

Case Study

Dorset Software: driving research and innovation across industry

Rotherham Doncaster & South Humber NHS Foundation Trust



Based in Doncaster in the United Kingdom, the Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust employs 4,200 people and provides a range of mental health services to a population of 850,000.

Solution Snapshot

The trust chose hosted Microsoft Lync Server 2010 unified communications technology for its e-clinics service - the first National Health Service (NHS)-built system of its kind in the United Kingdom.

Key Benefits

- Innovative online counselling puts patients first
- Patients respond well to pilot project
- Other organisations show keen interest in collaboration
- Hosted e-clinics solution offers value for money
- Supports the NHS constitution's patient right to choose
- Around 50 per cent of patients would be appropriate to use the system

"Our e-clinics project with Microsoft Lync Server 2010 is helping our trust lead the way in meeting a nationwide objective set by the government."

Niall Finn, Information Systems Development Manager, RDaSH

The Challenge

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust in the United Kingdom provides a range of mental health, learning disability, substance misuse, and community healthcare services across Rotherham, Doncaster, north-east Lincolnshire, and Manchester.

With a large geographical area of northern England to cover, the trust wanted to offer its patients the opportunity to receive mental health counselling in the privacy and comfort of their own homes or work places. It envisaged up to 10,000 patients using browsers anytime, anywhere to book online appointments with a nominated counsellor, then choosing communications channels including instant messaging, and audio and videoconferencing.

The Solution

The trust chose Microsoft Lync Server 2010 to interface with its website and e-clinics system, having seen a demonstration of the technology. This showed the trust that Lync Server 2010 could operate successfully with any browser and also on mobile devices.

Simone Grant-Jones, Project Manager, Dorset Software, says: "We've designed the solution so that patients can access the e-clinics service from any browser, whether using Windows or other operating systems. Lync Server 2010 is highly secure and the customisation work we've done makes the platform easy to use for both counsellors and patients."

The Benefits

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust is piloting the first NHS-built adult mental health counselling service in the U.K. using Lync Server 2010 unified communications. The service supports the NHS constitution's patient right to choose, giving them the option of having therapy in their own homes or workplaces rather than having to travel to a clinic. The trust is already experiencing interest from patients for the new service and hopes to share its innovative solution with other organisations.

The Microsoft unified communications technology customised by Dorset Software fulfils a core objective of the NHS - patient-centric care.



DORSET SOFTWARE

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust in the north of England wanted to offer online counselling to patients. The trust chose hosted Microsoft Lync Server 2010 unified communications technology for its e-clinics service - the first National Health Service (NHS)-built system of its kind in the United Kingdom (U.K.). The system can serve up to 10,000 users and is already attracting interest from other trusts that want to use the solution.

Business Needs

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust in the United Kingdom provides a range of mental health, learning disability, substance misuse, and community healthcare services across Rotherham, Doncaster, north-east Lincolnshire, and Manchester. The foundation trust has an income of £168 million, 4,200 employees, and serves a population of 850,000.

With a large geographical area of northern England to cover, the trust wanted to offer its patients the opportunity to receive mental health counselling in the privacy and comfort of their own homes or work places. It envisaged up to 10,000 patients using browsers anytime, anywhere to book online appointments with a nominated counsellor, then choosing communications channels including instant messaging, and audio and videoconferencing.

"The NHS needs to offer more online services and our e-clinics project with Microsoft Lync Server 2010 is helping our trust lead the way in meeting a nationwide objective set by the government."

Michelle Larkin, Business Development and Marketing Manager, RDaSH

Niall Finn, Information Systems Development Manager, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust, says: "The e-clinics service was not intended to replace face-to-face sessions with clinicians, but instead to extend patient choice and decrease the need for both patients and counsellors to travel for appointments."

Originally, Finn and his team of developers thought a text-based service would suffice.

He recalls: "Having reviewed available technologies, we concluded that a hosted unified communications solution would better suit our needs. It would give greater flexibility with audio and video, and remove the burden of operating costs."

Solution

The trust chose Microsoft Lync Server 2010 to interface with its website and e-clinics system, having seen a demonstration of the technology. This showed the trust that Lync Server 2010 could operate successfully with any browser and also on mobile devices.

Microsoft Gold Partner in software development, Dorset Software was recommended to handle both hosting and customisation. Simone Grant-Jones, Project Manager, Dorset Software, says: "We've designed the solution so that patients can access the e-clinics service from any browser, whether using Windows or other operating systems. Lync Server 2010 is highly secure and the customisation work we've done makes the platform easy to use for both counsellors and patients."

Dorset Software was responsible for advanced calendar scheduling using an application programming interface with the Microsoft .NET Framework development system. Ian Addis, Head of IT and Research & Development at Dorset Software, says: "Recognising that many users connecting from home or their workplaces may have limited expertise in IT, we've written wrapper pages to simplify the business process of connecting patients to counsellors. The system can detect automatically which browser is being used."

The project is now in its user acceptance testing phase, which will last for three months. This involves a pilot group of 15 counsellors at the trust and patients who have already expressed an interest in the e-clinics service.

Benefits

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust is piloting the first NHS-built adult mental health counselling service in the U.K. using Lync Server 2010 unified communications. The service supports the NHS constitution's patient right to choose, giving them the option of having therapy in their own homes or workplaces rather than having to travel to a clinic. The trust is already experiencing interest from patients for the new service and hopes to share its innovative solution with other organisations.

- **Innovative online counselling puts patients first.** The Microsoft unified communications technology customised by Dorset Software fulfils a core objective of the NHS - patient-centric care. The trust is aware of general practitioners who use Skype for consultations, but not on the scale proposed with Lync Server 2010 unified communications, which offers a highly secure portal.



The system can serve up to 10,000 users and is already attracting interest from other trusts that want to use the solution.

Michelle Larkin, Business Development and Marketing Manager, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust, says: "The NHS needs to offer more online services and our e-clinics project with Microsoft Lync Server 2010 is helping our trust lead the way in meeting a nationwide objective set by the government."

- **Patients respond well to pilot project.** Larkin says: "After a successful pilot project and good feedback, it was apparent that our patients wanted this type of service. Our initial findings suggested that around 50 per cent of our patients would be appropriate to use this system. The exciting opportunities the system presents are vast—not only for our patients in offering flexible appointments, but also for our staff too, allowing flexible working."
- **Other organisations show keen interest in collaboration.** The trust is expecting to recover some of its investment in the e-clinics service by offering the system to other organisations, opening up the potential for greater collaboration between clinicians. Larkin says: "There are many opportunities to expand the use of e-clinics, allowing all of our patients to experience the benefit."
- **Hosted e-clinics solution offers value for money.** The trust had a limited budget for the e-clinics solution and only a handful of IT developers with which to develop it. Finn says: "Rather than maintaining the entire infrastructure in-house to support this service, we engaged with experienced Microsoft Partner Dorset Software, which has taken on the responsibility for managing the service. It was the right decision for us and provides the reassurance we need as an NHS organisation."