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**NHS Lanarkshire**

**eHealth Department – Above & Beyond**

With the onset of COVID-19 back in March 2020, when NHS Lanarkshire realised this was here for the foreseeable future, immense pressure was placed on all staff and departments to react positively to a pandemic that no-one knew how to fight or treat initially.

The eHealth Department staff were no different, from any other department. A huge effort was achieved by the staff with the rapid acceleration of products and services, e.g. MS Teams, an increase in remote access, the deployment of laptops to enable home working and additional telephony, whilst maintaining business as usual activities.

The MS Teams roll out was a great success across NHS Lanarkshire to clinical and non-clinical staff. One of the challenges the staff were up against was having to learn the package themselves in the first instance, then produce training materials for all NHSL wide users. eLearning videos were made available and also in some cases one to one training via Teams.

As expected this brought some teething issues, but before long everyone was up and working.

There were approximately 1,500 remote access users when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Lanarkshire. The further roll out of this service grew to 5,000+ users, both clinical and non-clinical staff over the first 2-3 weeks.

The eHealth staff commitment and flexibility to work above and beyond around the clock, creating shift patterns to enable 24/7 cover was phenomenal. The on call teams were doubled up out of hours to cope with demand on the service. Staff time was not at the request from managers, but offered freely by the staff themselves.

The deployment of laptop kit to enable staff to work from home was immense. Access to some applications was such that PC kit had to be shipped home to allow departments to access the relevant systems, to do their job. Mobile and soft phones were also in high demand with the Telecoms team ensuring appropriate telephony for staff working remotely.

Supply and demand for IT kit was massive and it was difficult to source some of the items from our national contracts. Delivery times were extended causing operational issues in some areas.

The technical teams had also to maintain a business as usual service, whilst coping with the demand on them. Annual leave was given up by staff to overcome the pressure on their colleagues. Some staff moved to other departments to support them.

As services were stepped down a mass cancellation exercise was undertaken. Patients’ appointments were cancelled due to the pandemic. 10,498 letters were printed and posted to patients.

When it was decided to go into recovery mode following wave one, it was necessary to step up services once it was agreed to do so. Clinic builds were undertaken and re-appointments made with patients in the specific specialties.

Looking to the future and what this will look like for eHealth and other departments with respect to long-term home working is currently being considered and under review.

Donald Wilson, Director of Information and Digital Technology praised the team saying

“During the covid-19 response, recovery and re-design phase I have been immensely proud of the manner in which the eHealth teams have responded to maintaining essential services whilst delivering a wide range of innovative digital solutions across Lanarkshire.  We have received extremely positive feedback from patients, their families and a wide range of staff which is testament to our team who have excelled in challenging circumstances”

OMcN – October 2020