



Delivering ePMA in a record 10 weeks:
**Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Health and Care NHS prioritise
rapid roll-out to safeguard
patient safety.**

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CASE STUDY

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS **prioritise rapid roll-out to safeguard patient safety.**

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (H&W) is the lead provider of mental health and learning disability services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire serving a population of more than 800,000 people. The trust works alongside community partners to support people's mental wellbeing, actively providing help to 10,000+ children and adults.

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Our support includes helping people who are experiencing stress, anxiety or depression. We provide a range of specialist services for people at home or on a ward; and a crisis team that provides around-the-clock support for people experiencing an escalation of their mental health needs or a crisis. We also provide learning disability services across both counties which support children and adults to increase or maintain levels of independence.

Lisa Yates

Deputy chief information officer (CIO), Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust



As a Global Digital Exemplar (GDE), H&W is committed to advancing the quality of its care through the world-class use of digital technologies. The procurement of an electronic prescribing medicines administration (ePMA) was one of the trust's core obligations as a GDE and marked a significant step forward in its digital transformation.



Better, safer prescription and medicines management

As a result of the services it provides, H&W had a unique set of requirements when it came to choosing its new ePMA solution. *“Our challenges are particularly around end-of-life care and specifics around prescriptions of antipsychotic medications,”* Lisa explains. *“These require a lot of rigour and so we were looking for an ePMA provider that could best support this.”*

The trust embarked on a procurement exercise to find a vendor that could meet its specific needs, finally deciding that Better Meds was the best fit for its requirements. Lisa explains: *“The functionality around syringe drivers and infusions for use with end-of-life and palliative care was significantly better than any of the other solutions that we tested. This along with Better’s use of openEHR technology, really provided us with a simpler, easier to use system”.*

Despite the ability of Better Meds to integrate within the trust's existing electronic patient record (EPR) system, for patient safety reasons the trust chose to introduce Better Meds as a standalone solution.

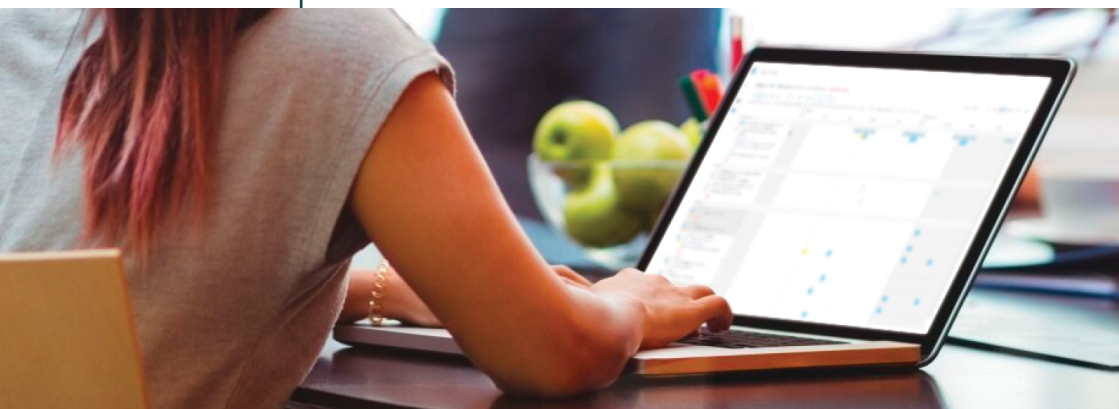
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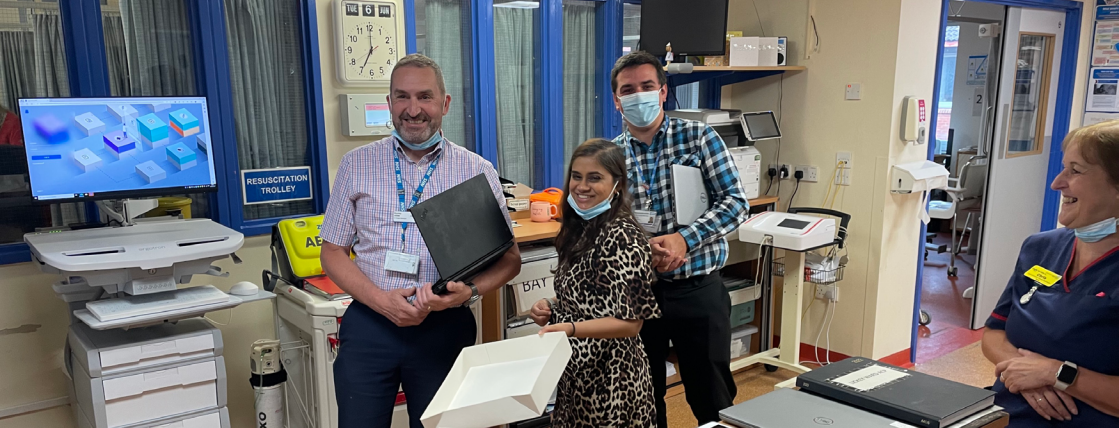
Embedding a solution within our existing EPR would have likely led to extended timescales and technical complexities. We were also aware of the risks of operating a dual system with some wards or units switching to Better Meds and others still on paper. We wanted the roll-out to progress as fast as possible to minimise the time we were operating a dual system to keep any risks to an absolute minimum.

Fazila Tagari

Project Manager, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

She adds: “Our primary objective for introducing Better Meds was to eliminate the risks associated with the use of paper, such as illegible handwriting or lost charts. We needed to prioritise achieving this in the safest possible way. We still have the option of integrating the ePMA to our EPR at a later stage.”





Planning for successful ePMA roll-out

The ePMA project initially kicked off in 2022, with various pre-planning activities such as the formation of the project team and scoping of the technical requirements. However, the trust experienced a major unrelated EPR and PAS outage leading to the project being halted completely until March 2023.

When they were in a position to proceed, the trust turned to the experience of the Better Meds team for advice on how they could meet their ambitious ePMA go-live target and achieve a rapid roll-out. “Due to the delay, we needed to re-look at the project needs and goals,” Fazila explains.

“The Better Meds team was fantastic at providing insight into what had worked in other similar trusts,” she reveals. “However, they also understood that although they had delivered Better Meds successfully in other trusts, we would still need appropriate time for decision-making. They supported us in leveraging insights from our neighbouring trusts already using Better Meds, such as Wye Valley NHS Trust.”



Assembling the perfect ePMA project team

One of the pivotal factors contributing to the project's success was achieving buy-in at all levels. *"We assembled a multi-disciplinary team which included our Medical Director, Clinical Director of Palliative Care, Chief Information Officer, Pharmacy Director, Nursing Director, IT Project Manager, and we sought input from the Sisters and Matrons from our community hospitals,"* says Fazila.

"Our staff could see that we were working collaboratively with the Better team which resulted in all staff having faith that the ePMA system would be configured effectively to meet the needs of all the clinical teams and the patients they care for."

This collaborative approach extended towards shared decision-making, with H&W and the Better Team working together to identify the best approach to achieving implementation within the desired timescales.

Fazila reveals: *"We set a target date for our pilot go-live in May and worked together to identify the most appropriate pilot ward; a small six-bed ward that provides specialised, end-of-life care. We opted for this specific ward as it allowed us to test some of the complex prescribing regimes and the software capabilities. We then moved to roll-out on a 28-bed rehabilitation ward, catering to a different set of requirements and providing further opportunities for testing."*



ePMA Training and Engagement

To ensure that staff was well-prepared for the transition to Better Meds, the project team placed an emphasis on training and staff engagement. A core team of super-users were trained, and online training was employed to reach all staff members, achieving a 90% completion rate. Moreover, face-to-face sessions were held to provide additional clarifications, enabling staff to adapt to the new system confidently.

Engagement sessions and “roadshows” were also held prior to each ward or unit implementation, allowing staff to raise queries and understand the impact of the roll-out. In addition, comprehensive mandatory online training was provided to all staff members, resulting in an impressive 90% completion rate and further face-to-face drop-in sessions were arranged to address any questions.



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We had immense support from the ePMA team with training before Better Meds was introduced. This meant we were familiar with the system and it was so easy when it went live. I would never want to go back to paper now.

laikynmawhun Diengdoh

Nurse, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

Fazila admitted that some staff initially felt apprehensive by the shift from paper-based processes to a digital ePMA system, however, they have since had fantastic feedback. *“Some nurses had been working using paper for 20-30 years, and so it was a big change to a new system. We found that once they’ve seen how Better Meds works, they are very happy with it.”*

A nurse from Cottage Ward at Princess of Wales Community Hospital was very apprehensive about using the system, as she had only ever worked with paper charts. As a part time member of staff, she was also concerned that she would get to grips with the system. *“I was really worried but, actually, it’s a lot better than the paper system,”* she reveals. *“I now recommend it to anybody.”*



Rapid ePMA roll-out

The combination of the successful training and the intuitiveness of Better Meds led to extremely high satisfaction rates following each roll-out and led to the trust deciding to expedite its implementation across the community hospitals.

“The extent of the faith and buy-in meant that we could bring forward the implementation roll-out timings for all our community hospital areas,” Fazila says.

Over 10 weeks, H&W successfully implemented Better Meds across 12 wards in community hospitals. They trained 24 super users who then trained 169 doctors, nurses and support staff within the trust.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

During each go-live we ensured there was a seamless transition by providing extended support hours, all-day calls over Teams and floor walking staff so there was always someone available to help if needed.

“We had direct access to the Better technical teams throughout the project, without the need for a helpdesk or third-party triage, which was hugely beneficial. The Better team’s commitment to transparency and clear communication regarding each project phase really set them apart.”



Time for continuous improvement

Despite the rapid roll-out, H&W and the Better team ensured that they prioritised testing of the system to ensure that it fully met the needs of the trust. Business analysts conducted workshops and use case analysis to ensure the final solution met the needs of the clinical teams.

Fazila reveals: *“During testing and workshop sessions we made an agreement on our configuration changes which really enhanced confidence in the system’s functionality. Some of the change requests were already part of the future roadmap which indicated a strong alignment with the system’s ongoing developments. Better Meds had a proactive approach to listening and understanding our issues. They were always eager to learn more about our challenges. This, to me, demonstrated their commitment to continuous improvement of the product in the future.”*

Better's UK Clinical Lead **Christine Wadsworth** also supported the trust with advice from a clinical safety perspective and supported them with the development of order sets for palliative care wards, where patients are often on complex prescribing regimes. Christine attended the trust 2.5 days over go-live and spent most of that time supporting clinical teams with advanced questions.

This specialist support was of particular benefit to **Ian Douglas**, H&W's Clinical Engagement Lead. Ian says:

"I knew that Christine would always be available if I had a detailed question about a clinical safety requirement. Christine, and the Better Team, took the time to understand our requirements and what we were trying to achieve at the trust. This was incredibly reassuring for us."



Key ePMA implementation success factors

Reflecting on the success of the implementation, Fazila says: *“The partnership with Better Meds was remarkable - the responsiveness of the Better Meds team and willingness to adapt to our feedback was exceptional. The positive feedback from the clinical staff was really encouraging, their willingness to embrace the new system and their appreciation for the support provided were clear indications of the successful implementation.”*

Following go-live there has been a profound impact on patient care and safety. The significant reduction in medication errors was a standout achievement. The system’s checks and balances alongside the real time decision support have greatly improved the accuracy and safety of prescribing medications which not only enhances patient outcomes but also instilled confidence in our clinical staff.



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Better Meds has empowered our clinical teams to deliver better, safer care which is one of the most rewarding aspects of this project.

Fazila Tagari

Project Manager, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

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