

case study:

savings released by the implementation of
skillstream at Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust

skillstream
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Huge savings released by the implementation of skillstream at Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust

Challenge

Picture the frustration in having to wait days [at best] for information on agency spend, only to read from its author that it needs to be caveated with “to the best of our knowledge, this reflects the position last month”. This is the reality across the NHS and was the case at Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust before the implementation of Skillstream. Months would pass by as agency invoices literally travelled around the hospital (with supporting timesheet data attached by staple) finding the correct ward or office, and hirer of the agency’s resource to validate the submitted invoice is legitimate. *Hmmm, what were those rates I negotiated, and are those the days and hours worked by Janetoh and I remember those nice people at the agency telling me that if I got the invoice turned round quickly there’d be a prompt payment discount or something like that...when did this invoice come in...6 weeks ago?*

The Royal Free represent a fraction of the £1.4bn spent on agency staff across the NHS (you know, that white elephant in the corner of the room that we don’t like to mention), and with all good intentions, and *Agency Reduction Programmes* a plenty, without the proper tool in place the complexity and variables of buying agency resource across the Trust (estimated at £18m) just swamped the HR and Finance teams finest Excel experts, and reporting differed month by month.

Solution

Jasvier Boyal, Director of Workforce at Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust, decided to tackle the white elephant. Whilst acknowledging that zero spend on agency resource was the NHS aspirational target, to be able to manage effectively whatever the Trust do spend with the agencies was a sensible option (and the contingent worker (could be nurse, locum, anaesthetist, hall porter...) is often a pivotal cog within the smooth operating of a ward or department. Jasvier was initially introduced to Skillstream as the contingent recruitment technology component of the (now obsolete) NHSE membership benefits. Despite the model not coming to fruition, Jasvier forged ahead by implementing what he considered to be the jewel in the membership’s crown.

Skillstream is a web based recruitment system that connects all the Trusts’ potential hirers of agency staff with the preferred list of approved government framework agencies. The system manages the whole recruitment process from shift creation, compliance and vetting through to e-timesheeting of all agency workers. Skillstream then automatically generates the agency’s invoice and presents it to the Trust’s Finance department, and sitting above the entire process is a suite of management reports that provide real time visibility of headcount, spend including overtime, framework deviation, ESR, compliance with AWR etc etc.

Skillstream is interfaced to the Royal Free’s bank management system, which ensures that HR policy is adhered to; before agency staff are requisitioned the bank can be explored for availability before seamlessly converting the requirement to fill through external agencies. The interface ensures Royal Free hiring managers have no double keying.

Results

Skillstream has enabled Royal Free to reduce their agency spend by **£2million since implementation** 8 months ago (paying for itself 4 times over within the first month alone).

The Royal Free have achieved additional savings (outside of Skillstream) by not using agencies when Bank staff are matched to a requirement, but the savings attributable to Skillstream have been achieved from a combination of the following:

real-time visibility and compliance – The Trust now only buy agency supplied resources in line with government framework rates and control the amount of agency spend in line with HR and Finance policy from one system [no rogue spend, as it is all approved and auditable]. Control and compliant processes have helped the Trust achieve QIPP initiatives, and enjoy reduced insurance premiums due to improved CQC audit [all agency supplied resources conform to security and skills requirements]. By ensuring all roles are approved and valid from the outset has reduced cancellation penalties being invoiced to the Trust almost entirely ie no more confusion about why temps have been sent to the hospital without proper authority. The controls and reporting provided by the system ensures the Royal Free will be conforming to AWR requirements from the outset.

online timesheeting and invoicing – Every agency worker is provided with a unique login to skillstream's electronic timesheet specific to their recruited role, which automatically calculates the correct overtime and shift allowances in accordance with the framework and agency specific terms. This provides the line manager and subsequent Accounts Payable team with total confidence that there has been no subjective interpretation of rates. As a result invoice queries have reduced by 95% and average invoice processing reduced from 2.5 months down to 2 days [!] enabling the Royal Free to benefit from prompt payment discounting offered within the framework.

improved agency performance - There are wins on both sides of the supply chain; and because the system provides a level playing field for the consolidated preferred suppliers (reduced from 180 down to a manageable list of 40) the Royal Free receive far greater levels of service. There has been a significant increase in quality candidates (providing choice) in faster timeframes resulting in better patient care. Skillstream also provides the Royal Free with the ability to review previous top performing resources and flags those candidates that have “been before” with the necessary onboarding training and security clearance removing any costly and time-wasting repeat exercise. A better relationship exists between the Trust and the preferred supplier list, with everyone having a better understanding of what is expected. Paperwork and previous administrative effort has been reduced allowing Trust resources to be redeployed into value adding activities.

In summary, all information relating to the engagement of agency resource is available from one system, real-time, by any member of the process.

For more information please contact a member of the Sales Team on 0207 401 9090 or email with your enquiry to sales@skillstream.co.uk