

TECHNOLOGY IN CARE HOMES

What was the issue?

When patients are discharged from hospital, care homes are still receiving information about that individual by fax, in person or post. Often, key pieces of information are not received at all. This makes it difficult for care homes to prepare for a new patient's arrival.

As well as being inefficient and slow, paper-based communication is not a secure delivery method. The NHS in east and north Hertfordshire is working towards sending all discharge information by secure email.

How it works

NHS.net is an email system used by the NHS which allows resident-identifiable information to be shared securely over email. This means that important information from the hospital, community teams and GPs can be sent quickly, securely and safely.

Before being able to send and receive patient information by email, each care home must complete the NHS Information Governance toolkit – an online system which allows organisations to assess themselves against information governance standards.



Lessons learned so far

- Engagement with care professionals is key. Promote the benefits of sharing information electronically.
- Set realistic deadlines for care homes to complete toolkit.
- Provide face to face and weekly telephone support to care homes during completion of toolkit.
- Shared mailboxes for care homes can help make sure information is available even when care home managers are not there to log in.
- Provide training at times when care homes are likely to have capacity.

How will we tackle the problem?

- Offered all care home managers and nominated Information Governance (IG) leads a free one-day training course on understanding Information Governance, including how to complete the IG toolkit and how to use NHS.net.
- Developed a 'Train the Trainer' toolkit to help care homes to cascade learning out to all their staff.
- After training, support is offered to care homes to complete the IG toolkit and to understand how to get the best from the NHS.net email system.

Benefits

- ✓ Ability to send and receive patient information quickly and securely
- ✓ No confusion from messages taken over the phone or illegible writing on faxes
- ✓ Care home staff are aware of information governance rules on handling patient information
- ✓ Audit trail for information, for example, time emails were sent
- ✓ Removal of fax machines which are costly and require maintenance