

e-Forms & Clinical Excellence



Broomfield 2010

Mid Essex NHS Trust is on track to achieve Foundation status by the end of 2009, along the way centralising acute services into the new Broomfield Hospital and harnessing technology to underpin its vision of a patient-focused, financially sound and efficient organisation delivering excellent clinical services.

Like many NHS trusts, Mid Essex has been working with Adobe to help rationalise the number of paper form-based processes generated by 3,500 staff around the trust's 680,000 medical records and 42 clinical IT systems into efficient, secure and streamlined electronic processes.

Mike Casey, IT director at Mid Essex, explains that he was looking for "an enterprise class" system to help create this underpinning move to secure electronic workflow processes.

In order to improve efficiency, says Casey, he wanted to create a "design environment" where he and his team could "put the challenges in front of clinicians and operations staff" and start thinking laterally as a group. He wanted to "know why things were being done this way" and start the process of saying "Let's do it a completely different way. Let's do it electronically, in a secure environment." And start the redesign of the ethos behind each paper form so that processes could be streamlined behind intelligent e-forms.

"We generate over 9.2 million pieces of paper a year," says Casey. "We have the inherent inefficiencies of any paper-based organisation needing to push that paper around." What was needed was a transition from paper to a secure electronic environment, enterprise-wide.

Casey had no previous experience of Adobe in the enterprise sector, and was not aware of "how much capacity the product had as a workflow system and also as a mechanism for engagement. For example, the Adobe web conferencing features weren't visible to me as a customer. In effect I was hunting it down – it was what I was looking for."

He was impressed with the open-mindedness of Adobe's approach to the trust's aspirations. "There was a genuine interest in what we were doing. The struggle was trying to match up the interests and drivers we had with the product set they already had - it was a free flowing discussion, no limits.

"That is what you need if you are going to design a strategy."

A transition from paper was imperative, but not just document imaging. Casey wanted a mechanism to undertake version control for documents: "In the 9.2 million bits of paper the trust produces there can be ten different variants of essentially the same

form." This had to be rationalised.

Says Casey, "Document and version control and electronic routing is second nature to Adobe. 'What mechanism would we use? How would we target it?' It was a horribly pragmatic discussion – what do you want to do, what examples do you use, how do you engage clinical staff and departments around your idea?"

Essentially, he adds, Mid Essex's drivers "are the same drivers across the NHS – what happens in Mid Essex will happen in any trust, or some variant of it."

Two solutions were agreed as the base for transformation: Adobe LiveCycle and Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro web conferencing.

Says Casey, "We needed an enterprise class workflow engine – we wanted to condense multiple different forms into one form and start to route them intelligently."

Web conferencing, meanwhile, provided "a mechanism for being able to engage lots of clinicians in a multi-disciplinary team meeting – from wherever they are."

These two products, says Casey, were seen as "the future for our organisation".

He explains, "We want to bring the concept of the 'mobile clinician' in to the trust. If you have a consultant at home they should have the ability to log in, see a digital x-ray, consult, and do everything that they would normally do as if they were in the office here in the hospital."

Adobe's implementation was "the 'softest' one I've ever worked with. The concept was that we got the product installed very quickly and then started to engage with their document routing specialists. We picked five form based processes and said, 'this is the sort of thing we want to do'.

"It is critical to start at this level, to focus right down and get practical with the solution – it is such a big product, you need to go by example and focus on small sets of challenges so that people can get their heads around it.

Security, as for all public sector organisations, is paramount. Sensitive data is being handled and processed on a daily basis and clinicians, or the trust, often need to communicate with professionals in other organisations – for example, GPs or local authority social care organisations.

"We have a big interest in how documents are secured; it is a big driver in the NHS.

You hear so much about it in the media, about patient data loss." Casey explains that Mid Essex has a directive that all patient information is encrypted, safe in the hands of clinicians who have the right to read it.

How you ensure this, he adds, is to "align yourself with electronic documents that are conducive to that; that can help you ensure that security of data".

Mid Essex actively wanted a platform approach because "we wanted an open mind with our customers - in order to engage with clinicians and practice managers.

"What you don't need is a platform that has built in restrictions, as the customers' ideas will begin to outstrip the functionality. You will limit yourself with your own customers. We needed the free-flowing platform based approach that LiveCycle can give."

The trust has now streamlined communication with GPs via encrypted letters that can be automatically generated and tracked within the system. Patient files are now more easily updated and located, significantly minimising cancelled operations, and the mobile clinician ethos is enabling scarce clinical resource and expertise to be maximised for excellent patient care.

For Casey the key benefit is that "it starts as a design discussion with your own customers". In turn, he explains, they start to look at how they run their business, and to ask questions: "They start to say, if we can design this electronically, why the hell are we still doing it this way? If we can do it electronically let's route it this way and this way – and in doing so they cut out ten different steps in the process.

"And a four day process can now be a three day one, or a two day one."

It is only then, says Casey, that you can get optimal efficiency: "You start to run a trust faster and faster – that's the key benefit: the open discussion you can have with people who are wedged in paper."



To view the full video case study visit www.UKauthorITy.com. For further information about Adobe's LiveCycle or web conferencing products please call 0208 606 1167 or email: Adobe@lgitu.co.uk