

Case Study...

New Gynaecology Hub using innovative staff passport

**North Central London**

Keen to take a 'digital first' approach to temporary staff movement, the workforce team at Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust saw a unique opportunity to support an emerging healthcare pilot - the North Central London Gynaecology High Volume Low Complexity Hub.

Background

In August 2021, the Gynaecology surgical team from Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (Royal Free) formed the High Volume Low Complexity (HVLC) Hub with neighbouring trusts across the North Central London (NCL) ICS. Based at Chase Farm Hospital, the Hub planned to run surgery lists every Saturday, with the aim to deliver an increase in operations per week to reduce overall patient waiting lists for patients.

Staff were involved from the following organisations:

- Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (Chase Farm) – *HVLC Hub Host*
- University College London Hospital NHS Foundation Trust - *Employer*
- North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust - *Employer*
- Whittington Health NHS Trust - *Employer*

Changing the approach

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the pan-London Staff Movement Agreement allowed NHS staff to move freely between NHS organisations across London to respond to the service demand. Whilst the agreement provided the ability to safely transfer staff with the correct liabilities and warranties in place, it still required workforce teams to issue individual placement agreements and check staff identification and employment information.

Traditional honorary contracts enable these staff to temporarily work at another site, but the paper-based administrative process did not allow for rapid movement in response to urgent patient care.

Royal Free had recently joined the [list of organisations registered](#) with the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport and saw the HVLC Hub as an excellent opportunity to pilot the system. The workforce team used the videos and user guides on the [COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport support website](#) and attended the live portal training in preparation to take the 'digital first' approach.

David Bray, Assistant Director of People at Royal Free, highlighted the [scope of the passport](#) ***“to aid the movement of substantive staff between NHS organisations, providing a virtual Memorandum of Understanding between the Employer and the Host, providing a simple process to***



transfer essential employment information and eliminated the need for a traditional honorary contract”.

David referred to the successful use of the [system nationally](#) and demonstrated the benefits of the system through [case studies](#) from other ICSs, such as King’s College Trauma network. David used the extensive COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport resources and found them to be ***“incredibly helpful”.***

How did it work?

The three Employer trusts were responsible for issuing digital staff passports to the staff, whilst Royal Free was the Host, who verified staff passports prior to the move to Chase Farm.

With the support of the central COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport team, a working group of Workforce Leads from each of the four trusts ensured the purpose and benefits of the passport were widely understood. Each Workforce Lead attended the virtual training session, hosted by the central team. Next, the Leads identified the team of workforce representatives who would manage the online passport portals at each trust.

The Leads and the wider workforce team also found the live training, [demo video](#) and [user guides](#) extremely helpful. To embed their training, the team issued digital staff passports to each other, to aid understanding of the portal and app sides of the process. This practise run was vital, to experience the user journey from the HVLC staff members perspective and highlight any barriers to implementation in the existing workforce supporting processes.

Prior to their first shift for the Hub, each staff member attended a short virtual meeting with their employer’s workforce team, to issue them with their passport to a digital wallet app on their mobile phone. Once received, the staff member then attended an even shorter virtual meeting with the Royal Free workforce team, to verify their passport.

Mr Lodhi, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist at North Middlesex, found the process to be ***“very smooth”*** and looks forward to digital identification checks being used across other staff groups, such as locums.

Joe Matthews, Associate HR Business Partner at the Royal Free, was one of the team to verify the passports at the HVLC hub. ***“Once the Employer had completed the check, it was a case of arranging a meeting with the consultant to transfer the details across to the Host. This worked really well”.***

Joe echoed the feedback about the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport portal, training and resources, ***“The process was extremely straight-forward and only took a couple of training sessions to understand how to use the portal. It is a very user-friendly system that could be implemented on a wider scale”.***



Benefits to you and your organisation

The potential benefits to the North Central London Workforce and Hub teams are clear:

- Quick, simple and seamless movement of staff
- Simple process to transfer essential staff information
- Removes the need for honorary contracts
- Removes duplication of employment checks
- Improved collaboration across teams/sites
- Increased knowledge sharing
- Opportunity to learn new skills and pathways
- Highlight and improve service delivery
- Add value to Continued Professional Development
- Efficient and flexible staff movement, i.e. urgent response to staff shortages

Prior to using the passport, deploying staff was time consuming and an administrative burden for workforce teams, involving chasing for information, repeating checks in some cases and issuing honorary contracts or letters of authority. **Implementing the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport reduced the process from 1-3 weeks to 1-2 days.**

Joe sees the HVLC Hub as the start to expanding the use of the passport at the trust, ***“I found the process of the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport very easy. I’m looking forward to the future, it will be a brilliant route for recruitment services to use”.***

Next steps

The Royal Free continues to seek out opportunities to utilise the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport.

Building on the success of the Gynaecology HVLC Hub, the NCL Urology Hub has successfully utilised the C-19 Digital Staff Passport to enable the movement of staff. The working group is moving towards a ‘business as usual’ approach with the C-19 Digital Staff Passport, by streamlining the local supporting processes. The Workforce Leads are scoping out opportunities with the temporary staffing workforce teams to support the mobility of temporary workers between NHS organisations.

Further information

To find out more about the COVID-19 NHS Digital Staff Passport and how it can benefit your organisation, visit our [support website](#) or [FutureNHS site](#).

Interested in the evolution of digital staff passport in the NHS? Visit our [What’s next...? page](#) or [FutureNHS site](#) to learn more.

