

Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust



Background

The Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust is one of the UK's largest NHS teaching trusts, providing general and specialist clinical services as well as medical education, training and research facilities. Its roots date back to 1758, when the trustees of the Radcliffe estate released £4000 for the establishment of a new hospital. But it came into being in its present form in 1999 when Horton General Hospital was incorporated into the existing independent NHS trust which already included the Radcliffe Infirmary and the Churchill Hospital.

With such a diverse heritage, the estate is comprised of a wide range of building types from Victorian to modern, which accommodate wards, operating theatres, outpatient departments, laboratories and all the assets typically found in a medical environment, including scanners and radiology equipment.

By the late 1990s, facilities management across the sites was being supported by a number of operational estate management systems and in 1997, the decision was taken to consolidate them onto a single platform. CAFM specialist FSI's Concept™ system was chosen and by 2000 had been implemented across the three main sites.

"We envisaged that this would be the most effective way to bring together the disparate systems, help desks, reporting and ordering," says Nick Roche, CAD & Information Manager for the trust's Estates and Facilities Directorate. "It was felt by the incumbents that the existing NHS solutions didn't match the needs of a more commercial environment or the flexibility required by a user base which was developing a different style of thinking and working."

Challenge

Initially, the trust implemented Concept™ 500 maintenance management, helpdesk, stores and ordering modules, but it has since added additional modules: Eclipse for room booking, Workflow and in 2007 Concept™ eSQL as part of a drive to offer internal customers more value through an online help desk service.

"As we've become more used to the system, we've looked for more opportunities to use it in different ways," says Nick. "But to begin with, we didn't properly understand how we needed to relate to it, and that was one of our biggest challenges. Hindsight is a wonderful thing of course, but as is the case with a lot of system implementations, we should have looked ahead to two or three years down the line. "Today, we've learned a lot about how to make the system work best for us."

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“Concept™ was rolled out and being used within six months, so it was a pain-free birth. But the toddling years were challenging: for the first couple of years, we were slow to develop a mutual understanding with FSI about how to move forward, and in helping our users to understand what was available to them through the system. And if they didn’t know what to do with it, of course they tended to dismiss it rather than use it! So we ended up orbiting the problem rather than communicating it to the supplier.”

Today, explains Nick, that situation has been completely reversed and the trust enjoys an excellent dialogue with FSI.

“This really was our biggest learning experience, realising how we needed to relate to the system,” he says. “My advice to anyone implementing a CAFM solution is that if you can anticipate as many requirements and challenges before implementation, do so. And remember that when your supplier has finished the initial installation, you will need people in place on both sides to continue the dialogue. The trouble is that you can’t buy ten years’ experience with a new system! Now, we move smoothly through each stage of every new development. We’re comfortable with the system and we’re able to cope with problems as they arise. And it’s really easy to work with.”

Benefits

The most valuable benefit to the trust’s FM operation is that Concept™ has enabled service delivery through a single system, regardless of location, complete with the availability of consistent information and management reports across every site.

“We have one system to train people on, one helpdesk, one way of doing things,” says Nick. “Everything is the same and that’s a massive gain for us. For example, we now have a very streamlined way to manage reporting for our expenditure and to meet our service commitment to our users. Everything looks the same to them and they can access the help desk via the web, control their own calls into us and log them.”

It is still early days for the use of modules like Eclipse, which are not currently accessed by a lot of the trust’s departments, but these too form an important part in the transition from paper trail to streamlined electronic communications and an enhanced end-user experience.

“Our customers’ level of interest in what they’re doing with the system is higher and that brings us closer to them and helps us build relationships,” says Nick.

“There is less paper and more reliance on central data because there are fewer islands of information held by individual people. And this flexibility is creating a complete sea change as the years go on. We’re more able to react to change quickly.”

Nick says the evolution in the trust’s use of Concept™ has escalated during the last 18 months as users become aware of the services that they can access electronically without physical interaction with the FM operation.

“We’re in a very interesting holding position at the moment, taking stock of a lot of change, and looking ahead I think we’ll continue to consolidate our use of Concept™ where we can automate more processes with Workflow,” he says. “Systems in general are working more like Internet applications and that changes the way everybody works. So in that respect, we’re looking to see how FSI will respond in terms of system development.

“But we have a very positive relationship with them as a supplier. We relate to them on a personal level, from management down to the support team which is very flexible, clued-up on what we need, and able. If there is ever a problem, they can dial into the system via a browser and we can interact with them in real time to solve it. FSI is very helpful and good to work with.”

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