

Improving Patient Care: How Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust Utilises HD Video Conferencing to Provide More Efficient Treatment

New video solutions from LifeSize enable the mental health Trust to save time and improve quality of patient care

Organisation

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, Southeast London, UK

Oxleas provides a wide range of health and social care services in southeast London, specialising in community health, mental health and learning disability services. Oxleas has been the main provider of specialist mental health care in Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich for more than 10 years and has developed a comprehensive portfolio of services in community and hospital settings.



The Trust offers adult learning disability services (care provided to patients who suffer from mental illness / learning disabilities) across these areas, as well as forensic mental health care (services for people with mental health problems that have been arrested/found guilty of a crime) across southeast London and in Kent Prisons. It also provides a range of physical health services to adults and children in the community in the boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich. These range from health visitors and community midwives working with the very young to district nurses and therapists meeting the physical health needs of the elderly.

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust has a workforce of around 3,300, including highly skilled health and social care professionals. It has over 110 sites in a variety of locations, providing a range of services to a population of over 750,000.



Challenge

The Trust serves individuals that live in southeast London, and offers services across this dispersed area of the capital.

Staff often had to make lengthy journeys across London to meet with their colleagues and patients. Doctors, nurses and managers have to travel between Erith Community Mental Health Centre and the in-patient wards on Woodlands, in Queen Mary's Hospital and in Sidcup. This travel between sites for meetings, particularly during rush hour, took valuable time out of their working days.

A more effective form of contact was required between management teams on the Trust's different sites, in order to streamline the patient referral process through encouraging more productive discussions about in-patient care.



CHALLENGE

The Trust supports individuals across southeast London and the neighbouring counties and making trips between sites took valuable time out of staff members' working days. A solution was required that was as effective as face-to-face meetings and easy to use for both staff and patients.



SOLUTION

After conducting staff and service-user consultations, an extensive literature review and evaluating several vendors' solutions, the Trust came to the decision to invest in two LifeSize® Express 220™ endpoints for use in one of its community mental health centres and hospital wards.



RESULT

The new technology has boosted productivity and enhanced communication not only between peers but also between staff and patients who are ready to interact via video conferencing. It has reduced the need for in-person meetings where appropriate and supplemented contact with patients on the ward, boosting quality of care.

The Trust recognised the need for having hospital and community team staff across the different sites discuss patients' progress and care more frequently, but in a cost and time effective way. For example, what should happen to a patient once he or she was referred from the ward and into the community, and what the plan for their care should include. Even when a patient leaves the ward, they frequently require support in their community.

John Enser, director of forensic and prison services at the Trust, identified there was an opportunity to streamline certain processes, in order to ensure patients get the best quality of care possible: HD video conferencing. The Trust, reviewed a number of technology vendors and it was decided that an investment into LifeSize's video communications (VC) solutions for the Trust's meeting rooms would be the best approach for the first two sites.

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust's Key Requirements:

Reliable: A video conferencing solution that was effective and dependable enough to reduce the need for in-person meetings

Cost-Effective: A tool that would increase communication, boost productivity, improve quality of care and resource efficiency

Simple: A solution that was easy and unthreatening to use for staff, and eventually for patients as well

Encrypted: To ensure confidentiality



Solution

"The Trust researched (by way of consultation processes with staff and service-users and an extensive literature search on the use of VC in a mental health setting) whether or not video conferencing was the best option for both the service-users and the Trust," said Esther De Weger, a representative at Oxleas NHS Trust. "We also reviewed a number of technology vendors and decided to invest in VC solutions for two of our meeting rooms."

"We chose the solution that would best help combat the time employees lost commuting from one location to another for meetings. Freeing up time for them to spend with patients to help them progress more quickly," she said.

To begin with, the Trust focused on encouraging staff to use video conferencing amongst themselves, until they felt comfortable with using the technology in the working environment. The organisation carried out staff consultations and site surveys before deciding to implement the system. Education and training was required to overcome the idea that in-person meetings and consultations were the best, and only, way of communicating with a patient. Oxleas shared research (literature review of the use of VC within a mental health setting) with its staff, which reiterated the fact that patient assessments conducted via video produced the same results as when conducted in the same physical location. Face-to-face contact with patients is still used often, especially at the rapport-building stage.

Two LifeSize® Express 220™ solutions were installed in early 2011, one in the Trust's community mental health centre in Erith, and the second at Woodlands at Queen Mary's Hospital in Sidcup. These two locations are home to a large amount of staff: Erith has three different community mental health teams and also an acute crisis day service for service-users with mental health problems, while Woodlands has two acute working age in-patient wards and two older people's wards, each with around 15 beds.



Results

LifeSize HD video solutions are now being used between the two initial sites to facilitate collaboration amongst staff without the need for travel. The organisation holds weekly peer-to-peer and clinical management meetings to discuss patient progress and what can be done to get them back into the community. Every Wednesday, the Trust holds bed management meetings where staff come together to discuss which patients are ready to move on from the ward but require care plans to be formulated. For example, if they are medically ready to leave the ward but may need housing issues to be sorted out first. The Trust also holds weekly training sessions between the two sites, which are conducted via VC in order to increase access to educational resources for the Trust's trainees.

Management teams meet every three weeks to discuss the roll-out plan to an extra 14 sites across the Trust. It is expected that the VC systems will be used more frequently for a larger variety of meetings when the other sites are on board (e.g. staff supervision). In the meantime the units also get booked out on an ad-hoc basis and can also be hooked up to the Trust's computers so staff can share desktops.



De Weger added, "holding these meetings via LifeSize technology has made them more efficient, firstly because staff can more easily participate from the two meeting rooms located at Erith and Woodlands without the need for travel. But secondly, conducting meetings over VC has actually boosted productivity, as staff tend to be more focused on the issues at hand."

"We also use the technology directly with patients to carry out assessments. We have a crisis team at one of community sites, and part of their job is to assess whether patients are indeed stable enough to leave the ward. Staff judge whether individual patients are stable enough to use VC for communication with the crisis team on the ward," she said.

Angus Gartshore, service manager Bexley Adult Acute Services, and a keen user of VC explained "We use video conferencing for our bed management meetings involving staff from several teams on both sites. Communication has vastly improved, saving a huge amount of time and making us more efficient."

The Trust has worked hard to ensure the new video communications technology was accepted and understood as much as possible by staff, in order for the technology eventually being able to play a bigger role clinically. According to De Weger, "it was important for us, bearing in mind the sensitivity of our work, that staff became comfortable with the VC technology and understood the benefits it could bring before rolling it out to include patient interaction."

"Video conferencing should not replace face-to-face contact with patients but we believe supplementing contact with VC is extremely beneficial. Increased communication may lead to a better discharge rate, and helps us to streamline resource efficiencies," said De Weger.

As a public organisation, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust has a government-mandated carbon reduction target to meet annually and LifeSize technology will help the Trust reach this target over the course of the next year or so through travel time reduction.

"Meeting time has reduced significantly as well," comments De Weger. "A meeting that would traditionally take two hours when conducted in-person can now last just half an hour. We believe this is because staff are much more focused during meetings via VC. Rather than having casual conversations about the weather and weekend, they just dive straight into the agenda and are very focused on the clients, actions and time restrictions. Video conferencing has definitely helped our staff become more focused during meetings. We hope that the increased level of inter-team communication has benefited the Trust's quality of care."

In an average month, the two LifeSize units are used by staff for approximately 80 hours. "For every meeting hosted via VC, we estimate we would make the below savings and expect biggest cost-savings to arise out of a reduced length of in-patient stay on the wards."

The Trust has calculated an approximate saving of £37.62 per meeting per person thanks to the LifeSize video conferencing units replacing travel costs and time. However, the Trust believes the biggest saving lies in the number of bed days saved. The VC system enables the community teams and the in-patient teams to communicate more frequently and thus reduce the number of days an in-patient stays on the ward. Management has also noted that meetings tend to take a third less time when conducted via VC than they do traditionally, which again has a positive impact on reducing staff time.



"Communication has vastly improved, saving a huge amount of time and making us more efficient."

— ANGUS GARTSHORE, SERVICE MANAGER,
BEXLEY ADULT ACUTE SERVICES



Future

The Trust is increasing its use of video conferencing systems by extending the system to another 14 sites by next year. "We expect usage will increase once the other sites have come on board, taking into consideration staff supervision as another area to expand on" concluded De Weger.

Oxleas decision makers believe that LifeSize will play an increasingly important function both in making the Trust more resource efficient, but also clinically speaking.

"Ultimately, we are a people-centred organisation and patient quality of care is our top priority. LifeSize video communications will help us to continue to maintain the critical face-to-face interaction with patients that plays an integral role in their development."



LifeSize[®]
A division of Logitech

LifeSize Communications:
1601 S. Mopac Expressway
Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78746 USA
Phone: +1 512 347 9300
Fax: +1 512 347 9301
Email: info@lifesize.com
www.lifesize.com

EMEA:
LifeSize Europe, Middle East, Africa
Medienbrücke, Rosenheimerstr. 145d
81671 Munich, Germany
+49 89 207076 0 (Germany)
+00 8000 999 09 799 (Toll Free Europe)

APAC:
LifeSize Asia Pacific
Phone: +65 6303 8370