

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals putting patients first and controlling costs with better bariatric bed management

Summary of benefits anticipated and realised:

- *Improving patient safety and experience*
- *Anticipated savings of £50,000 per year on delivery and installation charges alone*
- *Clinical support safety net for staff*

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) is one of Yorkshire's leading acute trusts, serving a population of more than 420,000 across South Yorkshire, North Nottinghamshire and the surrounding areas.

Hosting three main hospital sites and a number of additional services, the Trust is one of only five Teaching Hospitals in Yorkshire and is projected to train 25 per cent of all medical students in the region by 2018. The Trust currently trains 30 per cent of all other healthcare professional students.

A modern and forward-facing Trust employing over 6,000 members of staff, the hospital provides a full range of local hospital services across Doncaster Royal Infirmary, Bassetlaw Hospital in Worksop, and Montagu Hospital in Mexborough.

Identifying the shortcomings of existing bariatric bed rental

With obesity rates rising nationally and as part of DBTH's commitment to working as closely and as efficiently as possible with its suppliers, in 2016 DBTH's medical equipment team undertook a review of its bariatric equipment provision.

To ensure the Trust was making the most of the public money, the organisation needed to understand what was being spent on the rental of bariatric equipment and identify if, and where, savings could be realised. Alongside this, issues had been identified around accuracy and consistency of invoicing, high delivery and installation charges and a lack of management information.

Richard Somerset, Acting Director of Procurement at the Trust DBTHFT confirms: "Switching suppliers always presents its own unique challenges and can often be met with nervousness. However, we believed that by looking for a new partner, we could improve our service, reduce unnecessary costs and provide a better service for our patients. After conducting a comprehensive review we estimated that spend could be reduced by around £50,000 per year by a combination of better asset management and by working with a supplier with a new approach."

The previous supplier did not offer onsite clinical support as Skin Integrity Lead Nurse, Tracy Vernon, explains: "In the past, we were provided with equipment but that was it. We didn't have any kind of clinical support or a dedicated, visible and approachable nurse advisor to provide much-needed specialist advice and guidance.

"There was a real missing link at ward level: experts on-hand to check patients had the right product for their specific needs, at the right time, and that staff on the ward were supported to challenge instances of product misuse. Having additional proactive clinical support would mean we were able to provide a much more efficient and effective service."

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Mapping the route to enhanced bariatric asset provision

Armed with the knowledge that significant cost savings could be achieved, clinical staff better supported and patient care improved, the Trust initiated a tender process to test the market.

The specification was robust, with tendering organisations being asked to clearly evidence in their submission ability and experience in relation to:

Asset monitoring: The Trust needed a new and improved method of recording asset data, such as cost, usage, location, condition, maintenance, repair and cleaning schedules and so on. Without this vital insight, DBTH was aware that unnecessary cost – and risk - could creep back into the process.

Clinical support: Having regular, face-to-face contact with clinically-trained, bariatric equipment specialists would alleviate pressure on clinicians and empower ward staff to help patients access the most appropriate equipment correctly.

Value for money: The Trust needed to remove unnecessary expenditure and make the most of every penny spent – a key objective for the organisation.

Quality: The Trust wasn't willing to sacrifice standards of equipment so required a range of cutting-edge equipment to meet patient needs, in order to provide the highest quality care.

Patient focus: Care and treatment of local people are of the upmost importance to the Trust, with patients at the heart of everything the organisation does. DBTH wanted to work with a partner who shared this same vision.

Four tender bids were submitted for the Hire of Bariatric Bed, Furniture and Associated Equipment mini competition via the East of England NHS Collaborative Procurement Hub's Bariatric Furniture & Equipment Framework. After the tender and associated financial bids were evaluated, two potential suppliers were shortlisted. There then followed formal meetings with suppliers, incorporating product demonstrations, while references were also consulted. Following this process, Medstrom Healthcare – the UK's only independent provider of bed management services to the NHS – was awarded the contract in August 2017.

Commenting on the selection process, Nicki Sherburn, Matron of the Surgical Care Group, said: "Medstrom won because of the clinical evidence they were able to offer in relation to clinical efficacy on products, clinical support, education and training, and cost. No other supplier was able to offer this. Coupled with the company's obvious clinical expertise and ethos, awarding the contract to them was a clear choice."

Echoing the sentiments expressed by Nicki, Richard Somerset, Acting Director of Procurement, added: "Throughout the process, Medstrom were incredibly accommodating and went the extra mile to provide presentations, answer questions and demo products thoroughly, which was invaluable for both operational and clinical teams. Medstrom were not only the most personable company to deal with - clearly aligned with the vision and values of the Trust - but also the most price competitive and highest scoring in quality evaluation. Overall, Medstrom were in pole-position and we felt confident in their ability to deliver significant value to our organisation.

"Following the award, the transition period was well-handled. We faced none of the challenges you may expect with change of this scale, which further evidenced that we made the right decision to switch to Medstrom."

Adding up the benefits

Since transitioning to Medstrom's bed management services, DBTH has recorded a number of benefits. For Andrew Leverton, Medical Technical Services Manager, the decrease in rental charges has been significant: "We've noticed a tangible drop in rental charges since working with Medstrom, which is partly due to the better handle we now have on assets thanks to Medstrom's iTracker software. This helps us to quickly and simply match invoices with rental periods, while facilitating a clearer picture of where equipment is. For example, if a bed is on hire and a patient has been discharged, we can now easily stop the product rental. Medstrom listened to the problems we were facing in the past, and provided exceptional solutions."

Another thing that is proving popular is Medstrom's key performance indicator (KPI) reporting. This is enabling the Trust to not only have real time access to performance data but quickly and accurately respond to requests from auditors and demonstrate financial accountability. But it's not just the financial benefits that Medstrom is helping to deliver. Skin integrity is also an area that is further benefitting from the switch thanks to the better support, provision and allocation of products on offer. Helping the Trust provide the right product, to the right patient, at the right time – and empower staff to intervene should a product be unsuitable for a patient's needs – is adding genuine value, as Tracy confirms: "Medstrom have done exceptionally well to match the specification of what was needed. We wanted clinicians in need of bariatric beds to make one call and feel confident that a complete package of care would follow. Medstrom have gone above and beyond to meet this expectation."

When it comes to clinical support, the move to Medstrom has been transformational. Clinical advisors are visible on the wards and hold weekly sessions with clinical and housekeeping staff to ensure bed management is optimised, education and training is provided, and patient care remains a top priority. This is a night and day difference according to housekeeper, Steve Watson: "Medstrom have clinical experts who know the products inside out and are onsite weekly to offer advice and support. This is really beneficial as healthcare workers often don't know how to use the beds so access to ongoing training is really helpful. This also gives confidence to patients by adding an extra, visible layer promoting better comfort, care and experience."

The strong clinical ethos promised at tender stage is being delivered day after day, with staff describing Medstrom as a patient-focused, caring company. This again is a big shift, as Richard notes: "Medstrom have proven they are patient-focused and have a strong clinical ethos. Previously, a bed was put in place and it was down to the Trust to decide whether they needed 'stepping down' to different equipment. Although we have experts in the Trust, it always helps to have that external eye to ask crucial and probing questions and that's something that's delivering huge value for us, as well as for our patients."

Moving to Medstrom's bed rental service has been a rewarding decision for DBTH. So much so that the Trust plans to take its relationship with the specialist bed provider a step further by introducing wider provision, to include tilt-in-space chairs and ultra-low beds. The goal of creating a 'one-stop shop' is on the horizon and will help the Trust achieve its vision of providing all patients with the most appropriate equipment to support the provision of harm-free, high quality, personalised care. Quickly, efficiently, and cost effectively.

To speak to a member of our RN and RGN-qualified clinical team about our bariatric rental service please contact Medstrom on 0845 371 1717 or email info@medstrom.co.uk