

# STRAND I TECHNOLOGY

## Case study – The background

**Calderstones NHS Trust** is based in the Ribble Valley and provides a forensic specialist service to people with a learning disability.

It offers a comprehensive range of hospital and community based services and, over the past four years, has been working on a project to modernise its clinical systems and move towards the National Programme.

It chose the leading CareNotes electronic patient care system which is now well established at the specialist long-stay hospital and used by 800 staff.

The overall aim of the project was to create a flexible system to reduce pen and paper tasks, avoid duplication and provide a more efficient service to free up clinical time.

## The challenges

Calderstones is a specialist medium to low secure hospital treating patients with a wide range of learning disabilities affecting their behaviour.

Most patients range from 18 to 65 years and are generally referred when they are considered to be at risk of offending, or a court has decided there is an element of risk.

The hospital may treat a patient for many years and clinicians focus on ‘managing risks’ with progress tracked over time, using a defined Care Pathway for each individual.

The hospital had been relying on an antiquated medical records system which did not aid the clinicians in their workload.

Dr Adewunmi, a consultant in Learning Disability with a special interest in forensic psychiatry at Calderstones, said: “This is a forensic environment and we recognised the value of a system that could enable us to drive this Care Pathway quicker and improve risk management of our patients.”

## Developing the IT system

After considering several IT system providers, Calderstones chose to work with Strand Technology – the UK’s leading software provider for the specialist mental health sector of the NHS.

Strand Technology’s CareNotes electronic patient care system already has a proven track record of coping with the complex care associated with the mental health sector – which often involves a wide range of professionals, from psychiatrists and psychologists to social services and teachers.

A team of software experts from Strand Technology were able to tailor CareNotes to create an electronic version of the hospital’s own highly-specialised treatment and Care Pathway programme.

## Implementation

CareNotes ‘went live’ at Calderstones in 2002 when a three-month pilot project was carried out on two wards.

The roll out programme then continued with ‘go lives’ on two wards every few months, allowing for staff training and a controlled introduction.

During this time refinements were worked into the system to ensure clinical staff gained maximum benefits from the change.

The final wards were completed in 2004 – within the controlled timescale set by the hospital’s IT project team, headed by IT manager John Kelly.

Naturally, with over 800 people to train on the system, there were a full range of attitudes towards such a major change in working practice – including apprehension, excitement and even a little ‘technofear’.

Comprehensive training was therefore a major priority and the system was created to include a wide range of ‘user-friendly’ benefits...such as standardised forms automatically generating a patient’s basic details, to save on duplication, and a bank of standard assessment tools.

A dedicated helpline, manned by Strand Technology IT experts, was also set up to build confidence among staff and ease them through the transition.

CareNotes was developed to become an electronic version of the hospital’s complex Care Pathway – mirroring pen and paper tasks and therefore giving staff a clear concept of what was being achieved.

## Changes and benefits

The CareNotes system has radically changed the way clinicians work within Calderstones – with information on individual patients available at their fingertips.

Many of the patients may stay at the hospital for between three to five years, or longer, during which time volumes of clinical information are accumulated and archived – often meaning the full records are not easily accessible.

CareNotes can hold all this information – allowing clinicians to access the patient's entire clinical history at the touch of a button.

This is particularly useful within Calderstones because care takes place in a multi disciplinary environment.

A range of professionals are all working towards a patient's Care Pathway – including psychiatrists, psychologists, behavioural nurses and vocational staff, teachers, and occupational trainers.

These different strands all have a contribution to make to the care process, and the CareNotes electronic system allows all this information to be harnessed 'in one place' to give a clear picture of an individual patient.

Ward rounds have now completely changed thanks to this information 'revolution'. A patient's records are there for all the professionals to see – and clinical information is available there and then, rather than having to pull out details from archives and carry bulky files around.

One benefit this has brought is in freeing up consultants' time. Dr Adewunmi can now use the CareNotes system to make informed decisions about his patients much quicker and safer, and enable him to use his time in the most effective way.

By taking an overview of his three wards at the start of his working day, he can look at patients' notes, incident reports, such as aggression and related reports, and any need for clinical intervention. He is then able to identify 'hot spots' where patients need his attention – giving him more information to make an informed choice on how to prioritise his time.

Another time-saving benefit has been the way the CareNotes system can generate reports – in Calderstones' case this is particularly useful for information required by the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

The system has allowed valuable consultants' time to be used far more effectively – sometimes saving as much time as one to two four-hour sessions a week.

Paperwork, correspondences and reports required when new legislation and guidelines come in can also be added into the system without fuss.

A recent example of this was the NICE – new epilepsy national guidelines.

These were interpreted, changes made, and integrated forms (in the form of management guidelines and treatment and care plan) put on the system quickly and efficiently so they were available for use, to reflect current and up to date standards of practice.

## Future

Using the CareNotes software has unlocked huge benefits to Calderstones, saving time and offering new possibilities for delivering care.

The hospital has been forward-thinking in its approach to electronic patient care systems and has reaped the rewards of an early implementation of the national NPfit agenda.

The CareNotes system is extremely advanced and underlines the importance of a specialist electronic patient care system for the mental health sector – rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

CareNotes is itself working towards Connecting for Health ‘Choose and Book’ compliance by the end of 2005.

In the future Calderstones hopes to expand the use of its CareNotes system to the wider care community – not just within the confines of the hospital.

Extending the system will enable a wider group of carers to benefit from the web-based system – such as social workers, teachers, counsellors and treatment centres.

Harnessing this complex technology will revolutionise the way NHS staff work and offer new and exciting ways to deliver care in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

For more details visit [www.strandtechnology.co.uk](http://www.strandtechnology.co.uk) or ring 0845 66 079 67.

### **Ends**

### **Note:**

**Strand Technology is a leading I.T. software provider based in Warrington.  
For more details visit [www.strandtechnology.co.uk](http://www.strandtechnology.co.uk)**