchair loans, Salford has realised several important benefits. At the frontline of service provision, Occupational Therapists (OTs) use a single ordering system and have access to a fuller picture of the patient clinical history, and information on waiting list entries for both assessment and equipment.

The addition of ELMS2 to Salford Wheelchair Service has helped to improve communication between services. For example, where a wheelchair is on order for a patient, the OT can make sure that the necessary home adaptations have also been requested. This ultimately reduces waiting times as the patient will simultaneously be on the relevant request lists.

The reporting functionality of ELMS2 has also made monitoring and adjusting service activity much easier. Barbara continues: "ELMS2 provides management information far superior to anything we had before. We can pull off regular reports on referrals and assessments, enabling us to allocate time more effectively. For example, a series of 45 minute appointments can be redistributed to relieve pressure on 30 minute clinics, if the waiting times for these are greater."

Reviewing the integration of the two services from an operational perspective, Peter Sandiford concludes: "Operating as a truly integrated service across equipment loans and wheelchairs has helped us to be more flexible and therefore improve service provision. Furthermore, pooling resources such as drivers and storage space reduces our overheads and helps free up money to invest back into the service and equipment to the further benefit of Salford residents."

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