Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust introduces end-to-end patient safety and complaints management using Datix

Datix®
Software for Patient Safety

The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust provides healthcare to more than 356,000 people who live in and around Ipswich and East Suffolk. The hospital covers 46 acres, employs 4,000 staff and serves more than 4,000 patients and visitors every day.

The Trust strongly believes that the hospital belongs to the community which plays a vital role in the life of the organisation. Staff are supported by an enthusiastic team of 400 volunteers, local people who generously give their time to provide extra help including running the hospital's very own radio station, Hospital Radio Ipswich. In addition, the Trust's own big band – The Ipswich Hospital Band – has raised many thousands of pounds for health related charities.

Driving continuous improvement through technology

Ipswich Hospital is committed to delivering high quality, safe healthcare services within a continuously improving environment, an environment that is underpinned by the latest Datix technology. The Trust first turned to Datix in 2003 to set up a basic incident management and complaints system for use by the hospital's complaints and PALS (Patient Advice & Liaison Service) teams.

Since that time, the organisation has come a long way as Alison Davis, Risk Management Co-ordinator, at Ipswich Hospital explains, "Technology is key to supporting our vision for excellence. Over the years, we have worked closely with Datix to create a robust, integrated patient safety framework that places patients at the heart of everything we do by managing adverse incidents, risks, claims and complaints across the whole organisation effectively, at the click of a mouse."

Demand for complaints management opens the doors to Datix

In 2010, Ipswich Hospital deployed web-based Datix complaints handling software to meet the increasing demand from other parts of the Trust to have greater involvement in managing the complaints process. The roll-out was made easier because Ipswich Hospital could build upon the success of the existing Datix Incidents module and staff could transfer their knowledge of Datix quickly to the new solution with minimal training.

All those involved with a complaint now have instant access to all details provoking a much fuller and faster response than before the web-based Datix system was implemented, when only the complaints co-ordinator handled the investigative process. The Datix system is also set up so that expert practitioners, such as medical specialists, can see what complaints are coming in and comment on them without having to complete the whole complaints management process themselves. Additionally, consultants in the Trauma and Orthopaedic department, for example, will only see the complaints that relate to their specialist area.

Alison Davis continued, "The beauty of Datix is that you can set it up however you want. It is totally flexible, meaning busy consultants are alerted only to the complaints that matter to them, whilst managers have all the data they need to build the bigger picture."

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The Ipswich Hospital **NHS**
NHS Trust

Integration is key to success

The major advantage of Datix is holding all incident, risk, claims and complaints information in one place rather than having to manually link-up data between different systems. In principle, Ipswich Hospital can track the end-to-end progress of a patient from their initial incident to their contact with PALS through to making a complaint and then a claim.

Jenna Ackerley, Complaints Manager at Ipswich Hospital believes that integration between the various Datix modules and PALS has had a positive impact, "Datix has not changed the number of complaints the Trust receives, but has completely transformed the way we manage them. It has solved data confidentiality issues which come with using email accounts, and allows more collaboration and co-ordination between staff in investigations."

Ipswich Hospital has noticed significant benefits since deploying Datix especially in terms of simplifying the organisation's complaints management process. By their very nature, complaints are often complex and multi-faceted. For example, a patient admitted into the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department may go through the assessment unit before ending up in the Trauma and Orthopaedic department, although the main concern or issue may be with A&E, other issues may be raised about stages of their care. Ipswich Hospital has configured the complaints system to identify these individual contact points and issues to provide a joined-up view of the overall complaint that demonstrably accelerates resolution times and ultimately enhances customer satisfaction.

Culturally, the Datix system has played a significant role in encouraging senior staff to engage more actively in the continual improvement process by enabling them to comment on complaints in real-time.

According to Alison Davis, "We have noticed that more and more consultants have requested their own Datix account so they can instantly see the complaints that relate to their area and then respond swiftly to them."

Similarly, Datix has provided the Trust with an invaluable tool for proactively monitoring risk across the organisation. Each business unit holds its own risk register within Datix and can use the unique dashboard facility to flag up high risk items that demand priority attention. The introduction of Datix for risk management has developed an excellent process for what Alison refers to as "horizon scanning" whereby the Trust's Board of Directors and Risk Management Committee members can see at a glance the status of all risks.

Datix also allows the trust to track and share learning across specialities and give assurance for completion of actions.

Looking towards a healthy future

Always eager to maximise the Trust's original investment in Datix, Alison Davis plans to find new and innovative ways to expand the system. Next on the horizon is creating an automatic alert that notifies medical staff when a complaint or incident has been raised by one of their own patients. There are also plans to tighten up the Trust's incident and risk management processes by introducing an incident form specifically for A&E incidents and incorporating a standalone Board Assurance Framework report to be produced through the Datix system rather than independently.

Alison Davis concluded, "Datix is at the centre of our focus on patient safety and because the majority of people using it are clinicians its ease of use is essential. Datix provides the platform for the Trust's strategy for continuous improvement."

About Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust

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Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust's vision is to be the hospital of choice by placing patients at the centre of everything it does, based on principles of quality and safety, access and accountability within a continuously improving environment.

For more information, please visit: **www.ipswichhospital.nhs.uk**

Fast Facts

- Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust is using Datix to drive continuous improvement in patient safety and care
- 412 staff use the software to manage incidents, risks and complaints across the Trust
- Information 'all in one place' protects patient data confidentiality
- Enable anonymous incident reporting
- Flexibility of Datix means senior staff see only the complaints that relate to them and managers capture the bigger picture
- Datix becomes an integral part of the Trust's risk management framework
- Risk Management Co-ordinator Alison Davis believes Datix is easy to use, flexible and provides the platform for delivering integrated incident, risk and complaints management.

About Datix

Datix has been a pioneer in the field of patient safety since 1986 and is today the leading supplier of software for patient safety, risk management, incident and adverse event reporting. Datix aims to help healthcare organizations build a culture and practice that drives excellence in patient safety. Datix recruits and retains people committed to the healthcare sector and continually invests in its software and services to ensure that it integrates best practice and learning.

Datix is focused on the health and social care sector - customers include public and private hospitals, primary care providers, GP surgeries, mental health and ambulance service providers. Datix clients also include organizations delivering care home and domiciliary care services.