How mobility can improve frontline efficiency and deliver better care in the community

Power to the frontline

Why read this?
This whitepaper will help you evaluate ways to improve frontline care worker efficiency through mobile technology. We also explore the positive impact of technology on your organisation's working culture.

Vodafone
Power to you

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1 Introduction

Mobile technology is emerging as the key solution for healthcare organisations that want to move more services into the community.

Here at Vodafone we believe mobile technology is playing a big part in changing the way healthcare services are delivered. In this paper we examine how enabling nurses to remotely access patient records and back office systems promotes efficiency, supports better judgement and increases the quality of care the patient receives. It also reduces pressure on acute resources, by delivering more effective care in the home, as fewer people need to attend hospital appointments. Mobile technology supports this objective by making care workers more productive and free from the ties of paperwork.

In this whitepaper we will cover:

The technology that provides immediate benefits to the efficiency of frontline care workers

Results already achieved by the NHS and by organisations across the public sector

Impact on culture and how this can be managed

The mobile agenda, driven by government

Government backing for mobile technology in healthcare is gathering momentum. In 2012, the Prime Minister announced the launch of the Nursing Technology Fund to help nurses, midwives and health visitors in England make better use of digital technology in all care settings. The objective is to deliver safer and more efficient care directly in the home.

The government received a total of 226 applications, made by 139 Trusts. A second round of funding was also announced to focus on a range of mobile and digital solutions, to include:

- Mobile access to digital care records across the community
- Digital capture of clinical data at the point of care
- Digitally-enabled observations management
- Real-time digital nursing dashboards
- Smart workforce deployment

"It is about making life easier for staff – for example, a digital pen can improve record keeping and reduce paperwork, a tablet can mean a community nurse can work on the go without needing to make as many trips back to the office, which means more time spent with patients. Also, mobile IT devices that can be used at the bedside put valuable information at nurses' fingertips. This is ultimately about enabling nurses and midwives to improve the care they provide for patients." Beverly Bryant, Director of Strategic Systems and Technology for NHS England.

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2 Mobile technology boosting care workers' efficiency

With the right technology, care workers are able to provide more responsive care for patients.

In recent years, mobile technology has become a proven problem-solver for organisations right across the public sector and, with citizens' demands rising all the time, it helps to provide a more responsive service. By making processes more efficient, mobile technology can also help to mitigate the impact of budget cuts. There are many examples where this has happened: from police officers taking electronic witness statements, through to councils making waste collection more efficient with automated job scheduling. In healthcare, the productivity and efficiency issues that can be solved by mobile technology typically fall into three key categories, all of which prevent nurses seeing more patients and contribute to a poorer experience for patients.
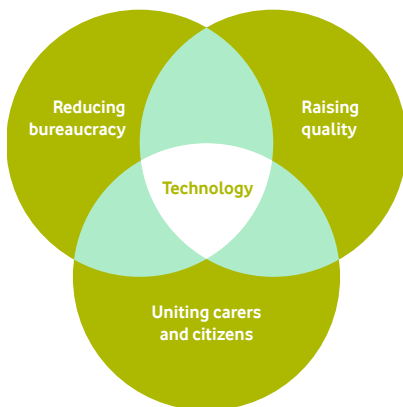
These are:

- Manual processes that are time consuming and prone to errors
- Time spent travelling back to a desktop to complete paperwork
- Lack of access to data that informs better and quicker clinical decisions

Today, healthcare organisations are starting to solve these issues with mobile applications and systems that focus on boosting both the quantity and quality of frontline care work. The following examples show how processes can be improved to deliver a wide range of benefits.

A Secure live access to patient records

With access to patient records on smartphones or tablets, care workers can radically improve both the speed and quality of the way they work. Staff can check previous notes, correspondence and also consult standards and regulations. They can also make faster decisions, and patients don't need to repeat their own medical history.

The benefits are numerous, including less time spent on administration, less travel back to the office to pick up records and a better experience for patients.

B Job scheduling

Mobile job scheduling means managers can send appointments as well as any special instructions or notifications to care workers' devices, wirelessly. Required job details, including medication history, can be made available to the carer on the mobile device. Meanwhile managers have a complete view of the appointment from creation through to allocation and completion. Carers can also update schedules as they are completed during or after the appointment.

The key benefit is that care workers are no longer required to call or visit an office to pick up their next appointment schedule. This increases their

Technology

Reducing bureaucracy

Raising quality

Uniting carers and citizens

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individual productivity, enabling them to spend more time with patients. Additionally, managers get a more strategic view of resources and how they can be deployed more efficiently.

C Paperless working and digital data capture

Replacing paperwork with digital forms means a carer's reporting and administration workload can also be made a lot lighter. All relevant forms can be pre-populated and completed either during or after appointments. There's no need to return to the office to submit forms or reports. Carers can also embrace mobile working further, by capturing other information digitally – for example, capturing images and attaching them to case records, or recording signatures.

The benefit once again, is that care workers reclaim time that can be spent seeing more patients where it's needed the most. Plus, data collected is available to other departments within minutes, reducing the chance of misdiagnosis occurring because records are waiting to be updated.

These solutions illustrate the potential of mobility to revolutionise both the efficiency and culture of community-based healthcare. In the following pages we examine the wider business benefits that can be achieved. We also look at how it will change your working culture and ensure that carers are comfortable with the new systems deployed.

According to recent research for the Royal College of Nursing, carried out in 2014 by the National Nursing Research Unit at King's College London, community nurses are so pressed for time that 75% leave home visits without having completed key tasks. In some cases, the nurses say they don't have time to provide the patient with a full explanation of their condition or treatment. A contributing factor is that only 37% of district nurses' time is spent on direct patient care. The majority of time is spent on travelling, administration, care planning and management.

The need for frontline efficiency: inefficient processes and admin overload are leading to poorer care in the community. The benefit once again, is that care workers reclaim time that can be spent seeing more patients where it's needed the most.

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Improvements to care workers' efficiency can also deliver wider benefits to the organisation overall.

Public sector organisations that adopt mobile technology for frontline workers typically achieve a wide range of benefits that have been proven to boost both efficiency and service. These include:

- Many hours recovered previously spent on paperwork
- Less time travelling and more time to spend caring for patients in the community
- Better access to and sharing of information, so carers can better react and respond to situations in the field
- More efficient job scheduling and deployment of resources
- Significant reduction in budget spent on desk space, travel and physical storage

This should be the baseline expectation. As a number of emerging case studies demonstrate, healthcare and other public sector organisations are also using mobile working to plan their resourcing more strategically.

Blackpool NHS: their story

Blackpool NHS, for example, has enabled community nurses with tablet devices to achieve a number of strategic business objectives. On a solution level, carers access and update records securely in the patient's home. As a result Blackpool's care workers now save up to an hour a day resulting in up to ten more patient visits per week. But the real impact spreads much further than that. Pressure on acute resources has been reduced considerably, with more time dedicated to planning, analysis and most importantly the care of patients.

According to Paul Morris, Assistant Head of Informatics and Performance at Blackpool NHS, this is a significant and positive shift.

Declining staff numbers highlights the need for greater efficiency

> " This solution supports clinicians in helping to deflect demand on acute care. Treatment in the community helps keep people out of hospital. We're now better at capacity planning – and having more time to spend with patients means we're better able to spot potential health problems during community visits and provide better advice, which leads to greater prevention "

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In another example, NHS Western Isles is using digital pen technology that converts a nurse's handwriting into electronic data that can be immediately transmitted to the NHS Western Isles central server. The innovation has achieved remarkable results. Community based staff are able to make more than 5,000 more visits to patients each year. But just as importantly, the system is accelerating the sharing of patient information with other departments, improving the speed of follow up actions. Ultimately, this improves the quality of overall planning of care and also reduces unnecessary hospital admissions.

Other examples across the public sector demonstrate wider business benefits that can be easily transferred to healthcare.

Fife Council, for example, has rolled out a job scheduling mobile application to its social housing repairs unit, giving it the ability to send teams directly to their next job. This provides a better and more efficient service for residents, but there are also other strategic benefits. Fife now uses live data gathered by mobile devices to identify equipment that is most frequently used. This information guides planning decisions and achieves substantial cost savings – benefits that are of major interest to healthcare decision makers.

Hampshire Constabulary has pioneered the UK's first Electronic Witness Statement application to help officers spend more time on the beat and less time in the office. Just as importantly, Hampshire is now also making the most of its officers' greater mobility and planning the future more strategically. The constabulary is looking at how it can rationalise its property estate, and is also exploring opportunities to share services, information and even offices with other public services.

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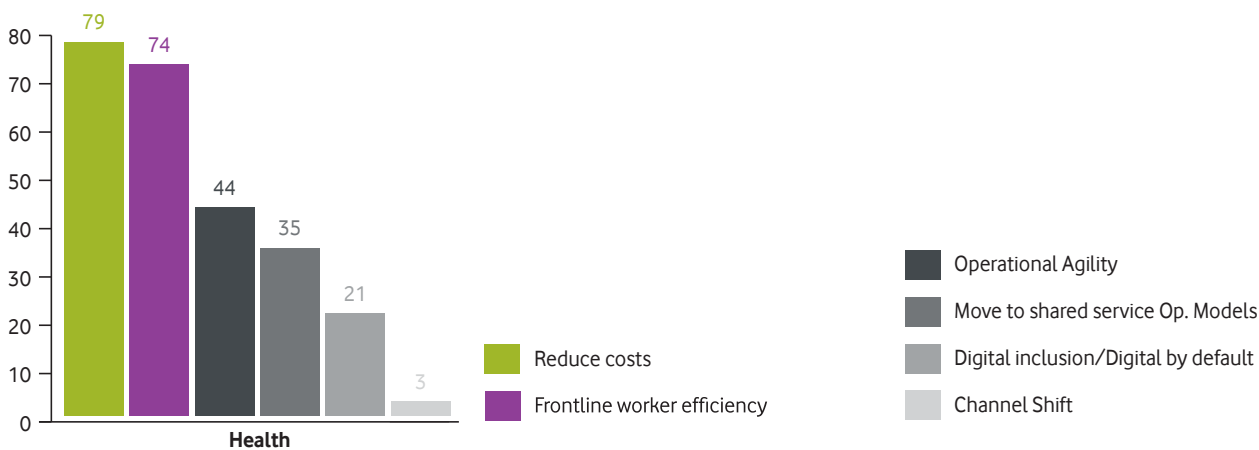**4** Changing your culture

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For anyone working in healthcare, these and many other examples from across the public sector, show that business cases for mobility are now hardening into tried and tested business models with proven operational and strategic benefits. More than this, they demonstrate that we are moving towards a culture in UK public service where mobility will soon become the accepted norm for both staff and service users alike.

With community-based staff numbers declining, the need to extract more productivity from frontline care workers is becoming greater than ever. Official figures show that the numbers of those working in the NHS in England have almost halved from 12,620 in 2003 to 6,656 last year, a 47% drop in a decade. Staff shortages will worsen in the next few years as many reach retirement. Currently around 35% of district nurses are over 50.

Kable research: reducing costs is also a top priority for healthcare

New research from Kable confirms that reducing costs while also improving frontline efficiency is a top priority for healthcare. The research found that pricing and value for money are valued most. Enabling flexible working through mobile technology also scored very highly. The report concludes that councils adopting mobile technology need to make sure that cost reduction and productivity aims go hand in hand.

Top priorities for healthcare

Legend:
- Reduce costs
- Frontline worker efficiency
- Operational Agility
- Move to shared service Op. Models
- Digital inclusion/Digital by default
- Channel Shift

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Workforce mobilisation has a positive impact on culture.

Changing the way community based carers work doesn't just have an impact on service delivery, it also brings about a significant culture change.

As illustrated below, the benefits of change have the potential to bring about a range of positive business outcomes for Trusts, boosting both efficiency and quality of service.

How mobility encourages new and more agile ways of working

Old ways of working
- Carers tethered to desks and not visiting patients
- Paper reporting resulting in higher error margins
- Decisions pending face-to-face meetings
- Email
- Travelling to pick up and enter information
- Longer lead times to reach diagnosis and secure treatment

New ways of working
- Real time information always updated
- Carers use mobility solutions to provide better quality of care
- Appointments scheduled dynamically

Benefits
- Higher productivity
- Faster diagnosis and treatments
- Reduction in office space and desktop maintenance costs
- Time and CO_2 savings due to reduced travel
- Potential to reduce property estate
- Faster decisions via real time collaboration
- Care workers free to complete more patient visits

Time spent by district nurses on patient's care is only

37%

As covered on page 5 of this whitepaper

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Managing the change

The most effective way to manage change is to conduct an in-depth study of frontline worker needs. This must look at how carers act on a day-to-day basis and how behaviours have to change to accommodate new working practices. This will help establish a new culture that gets the most out of new technology and applications.

Top three recommendations for managing culture change:

1 **Set objectives:** always ask yourself what you are trying to achieve. Is it cost reduction or better service? It could be both, but by setting priorities early on and communicating them widely there's a much greater chance of success.

2 **Profile individuals' roles:** take the time to profile your community workers, ideally through detailed 'day in the life' style studies. This is the ideal way to get the information that's needed to make decisions based on what is actually required by individuals from their working environment. It also helps to align new work styles to the wider objectives of the organisation.

3 **Engage with care workers as early as you can:** ensure carers are engaged as early as possible by making the organisation's objectives clear from the outset. That means articulating three important things:

- How it will help carers provide better service to patients in the community
- How more mobile working will benefit the organisation as a whole
- How it will benefit them as individuals

With this approach, it is possible to achieve a community-based workforce that is fully engaged with new technology and where individuals can see what's in it for both them and their patients. Ready, in fact, to deliver all the benefits that improved frontline efficiency can offer.

"Using this kind of modern technology is part of the innovative and new ways of working we need to embrace in tackling modern health challenges."

Jane Cummings, Chief Nursing Officer for NHS England

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The UK healthcare system is tackling the biggest set of challenges it has ever faced.

Demand is increasing because of an ageing population and through a growing number of people with lifestyle-related conditions. The result is a significant pressure on hospital beds.

In response, healthcare organisations are changing the way they work to provide more responsive and flexible care for patients in the community.

This is work to be proud of – but there's still much to do. The challenge now is to find better and more productive ways of working on the frontline of care and in a way that delivers better patient outcomes.

At Vodafone we help healthcare organisations achieve their objectives with a specialised solution for improving frontline care worker efficiency. Total Workforce Mobility for Healthcare is built around a highly robust toolkit of technologies, including:

Automatic record syncing

Digital writing

Job scheduling

All elements have been carefully chosen and developed so you can deliver a more efficient service, plus better care for patients. These include:

- Records that sync with carers' mobile devices in near real-time, providing the information they need at point of care
- Digital data capture with no need for double entry
- Offline working so care workers don't need a connection to get access to records
- Automated job scheduling, so carers can pick up daily schedules and tasks without travelling to and from the office
- Secure devices and secure data, providing peace of mind for patients and carers

Benefits at a glance:
Key benefits of workforce mobilisation for healthcare services:

More time with patients – less time chasing and filing reports

Lower costs – eliminate manual processes and cut travel costs

Quicker decision making – put information in the hands of frontline workers where needed most

We are commited to giving you insights and useful tips to help you plan your organisation's future direction and we hope you've found this whitepaper interesting.

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Find out more

For a free evaluation on your workforce efficiency visit:
vodafone.co.uk/twm

See how we can help you improve frontline efficiency
by contacting us on **0845 241 9557**

(standard call charges apply)