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North Bristol NHS

NHS Trust

Saving Time and Cutting Carbon: How North Bristol NHS Trust Turned to Video Conferencing to Improve Efficiency and Achieve Goals

New video solutions from LifeSize put this healthcare trust on track to deliver return on investment within one year

Organisation

North Bristol NHS Trust, North Bristol, UK

North Bristol NHS Trust is one of the biggest healthcare trusts in the United Kingdom, serving a large urban and rural geographic area from Bristol and South Gloucestershire right down to Cornwall, for its specialist services. It is internationally renowned as an innovative centre for neurosciences, plastics and burns, orthopaedics and renal medical work, and also delivers a wide range of other clinical services to its local population in and around Bristol.

The Trust employs 9,000 staff members, who provide services to approximately one million people annually. Employees are spread across the Trust's two main hospitals at Frenchay and Southmead, as well as several smaller community hospitals, renal satellite units and other community locations.

Following an investment of £430 million, a new hospital at the Trust's Southmead site is scheduled to open in 2014. The new hospital is approximately 1 million square feet in size, with 75 per cent single rooms for patients. With new technology and some of the best medical expertise in the country, the new hospital will be an innovative and effective way for the NHS to operate.

With innovative technology the new hospital at the NHS Trust`s Southmead site is scheduled to open in 2014.

Challenge

The North Bristol NHS Trust serves patients that live in urban Bristol, and offers regional services to one of the most rural and geographically dispersed areas of the UK – the South West of England.

Patients travel from as far away as the Southern tip of Cornwall to receive treatment, and community-based staff members often have to travel long distances to meet with their colleagues and patients.

Additionally, medical students, as well as clinical and support staff, have to travel between the two hospitals at Frenchay and Southmead regularly. Although the sites are only five miles apart, the journey is through one of the South West's busiest industrial areas. During rush hour, Trust employees need to allow around 45 minutes for the commute each way.

As well as travelling between sites, many of the Trust's employees who work out in the community have to travel to Bristol for weekly meetings, which could take up to half a day.

Martin Bell, director of assurance, information and technology at the Trust realised that in order to save money and cut down on wasted travelling time and employee frustration, he needed to make further investment into the organisation's video communications (VC) solutions.

The Trust's requirements were:

- A video conferencing solution that was effective and reliable enough to reduce the need for in-person meetings
- Satellite units that could be used by employees working off-site in smaller locations
- A solution that was easy to use, so that clinical and non-clinical staff could realise the benefits and engage with the technology immediately, without lots of time and investment in training

Solution

According to Bell, "video conferencing was still perceived as a '90s' solution – large, expensive and probably gathering dust in a conference room somewhere. However, when we thought about the time employees lost driving from one location to another for meetings, and the fact that time could be spent with patients, we realised there were some big potential benefits."

Previously, the NHS Trust had two separate video conferencing units in each of its major locations, but according to Bell, they were rarely used. "A few years ago however, the price of equipping a workspace with technology came right down," he continued. "Rather than spending £25,000 to equip an office with the most up-to-date technology, it cost £5,000 to provide an office with IT and communications, so we could afford decent webcams in all workspaces."

LifeSize HD video solutions are now being used across the organisation to facilitate collaboration amongst staff without the hassle and cost of travel. The Trust runs regional, multi-disciplinary meetings, where (for example) all staff treating a cancer patient can come together to discuss a case. Holding these meetings over LifeSize has made them more efficient, since the specialists can participate from their own room system in their respective location.

Similarly, all senior district nurses in the Trust might meet on a Monday morning to discuss workload and individual cases. For them, it is an important time to share ideas and prioritise work for the rest of the week. Every Monday, these nurses will be able to collaborate with their local hospital or health centre using LifeSize, allowing them to continue their day directly after the meeting.

The HD video technology has also been used in surgical and consultants' meetings, enabling greater productivity for these staff members whose time is at a premium.

Two LifeSize® Express™ 220s are also used for teaching medical students simultaneously at both the Frenchay and Southmead sites. The Trust is also looking in to deploying LifeSize® Video Center™, so these sessions can be recorded, to be played back at a more convenient time. This means that even if students are unable to attend, they can watch the lesson later, at their convenience.

Results

As a public organisation, the North Bristol NHS Trust has a government-mandated carbon reduction target to meet annually, and LifeSize technology alone has saved 2958 kg of carbon over 12 months[1].

With guidance from LifeSize, the Trust's IT team worked hard to make the new video communications as accessible as possible, producing a guide for employees on how to use it, pre-programming the call directory in advance, and educating users on the economic and environmental benefits of using LifeSize.

According to Bell, "as you'd expect, employees were cautious of using new technology at first, but as soon as they'd seen the results it was hard to argue with it. Last September, there was a total of four hours of video calls and we're now averaging 47 hours a month, or approximately four and a half hours per month, per LifeSize unit."

"For every large meeting, we estimate we save £200 in employee time and fuel expenses. This equates to £9,500 per month – the system will easily have paid for itself within a year of implementation," Bell continued.

Mr Martin Bell, director of assurance, information and technology at the North Bristol NHS Trust.

"The money saved on staff time and travel from using LifeSize in a single meeting room is nearly enough to pay for an entire room system[2]," said Bell.

[1] assumes an average of 50mph for a car with average 25 mpg fuel consumption

[2] based on five staff members earning £40,000 a year travelling to an onsite meeting once every two weeks, by carrying out that meeting over LifeSize the Trust is saving an estimated £4,342 per year

Future

The Trust plans to increase and maximise its use of video communications technology in the coming years.

Traditionally, the Trust has used ISDN lines for video calls, although it is moving towards IP technology, which will work over the existing broadband connection. The Trust is now considering using LifeSize® Networker™ to join ISDN and IP lines together.

Additionally, Bell's team is looking at clinical applications for the technology. For example, they are investigating whether to link up a camera and LifeSize system to a surgery, in order to contact international medical experts during an operation. In this scenario, there will be a microscope connected to a camera, so several people at once can comment on keyhole surgical procedures, such as laparoscopies.

"The opportunities to create even more efficiencies through the use of LifeSize video communications solutions are huge," concluded Bell. "Further implementations will help us reach economic and environmental targets, increase staff morale and provide even better care to patients. Ultimately, the NHS is a people-focussed organisation, and so LifeSize video communications will continue to maintain that critical face-to-face interaction."

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