

## Case Study Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

# Mobile access to rosters sees up to 1,500 shifts per week being directly booked at Blackpool Teaching



Blackpool Teaching Hospitals supports a population of around 1.6 million people. The trust has more than 7,000 substantive staff, and over 900 bank staff. The bank office found that as the temporary workforce grew in number, so did the queries from staff regarding shift availability, rosters, and annual leave. It soon became clear that better access to rosters was needed and, in February last year, the trust rolled out the Allocate Me app across the organisation. The has led to significant benefits for staff and managers alike.

### Testing paves the way for a smooth launch

Prior to implementing the Me app, the trust was using Allocate's Employee Online software. Gaining mobile access to rosters was the main driving factor behind introducing the app, explains Louise Mitchinson, e-Rostering facilitator at the trust.

"Being compatible with mobile devices meant the software was much more accessible to staff, and these days we all love to do so much on our phones via an app. We wanted to launch the capability for bank staff to directly book their own shifts, and we knew that being able to book them on their phone or tablet from anywhere would make this even easier. The two elements work together, so it made sense to launch them at the same time."

In order to guarantee a smooth launch process, the trust requested a testing period from Allocate and were able to check a range of different direct booking scenarios to mitigate risk to patient safety, such as whether staff could book onto shifts for which they were not qualified. During the testing phase, the team identified that it would need to use the 'required grade' field to ensure that roster managers sent every shift to bank with a specific grade.

Louise says: "It was essential that the launch went well and that there wouldn't be any teething problems to put people off using the new software, so the testing period was really useful to iron out any flaws."

### Benefits for clinical staff and back office staff alike

Following implementation in February, the trust saw a significant uptake of both the Me app and the direct booking function. There were 300 logins and 200 shifts booked in the first week. The e-Rostering team supported staff through drop-in sessions, to help anyone having trouble logging on. By May, nearly 1,500 shifts were being booked per week. Nearly one year on, both usage and shift fill rate are continuing to rise.

Louise believes the successful uptake of the Me app is down to the benefits for staff. "It was a positive transition because it has made lives easier for our staff. We didn't force the Me app on them – we kept Employee Online active so that they had a choice, but we have found that the majority of staff would rather use Me because they can get it on their phones and tablets.

"Our bank office is only open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, so previously staff were restricted by those times. Now, if they want to sit down in the evenings, or at the weekend and book shifts, they can. They can also see when and where they're working, they can book annual leave – they have more ownership. I think that's why it has been so well received."

Natalie Hill, e-Rostering and bench manager, says: "More staff groups, in addition to nursing, are coming on board and using the mobile app. It is great to see AHPs, admin and specialist nursing staff joining the bench. The Me app is not only helping to fill shifts, it is assisting with expanding the bench register at our trust, as bench workers love the flexible approach."

The accessibility the new software provides has also meant a huge reduction in the number of roster and annual leave queries being received, relieving pressure on the e-Rostering team.

## Communication is key to successful implementation

Before going live, the e-Rostering team promoted the new software through several channels, including email and on the wards themselves. This was extremely valuable when it came to the launch, says Louise, as staff were already aware of the product.

“Communication was absolutely key – making sure everybody knew exactly what the product was, when it was coming, how it would help then and communicating that as early as possible. We are still actively promoting the app via ward managers – making sure they’ve got their staff on the app – and we make sure new starters are aware of it, but it is spreading through word of mouth as well.”

## The value of ongoing support

Allocate is continuing to support the trust

Louise says: “Allocate has been incredibly supportive. It provided communications toolkits for our launch day and a team was onsite to make sure everything went smoothly. It was nice to see from the team from Allocate at our trust because it gave people more confidence in the product. We can’t fault the support we’ve been given.”