



Flash of brilliance

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Service: East Kent Referral Unit



Kent Community Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Aim: What were you trying to achieve?

The aim of this project was to make urgent referral handovers a faster and more efficient process, from the Local Referral Unit (LRU) team, to the clinical teams. Telephone calls were being used for handovers. The clinical teams reported problems such as being out of mobile signal and trying to call to confirm receipt and being held in a telephone queue for a long period of time. In addition to these issues for clinical colleagues, when needing to carry out investigations, it could be time consuming for the LRU to locate a call. Patient experience would be improved if urgent referrals were relayed to the clinical teams in a more timely and effective way.

Change ideas: What changes did you make?

We instigated a pilot of moving our urgent referral handovers to Microsoft (MS) Teams, after gaining assurance from Director of Information Technology (IT) regarding security of information. Groups have been set up on MS Teams for each area and/or service. All the relevant staff members have been added from the LRU and the clinical teams. The LRU staff add a message with the urgent referral patient details and referral information. The clinical team member triaging then acknowledges that they have seen the message and actioned the referral process. There is a clear audit trail.

Measures/results: What was the impact of the changes?

Time has been saved due to not having to escalate the urgency of the referral when clinical teams cannot be contacted quickly by telephone.

The results of the project are that faster hand over times now occur and this should impact patient experience, by delivering care more rapidly within the community.



Lessons learned and what's next?

It was important to run a pilot trial to make sure the system was going to work. There was good feedback from LRU and clinical colleagues as a result of the pilot. Doing small tests of change and rolling this out to one team at a time was ideal, giving us time to make any changes to the process before the next area went live. This has given us the option to look at digital solutions in other processes and the confidence to make changes in how we do what we do as a team.



Thanet are the next and last area to join the project and were due to go live in June 2022.