

AllocateAwards Case Study

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

An in-house enhanced nursing care team (ENCT) at East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust has led to improved patient safety, reduced agency spend and an increase in standards of care for high-risk patients.

Before the ENCT was created, high-risk patients with dementia, delirium and confusion were looked after by agency support workers, but increasing demand was leading to escalating agency costs. The initial impact of the ENCT on patient care and agency costs was so great that the size of the team was increased, to include five members of staff on the day shift and five covering the night shift.

Team members' shifts are allocated via a virtual ward on HealthRoster, with the 11.5 hour shifts divided into three-hour blocks to ensure that the nurse rotates every three hours. These three-hour shifts are allocated the previous day by the service co-ordinator, and the team uses EmployeeOnline to find out their allocations and prevent delays each day. SafeCare informs the wards of the time periods when the support will be in place.

Before the team was established, an unregistered nurse would cover the 11.5-hour shift for a specific patient on a specific ward when a patient was identified with enhanced care needs. The flexibility of an in-house team ensures that they can be moved around the hospital, covering more areas with fewer staff to manage and support any high-risk patients.

This new system also supports collaborative working with carers and ward staff so patients can be managed according to their needs. If there is a peak in demand and the team is unable to cover the ward, the shift will be put out to NHS Professionals by the service coordinator or duty matron out of hours.

The ENCT is a mobile team without a real base. However, they take breaks together and have monthly team meetings to support collaborative working. The team also has a WhatsApp group, to keep in touch while everyone is on the move.

Emily Watts, safer staffing matron said:

“Since the introduction of the team, the trust has seen a reduction in falls and agency spend, a reduced length of stay by approximately two days per patient and a higher standard of care for high-risk patients. The trust is currently 21 fall incidents below the reduction trajectory set for 2017/18 and is ranked fourth in the country for harm-free care.”

The trust has hosted more than 40 visits from other trusts to observe and learn more about its safer staffing process and the role and influence of the enhanced nursing team.