

North West Anglia Foundation Trust partners with Inhealthcare to launch a new acute virtual ward for patients to receive care safely at home.

The challenge

Health services in England have been tasked with treating more patients at home through virtual wards. North West Anglia Foundation Trust (NWAFT) wanted to adopt virtual wards to reduce avoidable admissions, support earlier discharge and ease pressures on inpatient beds, as well as improving overall patient experience.

Inhealthcare was selected as the digital health partner of choice.

The solution

Working with Inhealthcare, North West Anglia Foundation Trust has rolled out an acute virtual ward for patients with conditions including heart failure, infection, respiratory diseases and stroke. Up to 20 patients per day are choosing to join the North West Anglia Foundation Trust Acute service under the care of a consultant-led clinical team.

The service offers patients who are recovering but not yet fit for discharge the chance to return home with simple devices for measuring vital signs including blood pressure, temperature, blood oxygen level and weight.

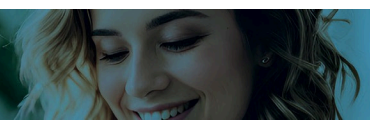
Patients supply readings up to three times per day through options such as a mobile app, text message or telephone landline and receive regular check-in calls from nurses. If any readings fall outside the expected range, the system automatically alerts clinicians to intervene with medical advice and treatment.

Evaluation

From December 2023 to June 2024, the service admitted 596 patients. Patients spend an average of four days on the virtual ward before being discharged or transferred to primary care.

Judged by patient feedback, the virtual ward has been a resounding success. The trust reported a remarkable 98 per cent score for patient satisfaction among those admitted to the virtual ward. The approach is gaining traction, with up to 20 patients per day choosing to join the virtual ward under the care of a consultant-led clinical team.

It's not just patients who are benefiting. The cumulative occupied bed days (as a proxy for bed days saved) is 2300, with a total saving of £810,000.



Evaluation snapshot over a 6 month period

596

patients admitted
onto virtual ward

2300

bed days saved

£810,000

cost savings

4

days spent on virtual ward, on average

98%

patient satisfaction rate



"We are proud to partner with North West Anglia Foundation Trust to pioneer the future of NHS care through remote monitoring.

Virtual wards help patients get home sooner, reduce delays in transfers of care, and free hospital beds for urgent cases."

Bryn Sage, CEO, Inhealthcare

Dr Deyo Okubadejo, Lead Clinician for Virtual Wards, North West Anglia Foundation Trust

"Patients love being at home instead of being in hospital and feel safe knowing a nurse regularly contacts them.

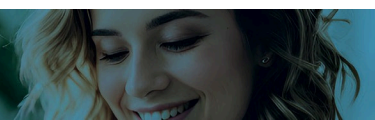
There are far more benefits for patients who are medically appropriate to be monitored and regularly contacted from the comfort of their home, rather than in a hospital bed. These include patients being less likely to acquire an infection or experience a decline in functionality if they are in their own home surroundings.

Our virtual ward is able to provide the safety and security of professional clinical care, provided within a familiar and safe setting for the patient. Virtual wards have massive potential as a fourth dimension of care with patients at home, alongside primary, secondary, and community care."



"I'm really impressed with Inhealthcare. I can go to the company and get a same day-response. The clinicians really rate the kit. We really enjoy working with the team."

Kim Ashall, Programme Lead for Virtual Ward for Cambridge & Peterborough ICB



Wearables

NWAFT is pioneering the use of wearable devices for patients admitted to its virtual ward. The wearable devices deployed use state-of-the-art sensors to continuously monitor vital signs and provide actionable insights on patient care. These Bluetooth-enabled devices seamlessly connect to the patient's smartphone which uses the Inhealthcare app to securely transmit readings to the trust's clinical team in real time.

This level of customisation and real-time monitoring enables the virtual ward team to closely track patients' conditions and respond swiftly to any changes or concerns.

The virtual ward team uses a large screen in their office to display a comprehensive dashboard of visualised patient data. This setup allows for constant monitoring and quick responses to any alerts, ensuring that patients receive the same level of attention and care they would in a traditional hospital setting.

The virtual ward has demonstrated significant potential in creating additional capacity and improving patient flow for the trust. This approach to healthcare delivery is particularly valuable in the context of increasing pressure on NHS resources and the growing demand for personalised, home-based care options.

Jennifer Donnelly, ward manager, North West Anglia Foundation Trust

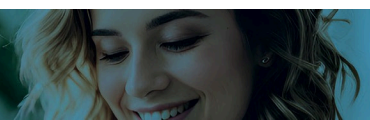
"Virtual wards are a relatively new concept for many hospitals. We initially started with individual devices like blood pressure cuffs and thermometers, but we quickly recognised the superior efficiency and effectiveness of integrated wearable devices.

If a patient reports not feeling well, we can immediately see their vital signs and adjust the monitoring regime if needed. We receive alerts if their readings go outside the set range, which we customise for each patient. This proactive approach allows us to intervene early if necessary, potentially preventing complications and improving outcomes.

We've received overwhelmingly good feedback from patients using the devices. They wear them comfortably on their chest, allowing us to monitor their NEWS2 observations in real time. This includes physiological measurements like respiration rate, oxygen saturation, systolic blood pressure, blood pressure, pulse rate, level of consciousness, and temperature. The system is very flexible – we can set the device to review every five seconds, five minutes or 15 minutes, depending on what's needed for each patient."

"While we don't need to monitor all patients constantly, as we wouldn't do that in a traditional hospital environment, our system gives patients the peace of mind that although they're not physically in hospital, they are being closely monitored by experienced healthcare professionals."

Hannah Woods, lead nurse for the virtual ward, North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust



Find out more
www.inhealthcare.co.uk

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