

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

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of Morecambe Bay
NHS Trust

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust uses Vocera communications system to support IT roll out as well as improve clinical care

At University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (UHMBT), staff use the Vocera® hands-free communication system to help manage the demands of major information technology roll-outs.

“Vocera allows floor walkers to instantly contact the control room if an issue arises and also enables the control room to broadcast issues out to the floor walkers with one single communication,” said Lee Coward, ICT Manager at UHMBT. “This greatly reduces the time between finding an issue and communicating a plan to users.”

In any major IT roll-out, the key is to keep in contact with the hundreds of users who are using the new system for the first time. This involves a team of floor walkers whose job is to visit all departments to listen to users’ concerns and help them.

Traditionally, this involved a series of calls using desk phones. This meant there was a delay between an issue being identified and it being notified to the rest of the team. Similarly, when a fix or workaround had been found, this needed to be communicated to the floor walker and users. A delay of even a few minutes meant a department’s efficiency could be hampered, causing frustration to both staff and patients.

Alex Johnston, Area Sales Manager for Vocera UK commented, “The main beneficiaries of the Vocera system are usually doctors and nurses who can contact each other instantly either by name or role. But it is often the IT team which first identifies the benefit of being able to work hands free using a wearable device. This means IT support can still work the mouse and keyboard while contacting the centre, moving from area to area as needed. It is typical of UHMBT’s creative style that it has used a clinical workflow solution in such an innovative manner.”

Communications Challenges

UHMBT serves approximately 101,477 patients a year at three flagship hospitals — Furness General Hospital in Barrow, the Royal Lancaster Infirmary and Westmorland General Hospital in Kendal — and two community hospitals — Queen Victoria Hospital in Morecambe and the Ulverston Community Health Centre. As one of the largest hospital systems in the area, spanning across more than 100 miles, communication is key to delivering the best patient care possible.

Prior to 2008, the hospital’s portering staff relied on telephones and two-way radios to deliver messages to each other, and the hospital had no electronic patient record system in place. UHMBT often has been quick to embrace new technology and decided to implement a state-of-the-art wireless communications system while at the same time rolling out the new Lorenzo electronic patient record system.

Embracing and Adopting New Technologies

Vocera, a Silicon Valley-based company, provides wireless communication badges designed to help healthcare staff communicate instantly at the point-of-care. The hospital’s decision to adopt the Vocera communications system was based off other hospital case studies and references which demonstrated how Vocera had streamlined communication and enhanced staff workflow and patient care. In 2008, the Vocera system went live with all porters, theatre staff and the Lorenzo deployment and floor walker team. Team members wear the Vocera communication badge on a lanyard around their necks to communicate hands free from anywhere at any time, so they can move throughout the hospital and still keep in touch.

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Lee Coward
ICT Manager
UHMBT
www.uhmb.nhs.uk



Communications Upgrade Improves Efficiencies

Today, more than 560 employees use the Vocera badge on a daily basis. The Vocera badge fulfills a key function in communication among staff and also helps streamline the implementation of IT systems. With the click of a button any portering staff member wearing the Vocera badge can communicate with another porter or their supervisor and even send a broadcast message to a group when needed.

For example, one can reach all members by saying, "broadcast to porter staff." Using pre-defined groups, one also can call several staff members, who might be in a room cleaning, all at one time by saying, "broadcast to room six." This reduces the ambient noise of indiscriminate overhead paging.

The Hospital Sterilisation and Disinfection Unit (HSDU) uses Vocera to help theatre staff instantly contact team members. Prior to Vocera, staff had to call the HSDU telephone to check status of equipment. The line would often be busy or unmanned. Using the Vocera badge, team members can get their inquiries addressed immediately without having to spend time physically tracking someone down. The system software directs the call to the appropriate available HSDU team member.

Vocera streamlines the process of securing any type of assistance. When a supervisor needs to call a porter, the badge connects them, eliminating the need to remember a phone number or search for an available phone. The porter can respond without interrupting their task at hand (for example, transporting a patient to another room) because of the badge's hands-free design. Before adopting Vocera, the porter physically walked to the nearest phone to return the supervisor's phone call.

Vocera eliminates numerous steps by facilitating instant communication with the right person anytime and anywhere.

Positive Staff Response

Since Vocera's deployment, the portering staff has adopted the new technology and is satisfied with how it is improving the efficiency of daily functions within the hospital. "I like how Vocera allows our portering team to do their job without having to stop what they're doing and return a call," said Sharon Granville, Hotel Services Manager at UHMBT, who oversees the portering staff. "With Vocera, there's really no interruption in my day, and I am able to instantly communicate with any staff member to help provide the best patient care."

UHMBT is considering how to use Vocera in other departments of the hospitals to promote efficiencies.



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