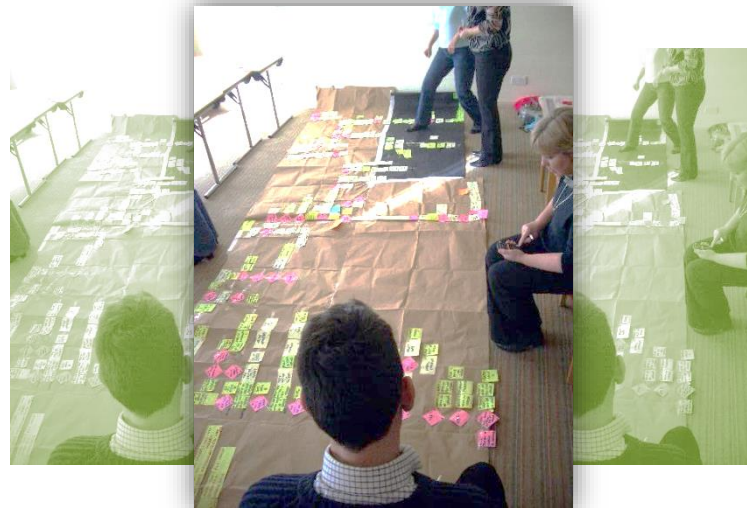


NHS Shared Services Provider Transforms Occupational Health Support Processes



The challenge for our NHS client, a shared services provider based in East Anglia, was to become more competitive. In achieving this it needed to streamline a number of processes. And in turn deliver a faster, better quality of service to their clients.

Like so many organisations, their processes for one of their key client activities (an occupational health service) had gradually grown in complexity over the years. So it was time to assess the current value stream; identify the wasteful activities and then redesign new processes.

This all commenced in January 2008 with a selected group of staff undertaking an intensive development programme with part of the Alturos team. This training prepared the team for the Value Stream Investigation and the subsequent projects for implementation.

The Value Stream Investigation then followed; facilitated by Tim Franklin. The primary focus for the change, designed by the team, was the administration processes, clinical areas, stock areas and physical workflow.

Then Alturos associate, Mark Knowlton, took over for the Rapid Improvement Activities of implementation and subsequent project management support.

Mark observes, 'The Change Agents and their colleagues worked very hard in the run-up and preparation for the Rapid Improvement Activities. This was their project; they owned it and they were determined to make it work. They held regular Continuous Improvement meetings in the month before implementation. The status of preparation was checked against plan and any issues were resolved.

In the drive for efficiency the team first targeted excess paperwork and also creating a logical workflow. This initially involved sorting and transferring records to a nearby archive area. And so 200 boxes later – or the contents of 12 large storage cabinets containing 10,000 files – and this task was achieved.

Mark picks up the story again, 'The physical work-place re-design and transfer of the files was no mean feat; but that was just the start. With the physical barriers removed the teams now report a distinct improvement in working relations and communications. With growing confidence the team moved onto other improvements. The physical workflow was matched with new electronic systems which eliminated the previous delays of information exchange.

The team then turned their attention to other critical areas. Clinical stores, clinical test equipment and clinician rooms all received '5S' treatment. Audit systems, Standard Operating Procedures and visual management for performance were then added to ensure the changes were sustained.

The results are summed up by a departmental manager, 'Since January we have achieved far more than I imagined: we have a 20% improvement in space use, better flow of the activities, no more searching for files and equipment...and all this means a huge benefit for our clients. In the pre-employment pathway we have now achieved 100% performance and in the management referrals activity we are at 99%. A fantastic achievement by the team...'

In a closing comment Tim Franklin notes, 'This is a powerful example of what can be achieved by a motivated team, backed with management support, who have discovered new skills in change'