

Resource matching and e-referrals with care homes and hospices across Cumbria

Transferring patients from one kind of care to another is a complicated process. Failures in coordination between care providers can seriously affect patient safety. “Strata” is a software programme that allows care providers to see a full directory of services available in their region. Patients’ needs can then be matched to the most appropriate service available and an electronic referral (e-referral) can be made in a timely manner. This project supports the implementation of the Strata e-Referrals and Resource Matching system to hospices, specialist palliative care teams & jointly funded care beds across Cumbria.

Cumbria CCG is the first commissioner to introduce a proven software into the NHS as the common e-referral and resource matching system across all health and social care providers in Cumbria.

Outcomes

The Strata software massively improves the transition of patients between care providers allowing for safer & more efficient patient care.

Staff can see the real-time availability of resources and beds and pro-actively match these to patient needs.

Implementation has led to earlier discharges from hospital for patients, thereby reducing the risk of healthcare acquired infections, pressure ulcers, medication errors, malnutrition, loss of independence & psychological upset.

Record keeping is improved due to integrated digital care records that can be shared across care providers and the quality of patient data is improved.

Paper and fax costs are significantly reduced generating real cash savings.

Staff time can be re-directed to patient care rather than complex administrative processes.

Impact

- Safer and more efficient patient care transfer
- Reduced time in hospital

- Improved patient data and record keeping
- Reduction of staff administrative work
- Administrative and stationary cost savings



“Prior to the referral system we spent one morning a week going through errors and issues with referrals. Now issues are immediately highlighted and an audit trail ensures we can rectify these quickly & transparently.” Nick McCarthy, Team Manager, Cumbria Social Care

Background summary

Inadequate systems for the transition of patient care can compromise patient safety. Across Cumbria there are at least 231 000 transitions of care per annum. Common care transferral problems include: a reliance on outdated paper / Fax and telephone systems; Delayed transfers of care; High levels of re-admissions to hospital within 30 days and longer lengths of stay in hospital. Furthermore, hospitals can't see what community based services are available, what the capacity of these services are and whether any beds are available in hospices and care homes.

A number of National reports highlight the need for electronic referrals to be made between care providers to improve communication as well as the quality of patient data. This can be achieved using the "Strata" software programme. Strata is designed to enable health and social care providers to see the current available beds and places in hospices, care homes and specialist palliative care teams. Patients' needs are then matched to the most appropriate service available and electronic referrals are made. This enables prompt discharge from hospital to the most appropriate care setting for patients. The software is integrated with the patient's electronic record so patient data is up to date. As a result patient flow between acute and community services is greatly improved and so is communication between these services and teams. Health & social care providers will also be able to improve end of life care planning for their patients. Cumbria CCG is the first commissioner to introduce this proven software into the NHS. It will be used as the common e-referral and resource matching system across all health and social care providers in Cumbria.

Support provided by AHSN

- NENC AHSN has supported the roll-out of the Strata software to jointly funded intermediate care beds. This is now in place across Cumbria.
- Hospices are also scheduled to begin use of the software in September 2015 with a roll-out programme expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year. This will cover End of Life care services across Cumbria.
- NWC AHSN will support hospice services in Lancaster, which are accessed by Cumbrian patients.



Benefits

- To patients: Better, safer and more appropriate care, less time in hospital, more quality care time with care staff.
- To staff: Smoother and safer transfer processes, less administrative work, more time with patients, improved patient data quality.
- To Trusts and CCGs: Integrated patient records and improved patient data, more coordinated and accessible care across the region, savings from reduced hospital time and stationary/administration costs, improved patient and staff wellbeing.

Next steps and plans for the future

Details of all users, services and locations have been set up in the Strata system. Electronic forms have been designed and signed off by all senders and receivers of e-referrals involved in end of life care.

Since April 2015 the Strata system has "gone live" at 3 care homes for receiving e-referrals and at 4 services for sending e-referrals. Cumbria Adult Social care would like to extend the service into independent care homes. This is currently being discussed with the CCG and care homes.

Staff training commences from September 2015.

The AHSN agreed to extend the scope of the project so that from April 2015 it also included re-ablement beds.

Contact

Project Lead, John Roebuck:
John.Roebuck@CumbriaCCG.nhs.uk

