

Ambulance service reduces management time by 1,000 hours a week with mobile working

Fast facts

Customer

East Midlands Ambulance Service

Web site

emas.nhs.uk

Number of employees

3,200+

Country or region

United Kingdom

Industry

Public Sector – Health

Customer profile

East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) NHS Trust provides emergency and urgent care, along with patient transport services, for Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland.

Challenge

EMAS wanted more employees to complete administration tasks from their vehicles, so they could spend longer in the field responding to emergencies. This was a challenge because there were only limited resources for the BlackBerry devices that employees needed to make it possible.

Solution

The service gave more employees the ability to work from their vehicles by using BlackBerry from Vodafone. At the same time, it ensured that the solution wasn't a drain on IT resources by using Vodafone to manage the infrastructure.

Benefits

- Increased productivity
- Lower costs
- Better patient care
- Greater IT efficiency
- Reduced carbon emissions

East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) NHS Trust provides emergency services to around 4.6 million people. In recent years, personnel have increased the amount of time they spend on the road saving lives, thanks to mobile technology. At one point, with pressure on budgets, it was going to be hard for EMAS to develop its mobile strategy and keep employees on the road for longer. That situation has now changed and employees are working more effectively from their vehicles with the support of Vodafone, whose Flexwork tariff has reduced monthly bills by 60 per cent in some cases.



"Personnel find the service from Vodafone very reliable and if they have any questions or need to replace a handset they get a quick response. We use the time that we save to look at other mobile solutions to deploy across all our vehicles."

Andy Evans,
Head of ICT, East Midlands
Ambulance Service

Challenge

EMAS NHS Trust represents the modern face of healthcare in the United Kingdom. The services that it provides and the demands on its personnel are greater than ever before and look set to continue growing. The days when paramedics simply ferried individuals to hospital are long gone, and nowadays employees are highly skilled in providing treatment at the scene or in people's homes.

With the service's 6,500 square miles to cover and a resident population of 4.6 million, the only way that it can meet its commitments is by maximising the productivity of staff and maintaining a tight rein on costs. The cornerstone of its policy for achieving these goals is to keep staff out on the road where they can save lives. Andy Evans, Head of ICT at East Midlands Ambulance Service, says: "Even though our top priority is to provide medical care, there is still an element of administration to our jobs. By enabling staff to do that work out in the field using BlackBerry® devices, we can give more effective care to a greater number of people."

However, EMAS faced the dilemma of how to give more people access without going over budget. "Here was a great opportunity for us to save more lives by team leaders managing ambulance resources in real-time. But how were we going to afford the devices that they needed and the IT support on which this kind of system depends?" says Andy.

Solution

EMAS saw that it could overcome this challenge when it began talking to Vodafone. Comments Andy: "We now had the chance to deliver better services by enabling a greater number of people to work effectively from their vehicles using BlackBerry devices."

Today, around 200 more employees such as Operational Support Managers work closely with colleagues while in the field using email or the phone on tasks such as scheduling paramedics. Plus, they can dynamically manage in-field assets using information from a computer aided dispatch (CAD) system.

A solution such as this has the potential to be draining on the ICT team's resources. But this isn't the case for EMAS because it's given Vodafone the role of managing the BlackBerry® estate. Besides being more cost-effective, outsourcing management gives Andy and his colleagues' time to develop other ICT solutions. Says Andy: "Personnel find the service from Vodafone very reliable and if they have any questions or need to replace a handset they get a quick response. We use the time that we save to look at other mobile solutions to deploy across all our vehicles."

The key thing for EMAS is that employees are more productive and the organisation saves money. That's because the vast majority of BlackBerry users are on the Flexwork tariff, which bundles voice, email and data into a predictable, monthly price. "Flexwork offered a great way to bring down our costs and enable us to plan effectively for our BlackBerry estate in the future," says Andy.

"In some cases, Flexwork has reduced monthly bills by 60 per cent. This gives us greater capacity to develop our mobile working strategy and continue to increase the effectiveness of our personnel."

Andy Evans,
Head of ICT, East Midlands
Ambulance Service

Benefits

EMAS can cope with significantly increased workloads during busy times thanks to personnel working more productively on the road. Says Andy: "During holiday periods, the number of calls can jump by 25 per cent. But employees can better handle this increase because they work more effectively using their BlackBerry devices." Also, there's no longer the risk that rolling out additional devices to employees will be expensive and time consuming.

Increased productivity

The organisation's 1,000 BlackBerry users have cut management time by around 1,000 hours a week across EMAS because they can complete more tasks on the move. "Paramedics, for example, can use this time to deliver care to more patients so you can see how crucial the technology is for what we do," says Andy. "Vodafone enables us to make sure personnel are increasingly productive."

Lower costs

The Flexwork tariff has really paid off for EMAS. "In some cases, Flexwork has reduced monthly bills by 60 per cent," says Andy. "This gives us greater capacity to develop our mobile working strategy and continue to increase the effectiveness of our personnel."

Better patient care

Patients – not least those who use the non-emergency patient transport services – are benefitting in big ways thanks to increased efficiency. Says Andy: "When we had a paper-based system for administering non-emergency transport, we had a data collection form completion rate of 25 per cent. But with our CAD system and the BlackBerry devices from Vodafone, this figure is around 80 per cent."

Greater IT efficiency

Andy likes the fact he can work on other ICT solutions safe in the knowledge that Vodafone is taking care of the BlackBerry estate. "The benefit of having Vodafone look after things is that I don't lose a member of my team for a day while they try to rectify a BlackBerry issue in one of our locations. Vodafone does all that work and my colleagues can focus on higher-value tasks," says Andy.

Reduced carbon emissions

EMAS plans to cut carbon emissions from road vehicles by at least 15 per cent as staff complete more work from their vehicles instead of travelling back to their bases. "We are giving employees the mobile working tools they need to help us meet the carbon reduction targets set for the entire NHS," says Andy.

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