

Case Study...

Major Trauma Network rapidly deploys staff using the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport

The introduction of the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passports is helping during the current pandemic and creating a lasting legacy for other major incidents such as terrorist attacks.



These can often require the rapid deployment of staff from various organisations to treat critical patients in a timely fashion.

Mr Robert Bentley works as Consultant Craniofacial and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon at Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and is National Clinical Director for Major Trauma and Burns Network and tells of his experience of using the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passports.

“We often need our trauma consultants to move quickly from one organisation to another to respond to an individual patient emergency or occasionally for much larger emergency situations, like the London Bridge terrorist attack. Historically, this has involved completion of lots of paperwork, memoranda of understanding and honorary contracts, which clearly is not practical in such an emergency so the opportunity to replace all of that with the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport has made this so much easier.”

National Major Trauma Networks

There are 23 Major Trauma Networks across the NHS in England and each involve several local NHS providers working together to respond to emergency situations.

Mr Bentley’s national role means that he was very keen to ensure trauma consultants are able to move wherever they are most needed within each major trauma network to deliver patient care. In particular, his teams deal with major incidents like terrorist attacks. The COVID pandemic has impacted these major trauma networks by reducing capability and capacity on certain sites, which needed to be addressed by redeploying staff to available units. *“We often need staff to move quickly from one organisation to another and that is why it is so important we have these Passports.”*

He has been championing the need for a staff passport to enable staff to rapidly move since 2017 following the terrorist attacks in that year. As soon as he heard that the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport was an available option, he worked closely with the clinical team, the HR team and the NHSE&I Enabling Staff Movements team to promote its use. Within a few weeks all trusts in the trauma network had registered for the service and passports had been issued by the employing NHS organisations and verified by those where staff might need to operate. Mr Bentley is now promoting the use of Digital Staff Passports across the 23 major trauma networks that make up the national major trauma system.



Benefits

Before using these Passports, the HR team at Kings had paper based passporting arrangements between some, but not all of the organisations involved in the trauma network and were about to embark on an exercise to expand that paper-based arrangement, which would have taken a lot of time writing and chasing paperwork in the form of workforce sharing agreements and honorary contracts.

The HR team at Kings could instantly see the real benefits of using Digital Staff Passports instead from both a speed and security perspective. After initial concerns about how long it might take to get set up and registered, these concerns were allayed with support from the NHSE&I regional and national teams. The issuing of passports proved to take less than 10 minutes per passport and to verify the passports took even less.

The consultants that received their passports found the process very simple and effective. This now means patients can be treated in centres by specialised staff that previously could only have been delivered in a major trauma centre and that currently, due to capacity constraints, can be delivered in more peripheral units in the network. This will reduce the demands on the capacity of the major trauma centre which are significant, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. It also means we have the right clinicians with the right skills and experience in the right place to treat the specific trauma cases presenting at the relevant unit.

What was the aim?

As a consultant, the aim for Mr Bentley was to be able to offer support to his colleagues within his network, the knock-on effect will be to the betterment of patients who will be able to receive treatment in their own local units given they can no longer be transferred for their specialist care.

This ensures that patients will still access specialist care but at their local hospital.

There are 23 major trauma networks in England which comprise major trauma centres and affiliated Trauma units and Local Emergency Hospitals. In normal times, patients with the most severe injuries would be transferred to a major trauma centre and this still is the case with time critical interventions. For other conditions, that still require special care within days rather than hours, the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport allows travel to that centre to provide care more locally due to the COVID pandemic.

What was the solution?

For example, something they see are complex lower limb injuries following a motorcycle accident, these injuries need very specialist care within days. The digital staff passport means the team at Kings can go directly to those units and deliver that care to those in need.

What were the results?

The team at Kings are just realising some of the real-world results, but the potential is huge. This is the start of the process and for him, as a clinician,





COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport

it is important he can spread the message to HR teams and clinical colleagues, so they know what to expect and how to support and issue and verify COVID-19 Digital Staff Passports.

Next steps

Mr Bentley is keen that we all promote the passport to HR departments, clinicians and organisational leads so that staff are all trained. Promotion is key if this is going to work seamlessly for the benefits of all our patients and all our staff.

This is a clear example of how staff can move across our NHS organisations for the betterment of patients and our population.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was an enabler but the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passport means that the patients we see could have been treated 24 hours or more earlier.

To find out more the COVID-19 Digital Staff Passports and what it can mean for your organisation, contact nhsi.digitalstaffpassport@nhs.net

Mr Bentley is National Clinical Director for major trauma and burns and Clinical Director for South East London Kent and Medway major trauma network. He works as Consultant Craniofacial and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon at Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and National Clinical Director for the Major Trauma and Burns Network.

