



Lean Solutions for Healthcare

Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust had embarked upon a turnaround plan that was making significant progress. The Trust had reached the stage where they needed to test planned-in techniques that put their customers and staff at the centre of a programme of continuous improvement. A pilot scheme was launched to discover if Lean working would deliver that objective.

The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals 
NHS Trust

Atos 
Healthcare

“The Lean pilot scheme has demonstrated how significant results can be achieved by giving the Mid Yorks staff who deal most closely with patients the tools they need to deliver better healthcare. We are looking at productivity gains of up to 40%, with waiting times slashed. The people who were involved in the Lean pilot scheme are now working together with our Executive Team to realise those benefits.”

Toby Lewis, Operations Director, Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust

The challenge

Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust is responsible for hospitals in Wakefield, Pontefract and Dewsbury.

The Trust decided to pilot the Lean process in two areas of the Cataract Unit – Theatres and Outpatients. The purpose was to identify the benefits that Lean working offered along one patient pathway – throughput in the Cataract Unit – and demonstrate how the benefits could then be implemented in Theatres and Outpatients.

The solution

Working together we identified sponsors, a core team and additional contributors to the pilot schemes, in order to ensure all relevant parties were included. As stakeholder commitment was critical to success, the Ophthalmology team selected a consultant to represent the interests of all the consultants involved.

An important part of the solution process was to reach a common understanding of ‘Why Lean?’ For the Trust generally, and for the Cataract Unit in particular, Lean was deemed an appropriate assessment methodology because it specifically addresses key issues that already existed:

- > Low process definition/maturity
- > A requirement for early improvement gains
- > The need to engage and involve the people who use and own the process
- > Lack of accurate process and cost data
- > Different systems in each of the hospitals under Mid Yorks’ remit.

Two Lean phases

The first phase of the pilots was to conduct a Lean Value Stream Analysis for the end-to-end Cataract patient pathway. This provided the basis to undertake the second phase – one Lean Action Week in Theatres and one in Outpatients, during which we could follow and study the patient pathway in both areas to see how the Value Stream might be improved. A key factor in both weeks was to be able to report to the Trust’s Executive Sponsors so that results could be immediately integrated into working practices.

Five steps to Lean working

1. Define Customer Value – putting the patient first
2. Value Stream Analysis – know before you act
3. Flowing the Value – create a seamless Value Stream
4. Pulling the Value – put in place processes that pull through patient demand
5. Perfection – Value as the basis of continuous improvement.

The benefits

Significant early wins were achieved to the benefit of patients, staff and the Trust, showing improvements in productivity and sustainable changes in service, without any significant increase in capital expenditure.

Patient pathways were standardised and process steps reduced from 42 to 35 (at most). Waiting times for cataract operations were reduced from 25 weeks to a maximum of 10 – a 60% improvement.

Increased productivity options using current resources ranged from 16% to 40%. In Outpatients, the patient flow cycle was shortened and queues reduced. Waiting time can be halved if all the Lean event recommendations are implemented¹.

Just as importantly, there was very strong engagement from the whole of the Trust team, who demonstrated an immediate willingness to change how they worked – which meant that improvements could begin to accrue immediately.

Going forward

If you would like to know more about our capability in Lean solutions for healthcare, please call 020 7830 4931 or visit atoshealthcare.com

¹Pending implementation of a policy change