

## Mental Health Trust weathers economic storm and delivers more to patients (2010)

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust attribute savings of £16million and a 97 per cent increase in the amount of clinical time spent with patients to their services redesign using continuous improvement techniques. This has also improved overall efficiency and elevated staff morale.

Process innovation made this possible - not a 'slash and burn' cost cutting approach. Internal pathways and processes were re-designed though applying Lean thinking, facilitated by Alturos Ltd, specialists in Lean continuous improvement for the healthcare sector.

The process of achieving these results has been a long and steady one, with the Trust now leading the field as one of the most progressive and adaptable NHS organisations in the country. Instigated and championed by Keith Spencer, the Director of Business Development at the Trust, this continuous improvement journey started in 2007.

"The work we started three years ago continues to evolve and bear fruit with the Trust reaping the rewards of Lean improvement and innovation," commented Keith Spencer.

The largest proportion of overall savings was reported in adult mental care. This is largely because it has the highest volume and also because it has multiple access points and multiple teams. The breakthrough thinking here was:



Active case load management – the number of active cases and the number of cases that could be discharged temporarily were determined. This helped reduce the work load on clinicians and increase their capacity for clinical time spent supporting service-users.

However there remained a concern, among both clinicians and service users, that discharging service-users, even temporarily, might cause further issues, such as service-users finding it difficult to get referred back into the system because of existing waiting times or that their condition could worsen if discharged early.

This concern was alleviated by providing service-users with a fast track re-access number. Additionally, actual waiting time was dramatically reduced as a result of reducing the active case load, thereby allowing the Trust to deal with even more cases.

Getting service-users to move (flow) through Pathways – through a deeper understanding of each step taken by service-users and measuring the time lapse between each, a system was designed to allow service- users to be assessed and treated at the optimum pace. This allowed all service users to move more quickly through the process (where appropriate for their particular mental health circumstances).

This in turn made it a more efficient process for both service users and carers and also creating additional capacity to deal with more service users.

The Trust also created and published a manual for referrers to the service. This illustrated the key steps of service-users and clinicians and enabled referrers to explain to service-users the journey ahead and ensure referrals were directed appropriately, at the right time, and that the response from the trust would be faster.

Create a 'role and purpose' for teams and for case load – Over time the system had developed complexity causing teams to overlap in their activity. This duplication was effectively taking capacity out of system. The redesigned process re-configured and distributed the service teams along a new high value-adding pathway to optimise service delivery and minimise duplication of effort and resource.

Establish resources required – Once the teams understood the steps in the process from a Lean perspective they were in a position to allocate the appropriate resource to each part of the service-user journey. This is known as balancing the system, to achieve even flow. This not only benefits existing service-users but also frees up capacity to benefit additional service-users that need to access the service.

Established demand rates and increase clinical time (obtained by working with PCTs) – assumptions were made about inappropriate referrals and this figure was subtracted from the total to arrive at realistic demand rates that would need to flow through the pathway. The service teams categorised their service-user group to understand how various conditions were represented in the overall service. This enabled them to construct a system to meet current demand and also build-in a measure to allow flexibility to meet future demand increases.



Alturos helped the Trust quantify the actual time clinical staff spent with service users. This revealed that in a typical week, clinicians spent only 28 per cent of their working time in direct contact with service-users. Under further investigation it was revealed that valuable clinical time was been consumed by paperwork, IT, administration, trying to make



- Managing the multiple agencies and stakeholders that refer into, and to which the mental health trust may need to subsequently discharge service users is usually a greater challenge;
- Mental health support is often community based. This means that implementing changes can present a series of further challenges for the teams. With locality teams this adds further challenges in terms of standardising services so that all service-users receive the same standard and consistency of service levels.

Despite these anomalies, Alturos has proven that lean can be successfully applied to mental health settings.

Tim Franklin, of Alturos said: “The process reflects the complexity of the environment and service-user needs. Attempting wholesale application of traditional lean concepts may yield limited success as implementing change in a fragmented community-based setting presents challenges. It is a long-haul and not a quick-fix approach that requires dedication from management and staff.

“For mental health trusts willing to accept these issues the tangible rewards are there for service-users, staff and the greater community of stakeholders.”

“The innovations undertaken by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation MH Trust are an outstanding example of how continuous improvement techniques can be successfully applied in a demanding environment.”