



East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Brings innovation to patient safety with help from Datix



East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust covers the six counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, a diverse region spread over 7,500 miles and containing a mix of rural, coastal and urban areas.

The Trust attends more than half a million emergency calls every year and transports nearly twice that many patients to and from routine hospital appointments. The organisation is proud of its reputation for providing an excellent service to patients and aims to be the recognised leader in emergency, urgent and out of hospital care in the East of England.

NHS changes drive cohesive approach to patient safety

Up until five years ago, people living in the East of England were served by three separate NHS organisations. Then, in 2006, all three were consolidated into one Trust to deliver a unified face and consistent levels of emergency services to patients throughout the region. Interestingly, all three organisations amalgamated into the newly formed East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust had used Datix technology to manage their patient safety activities although the software had been applied in different ways within each organisation.

With the new structure in place it was time to take a fresh, more cohesive approach to patient safety. Following an objective procurement process that included a full evaluation of the marketplace, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust took the decision to re-select Datix, purchasing the latest web-based version of the software to facilitate improved, trust-wide access to a single system, a major priority for the new organisation.

Ramping up to full-scale roll-out

When Dean Ayres returned to East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust as Implementation Manager, the new Datix system was installed but was not being fully utilised. The project was significant and focused initially on delivering incident management functionality to 4,000 staff who were responsible for an area the size of Wales. Dean created a cross-functional team to accelerate the roll-out of Datix which included a full-time Datix Administrator and Risk Systems Administrator.

Dean Ayres explained, "We put in place a team that combined dedicated Datix resources with the flexibility to tap into specialist skills to ensure the new technology framework supported the overall corporate needs of the organisation. Responsibilities and knowledge were also shared across the Trust. For example, when I had an accident myself and was out of action for several months, the roll-out of Datix could continue as planned without undue delay."

Innovative use of Datix supports new call centre for incident reporting

Using Datix, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust has introduced an innovative way»

"The speed at which Datix can identify a trend is a real benefit and contributes to a safer environment for patients. Paper can be lost but data stored and gathered in one place within the Datix system cannot be missed. Senior management now have accurate and up-to-date information at their fingertips to drill down to the root of problems quickly and so minimise their impact and any risk to the organisation."

Dean Ayres
Implementation Manager

to record and manage incidents. It has recently implemented an option via its call centre that provides the Trust's 4,000 permanent staff and several thousand additional community first responders and volunteers with a single point of contact to report incidents, near misses and safeguarding issues. Calls into the call centre are answered within 30 seconds by trained staff who enter the details directly into the Datix system. This is particularly useful for ambulance crews who want to report an incident immediately while on the road or to help those who have no access to computers or the skills to use them.

Dean and his team believe that the introduction of the call centre option, together with more consistent ways of reporting through the Datix Dashboard, will further encourage incident reporting which in turn will help the Trust's continued drive to improve services to patients.

Lessons learned for a successful implementation

Like many large and complex projects, the road to a successful implementation was made up of many parts and Dean's team learned some valuable lessons along the way. Their top tips include:

- A considered implementation and solid project plan is essential
- Configuration is essential so get it right first time with help from others
- Use Datix in a test environment first before rolling it out; that way, any process or design items can be ironed out before it is delivered to users
- Take the opportunity to visit other Datix users, share information and discuss different ways to deploy the software and enhance it in a secure way
- Make a total switch to Datix Web-based solution to ensure consistency of data
- Save time and money – for example, Datix Web forms are designed for simplicity and most staff are up and running from the outset without the need for training
- Hire a dedicated Datix Administrator – building dashboards, maintaining quality of data, helping people build reports, keeping the system clean and tidy is a full-time job but invaluable to all other users and worth every penny
- Be part of the Datix Forum – this is an excellent way to connect with other Datix users and benefit from additional technical and documentation support

Seeing is believing

Staff and patients have noticed tangible benefits since using Datix. For example, Datix enabled the Trust to identify one particular problem with certain nebulisers. Information fed into the Datix system allowed staff to spot the trend which, once investigated, established that the glue in the nebulisers was not strong enough. This discovery was immediately alerted to all staff and resulted in the specific batch being removed.

Dean believes that greater and more proactive engagement between his team and users, together with positive feedback from Union representatives, helped overcome any cultural resistance to the new technology and will ultimately foster widespread adoption of the Datix system.

Excellent technology, excellent support

Using Datix, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust now has a robust technology framework that effectively manages all parts of the patient safety process from incidents, complaints, actions, contacts and equipment used within a user-friendly and highly visual dashboard environment. The Trust has also been impressed with the superior quality of support and consultancy from Datix, a sentiment backed up by Dean, "The Datix team is always approachable and very helpful, offering a lot of guidance and clarity when we need it. They also listen to our needs and their consultancy is second to none. We have trust in them as a partner and consider them to be an integral part of our team."

About East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Established in July 2006, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust covers the six counties which make up the region – Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The diverse area is spread over 7,500 miles and contains a mix of rural, coastal and urban areas. Services are tailored to meet the needs of each community's differing environmental and medical requirements.

East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust attends more than half a million emergency calls every year and transports nearly twice that many patients to and from routine hospital appointments. As an organisation, the Trust is proud of its reputation for providing an excellent service to patients and aims to be the recognised leader in emergency, urgent and out of hospital care in the region.

For more information please visit: www.eastamb.nhs.uk

Fast Facts

- Datix technology introduces consistent ways of working for 4,000 staff and delivers excellent patient care across six counties
- Data now gathered and stored in one place
- Overall increase in incident reporting since implementing Datix
- Appointment of dedicated Datix Administrator is worth every penny
- Datix lays the foundation call centre operation that provides single point of contact for permanent staff and thousands of volunteers to report incidents and complaints
- Transparency within Datix helps staff and management track tangible progress of incidents
- Datix is a strategic business tool - senior management now have a clear view of risks and take proactive action to ensure high quality patient care
- Access rights enhance security of data and processes

About Datix

Datix has been a pioneer in the field of patient safety since 1986 and is today a leading supplier of software for patient safety, improving quality, risk management, incident and adverse event reporting. We aim to help healthcare organisations build a culture and practice that drives excellence in patient safety.

Set up specifically to meet the governance and risk management requirements of the healthcare industry. Datix is working as a partner to leading healthcare organisations across the world, including more than 75% of the National Health Service in the UK and leading healthcare providers in the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe and the Middle East.