

# West Suffolk Hospitals NHS Trust Increases Helpdesk Efficiency with Supportworks from Hornbill

The West Suffolk Hospitals NHS Trust provides acute health services in West Suffolk. The Trust serves an area of approximately 600 square miles, covering a population of approximately 275,000.



The main hub for the Trust is the West Suffolk Hospital in Bury St Edmunds, with additional hospital and out-patient services available at a variety of locations throughout the region. The Trust employs around 3,000 people, made up of about 900 clerical/administrative/estates and 2,100 medical staff. With the NHS's initiative to ensure all employees have access to the internet and email, IT and desktop support for staff is vital to ensure the smooth running of the Trust.

In 2003, the Trust selected Hornbill's Supportworks for its expanding IT helpdesk operation. The Trust's old MS Access based application was no longer suitable for the purpose.

Since installing Supportworks the IT Department Support Team has expanded from 3 people to 7. Working practices have changed considerably and there is much more emphasis on keeping track of who is using what equipment and who has access to what systems, particularly important in a medical environment.

## Why Hornbill?

One of the main reasons for choosing Supportworks was its flexibility and the ability to customise it easily. Alan Burgess, IT Support Team Leader explains, "Supportworks is highly versatile and enables us to display information in a way that makes it easier for our users. Not only can we choose how the screens should look, incorporating Trust branding and using phraseology that we know, but we are also able to group information together, and link screens together in a series of workflows that supports our business processes.

"The application functionality in Supportworks is comprehensive, giving the Trust everything that we needed. In particular, we were keen to have integrated email capabilities and web technology so that we could give access to users and customers via the Trust intranet."

## A Choice of Customer Interfaces

Customers (ie. Trust staff) can choose how they prefer to contact the helpdesk. They can fill in a form from the intranet or send an email to request help, or if more urgent help is required they can phone the helpdesk directly. Customers can also use the intranet to check the progress of their call.

The helpdesk supports people using all systems from the patient administration system, to MS Office and other desktop applications. The helpdesk also looks after networking and hardware issues with printers, keyboards, mice and other peripherals. There are two levels of support. The first line support consists of taking the calls and sending someone to fix the problem. The second line is for more complicated issues where some investigation work is required.

During 2004 the number of calls logged by the helpdesk went from 900 in January to 1,200 by the end of the year, 75% of these calls are dealt with straight away, either on the phone or with the use of WinVNC to connect remotely to the PC to check the errors as they occur.

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## Business Benefits:

- Access to better information and application automation saves time and ensures work is allocated quickly. Agents are able to provide a faster more streamlined service.
- Increased functionality means that more information can be accessed making communications with customers quicker and easier.
- Automated email facilities make updating calls quicker and ensure customers are kept fully informed.
- Integration with other systems means databases can be synchronised ensuring integrity of data
- Centralised inboxes means that workloads can be monitored and work allocated to the right people at the right time.
- Web technology means that customers can request support in the way most convenient to them, via intranet, via email or via phone.
- Customers can track the progress of their calls via the intranet.

This increase in call rates has been as a result of new hardware that has been introduced to the Trust and due to increased numbers of staff.

### Automation is Key to Efficiency

The customisability and strong functionality of Supportworks has ensured that the Trust has got a helpdesk system that does everything it requires. However, the real productivity gains have been due to the impressive automation within the system.

Supportworks is able to automatically populate new customers from MS Active Directory or the NT Authentication database, which is used to store user details such as passwords, name, address, and telephone numbers on the network. This means that only one set of records needs to be updated and then all systems are synchronised automatically. Having just one input source saves time and cuts down on errors. As a call is received from a customer, Supportworks recognises the email address and automatically populates the call report with the customers details, again saving time.

Having built-in web browsing and email tools has proved even more useful than was first anticipated, Alan explains, "Automated emailing from within Supportworks is a valuable tool because it saves time in so many ways. When problems are resolved an email is sent to the customer to let them know, detailing what action has been taken. This is generated using a template, so there is no need to re-key the details. Also, the system has built-in intelligence, so we can hide some of the notes from the customer. For instance, if there has been a two way dialogue between members of the support team with suggestions as to how to resolve a problem, the customer does not need to read through all those notes, but just gets what is relevant, ie. details of the final resolution, what the problem was and how it was actioned."

The Trust uses a shared mailbox so all emails go to a central helpdesk mail box. All members of the team have access to this and as calls are dealt with they are automatically removed from the inbox and filed into the appropriate folder. It is also possible to set up different sub groups, so that each sub group only sees emails relevant to them. Call reference numbers on each email means that it is allocated to the correct call, and the record updated automatically. Again this saves valuable time.

### Next Steps

The Trust is planning to implement the latest version of Supportworks in the near future. This will enable the Trust to take advantage of several new features which include support for portable devices which will save time for mobile workers, innovative licensing for Messenger which will save money for users who access the system infrequently and Call Logging Scripting which will ensure that all basic information is recorded and will aid diagnostics.

### Business Benefits

When asked about how the Trust had benefited from the implementation of Supportworks Alan commented, "The whole workflow of the helpdesk is quicker and easier now because there is so much helpful automation within the system, and more information available. We have more detail about the users which has speeded diagnostics and general communications.

"We are now able to monitor calls better, we can see exactly who is handling which calls and when. Supportworks has enabled us to better utilise people's time because we can allocate calls quicker and to the right people, in the right team, at the right time. Reporting is more accurate, and every update on a call has an audit trail, with a user timeframe and a system timeframe. All calls can be traced from start to finish. Supportworks is a huge benefit, enabling us to provide a more efficient and comprehensive service to our customers, which ultimately will help the smoothly running of the Trust's patient care services."

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