



Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

THE CLIENT

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust's (HDFT) 0-19 Children's Services serves young people across North Yorkshire, Co. Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Middlesborough, Northumberland, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland and Wakefield.

Its extensive remit embraces Healthy Child Programmes, health visitor, paediatric outpatient, safeguarding, speech and language therapy services.

It also provides specialist children's services for young people with physical, communication, learning and developmental difficulties or disabilities which affect health, development and wellbeing. In addition HDFT is an acute hospital trust which further provides adult community services.



Business Needs

The service was operating multiple PBXs across its sites, with telephony being delivered through a mix of HDFT and local authority systems, with no single administrative oversight.

In addition, whilst clinical staff administrative employees had the capability to work from home using a VPN, this was not available to administrative staff.

"From our experience during COVID it became clear that there wasn't a flexible working option for administrative staff," comments Service Manager Anne-Marie Cook. "The need for this was also highlighted through our Inpulse staff surveys and listening sessions. We also wanted to offer staff flexibility in where they could be employed."



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Anne-Marie Cook, Service Manager, 0-19 Children's Services, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

The trust was keen to ensure remote working was accessible across the board, with the introduction of softphones. "As part of a task and finish group looking at admin staff working from home, the idea was brought forward to see how we could enable Single Point of Contact (SPOC) calls from home. Staff health and wellbeing is a priority for HDFT," comments Service Manager Anne-Marie Cook.

Further flexibility is offered via the 8x8 Work Mobile app which enables calls to be made via staff mobile phones.

The trust also wanted a single platform that was easy to administer and use, resilient and reliable. Anne-Marie stated, "We were keen to move to a cloud-based telephone solution to help further enhance overall functionality and reduce reliance on the hospital systems for 0-19 staff. However, we also didn't want to need a lot of training or suffer any interruption for service users."

With Avoira already providing services to the trust, we were a natural port of call for advice.



The Solution

Having assessed HDFT's needs Avoira Pre-Sales Technical Consultant Ryan McKenna recommended implementation of business telephony via 8x8's eXperience Communications Platform.

This incorporates a cloud-hosted PBX and apps which enable telephony both via softphone-enabled laptops and mobile phones. Offering award-winning call quality, the 8x8 platform is also backed by secure, fully-redundant data centres to ensure outstanding resilience. Both are of vital importance to a trust serving potentially vulnerable service users.

Recalling the selection process, Anne-Marie says: "Ryan and 8x8 met with us, talked to me about what was required from a clinical aspect and our IT team from a technical perspective.

"As I'm a nurse, without an IT background, Ryan broke the terminology down for me so I would be able to understand it. More importantly it enabled me to disseminate to staff and reduce any anxieties that come with any change.

"Four of us then trialled the system to see how simple it was to download, use the 8x8 app and a laptop as a softphone. I didn't need any training, it was that easy to use."

She adds that during the trial, the system was tested "every which way" and, having passed with flying colours, was then rolled out across the trust's regional locations to serve its 200 children's service staff.

The implementation was, she reports, impeccably smooth. "We worked with Avoira to set out a really clear plan, with a roll-out based upon priority locations."



Administrators were then given the 8x8 Work client and headsets so that they could familiarise themselves with its operation, before conducting a trial run and then going live.

The project ran so smoothly that transition from each PBX to 8x8 across eight sites resulted in zero downtime, with not a single call missed.

"The feedback we got was that this was the easiest change management process ever," reports Anne-Marie. "Everyone was really, really positive and that was due to Avoira's staff being really accessible.

"The whole process has been fantastic. Avoira's team have been amazing, so responsive to queries regardless of what they were."

For added peace of mind, we backed our solution with a highly-responsive technical support package. This is structured to offer best value to the trust by focusing solely on swiftly fixing any system faults should they arise, rather than also embracing day-to-day administration duties. We recommended this option because 8x8 is so easy to administer, meaning that day-to-day admin tasks such as adding users could be handled in-house. This saves both money and time.



The Benefits

With the system now implemented across the entire Children's Services, admin and IT staff are all benefiting from a single, highly functional platform that is both easy to use and administer.

"Staff say it's made a massive difference. They absolutely love it," reports Anne-Marie, pointing out how easy it is to do things like forward calls or schedule call diverts when people or teams are unavailable. "The more we use it, the more we'll find benefits," she adds.

The overview of operations that 8x8 offers has also been welcomed.

"It's really beneficial that we can look at the amount of calls being handled, see when our peak times are. It means we can work out how to most effectively manage staff workload," she observes.



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Anne-Marie Cook, Service Manager, 0-19 Children's Services, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

The ongoing support provided by Avoira is also much appreciated. "We have a weekly meeting with Avoira and if we need anything outside of that they're there, straight away."

Such has been the success of the implementation across children's services that HDFT has now commissioned Avoira to roll-out 8x8 telephony across its adult community services.

That's a significant extension that will embrace North Yorkshire Child Health Information Services (CHIS), dental and five safeguarding teams.

