

South West London's collaborative bank leads the way in NHS Trust partnerships

Case Study



Announced in June 2019, the Interim NHS People Plan, designed to make the NHS the best place to work, has put at its core the critical nature of collaborative working. It calls for NHS staff to work in a more 'joined-up' way.

With the NHS moving to an Integrated Care System by 2021, the creation of ICSs will bring together local organisations in a pragmatic way to deliver the triple integration of primary and secondary care, physical and mental services and health with social care.

This shift calls for a more intelligent and collaborative approach by Healthcare Trusts to staffing and resource management.

Introduction

Some forward-thinking trusts have already recognised this direction of travel and made significant steps forward in demonstrating the benefits of innovating around collaborative working.

Since April 2018, the South West London Collaborative Bank (SWLCB) was created to form the first staff-sharing platform of its kind in the UK, integrating rostering and bank systems to provide visibility of working patterns across South West London and Surrey and drive ahead with collaborative workforce initiatives.

As an Acute Provider Collaborative (APC) who decided to develop a Collaborative Staff Bank as one of its workforce priorities, the SWLCB is made up of Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust, Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and St George's Healthcare NHS Trust in partnership with Allocate. Together they created CloudStaff, a solution which integrates available shifts at every Trust onto a single platform. This means workers registered at one staff bank can see and easily book onto vacant shifts at any of the other partner Trusts using the Me app.

The aim of SWLCB is to develop a collaborative health and social care workforce that works across existing organisations and clinical boundaries, creating a step-change in the ways Trusts work together and now recognised as a way to achieve with pace the goals of the Interim NHS People Plan. It forms part of a workforce sustainability strategy and from the outset, was recognised as an important contribution to realising the Trusts' overall agency savings and staff retention plans.

The project went live in April 2018 with the goal of achieving a minimum financial savings of over £100,000 within the first two years, looking to double those savings by year three.

These savings were achieved by providing the opportunity for substantive and bank only workers to work at other Trusts, focusing initially on only Band 2 healthcare assistants and Band 5 registered nurses.

This change also reduces the Trusts' reliance upon agency staff whilst maximising existing these NHS staff resource. Based on the success to date, the Trusts' HR Directors are now looking to expand the Collaborative Bank across other staff groups and consider new collaborative approaches.

The Department of Health and Social Care recently the SWLCB project to monitor its progress. Sam Rodger, Head of Temporary Staffing Strategy commented:

"We believe that, through effective and intelligent use of in-house and collaborative banks, the NHS can offer true flexible working to its staff, while fostering a workforce that is agile and responsive to real-time patient needs.

A collaborative bank, underwritten by interoperable technology, enables trusts to take a holistic approach to workforce planning, and empowers them to deploy their staff both within and between trusts, drastically reducing reliance on expensive and opaque recruitment agencies, while improving working lives.

Collaboration is essential if we're to make to the NHS the best it can be for patients and the workforce. We have seen that collaboration on temporary staffing can, in particular:

- pave the way for the harmonisation of pay rates and give trusts collective bargaining power when dealing with agencies;
- can greatly increase the pool of staff able to fill any given temporary shift, and thereby increase opportunities for those who choose to work flexibly; and
- can break down barriers, such as incompatible pre-employment checks and mandatory training, that currently makes the movement of staff between trusts so burdensome."

From vision to reality

Sue Winter, HR Director for South West London STP, has been involved in the Collaborative Bank from the start. "It was a key part of our workforce strategy and it's incredible to think that we consider this to now be business as usual," she says.

"To retain our workers and encourage agency workers back to the NHS we needed to refresh our proposition to them. We can now offer more choice of when and where they work, support them in gaining new experience by working with different multi-disciplinary teams, and them to supplement their income. It's also about supporting our teams to deliver the best possible care to patients, with workers from our Trusts."

"We never lose sight of the financial objectives," Chris Goulding, the South West London Collaborative Bank Project Lead, emphasises.

Agency savings measured in the tens of thousands in the first year. In the second year we're focused on delivering hundreds of thousands. The foundation has been established and now it's about scale; driving up bookings and recruiting bringing up to an additional 500 hundred more nurses onto the collaborative bank, especially as we look to expand to additional nursing groups."

"There are many dimensions to the work we do as part of the collaborative bank," Chris cautions. "Joint agreement between Trusts on pay rates, reducing barriers to working between organisations, mandatory training and performance management are part of our business as usual.

We also focus attention upon rostering, which is where good practice needs to start. Getting onto wards and talking to managers and their teams is key to driving awareness. The support and oversight of senior Executives ensures we remain focused upon outcomes."

Prior to launching the Collaborative Bank the Trusts surveyed workers to gauge their interest in joining. More than 40% of workers responded positively and feedback from workers indicates that the Trusts are doing things right.

Integrating rostering and bank systems provides visibility of working patterns across a region which provides a strategic view when looking at forecasting and planning for the STP.

It also provides assurance to Trusts and workers that only those with the availability and correct skills and experience can book duties.

"We've more than a thousand workers on the collaborative bank," Chris Goulding explains. "Bookings are increasing and thousands of hours are being filled. Having confidence that each booking is safe – that rostering and working time rules are not being violated – is critical to the safety of our workers and patients."

"The data shows the underlying downward trend in terms of agency spend and usage. The Collaborative Bank has had an impact and contributed to this reduction, ensuring we never use agency staff where bank staff are available."

Chris Goulding
SWL Collaborative Bank
Project Lead

Taking things to the next level

The SWLCB has changed the way the APC works and is playing an important part in making organisations more agile, inclusive and modern employers, underpinning the goals of the Interim NHS People Plan.

For example, to support the strategic and operational delivery of the Collaborative Bank, a governance structure has been established and regular forums are used to plan, track and deliver the vision of Trust Executives.

"We're already preparing for additional nursing, Allied Health Professionals and administration and clerical staff groups to join the collaborative bank," Chris Goulding explains. "Beyond this, we're defining how to streamline payroll."

Working with Allocate

"It's been a partnership from the start," Sue Winter states. "We continue to work closely with Allocate. They provide an exceptional level of support and are solution-focused.

Over the past few months they have assisted our analysis and modelling of pay rates, provided guidance and support with promoting the collaborative bank in each Trust, and listened to our feedback and suggestions for improvements to CloudStaff."