e-Rostering benefits could save NHS up to £50million while giving better shifts for staff, says SMART

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SMART, a leading supplier of workforce management solutions, has stated that the NHS could save up to £50million by investing in technology that automates key HR functions, according to an article written by Tristan Spencer, Health Sector Director of SMART. The company strongly advises health service directors, faced with increasing pressure to save money, to introduce new technology that reduces the cost of staff rather than take the drastic action of reducing headcount. Today's workforce management solutions help NHS organisations make better use of their existing employees and provide a much improved working environment for staff.

Mr Spencer comments, "In the face of strict efficiency savings targets, the NHS is being forced to take radical steps in order to cut costs. NHS employers state that 75% of the NHS's costs are attributable to its workforce, making it by far the largest single item of expenditure. As a result, the workforce represents the single largest source for generating efficiencies. One option is to reduce headcount, cutting the amount paid out in salaries. However, this would be to the detriment of the quality of service delivered. Workforce management solutions provide a highly effective and certainly less traumatic alternative to losing valuable staff."

According to the National Audit Office (NAO), by implementing e-rostering systems, as well as more flexible contracts for staff, the benefits that arise in savings for the NHS could be between £25m and £50m per annum. Furthermore, the improved procurement and management of bank and temporary staff as a result of automation could generate annual savings for the NHS of between £13million and £38million.

Workforce Management Solutions are able to offer the NHS tangible operational and business benefits in three key areas. The first is making the best use of the existing staff at the disposal of the health trust. In doing so, trusts reduce their reliance on bank and temporary staff to fill vacancies, generating savings without having to reduce headcount. For example, South Devon Healthcare NHS Trust found that temporary staff costs fell by 8% during the implementation of an e-rostering system, with a £350,000 net reduction in temporary staff costs.

The second is the ability to automate processes. This increases efficiency, reduces the time that staff must dedicate to the back-office tasks of workforce management and frees their time to focus on the delivery of care.

Finally, by allowing staff to view the roster in advance, and giving them the ability to make requests for the hours they want to work and the time they want to take off through the system, trusts can achieve higher levels of staff satisfaction, lower levels of attrition and reduce absence. The Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust reported a reduction in sickness absence from 5.4% to 3%, which it attributed to staff being able to enter their own shift preferences and viewing the system as a fairer way of allocating shifts.

Workforce management solutions also automate compliance with regulations such as the Working Time Directive and the NHS New Deal, as this can be built into the parameters of the system. This is

important to ensure that rostering systems are able to cope with junior doctors, a group with particularly high demands placed on their time. By comparison, manual processes cannot manage the complex rules for this group, and run the risk of breaching regulations which can result in large fines.

Mr Spencer concluded, "By selecting the right e-rostering system and encouraging its adoption across the entire workforce, NHS organisations can confidently meet the challenge of cutting costs whilst protecting front line care at the same time. E-rostering, as part of a full workforce management policy, can deliver significant benefits for staff, patients and the trust alike."

For a full copy of SMART's article or the independent research report published by Pierre Audoin Consultants (PAC) and commissioned by SMART, please contact: Andreina West, PR Artistry, on 01491 639500 or via email: Andreina@pra-ltd.co.uk.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About SMART

UK based and with 25 years experience, SMART is the leading provider of solutions for workforce management designed to help organisations to achieve agility and cost efficiency from their greatest asset – their people. Utilising our own highly skilled and experienced people SMART helps companies to maximise the performance, productivity and value of their workforce. Our solutions can assist in achieving a sustainable reduction in people costs of up to 10%, while providing a better working environment for staff.

From time and attendance through to workforce planning, scheduling, absence management and comprehensive automated reporting, the SMART solution suite offers a wide breadth and depth of functionality. It can be fully installed on site, delivered as a managed or hosted service with a full range of support services from SMART's own in-house consultants.

Accessible from anywhere in the world, SMART's web-based workforce management solutions are developed using Microsoft .NET to give a zero-footprint solution that is flexible, reliable, scalable and easy to implement, and provides an environmentally responsible option. The data centre supports the Trees for Business Campaign and we are collaborating with Brunel University to identify practical ways to recycle heat and airflow to minimise draw on the power supply, and uses optimised hardware to ensure power consumption is reduced wherever possible.

SMART in Healthcare

SMART RPC provides a simple web based solution for creating and managing Trust-wide staff rosters and time and attendance related activity. The only Next Generation workforce management solution available today, SMART RPC has been designed by our developers to support all NHS Trust roles – a feature that is currently unique. As well as eRostering SMART RPC encompasses Automatic Attendance Recording and Bank Administration, in one easy to use system.

As a Next Generation rostering application, SMART RPC has a host of time-saving features including Auto Roster which generates staff rosters in minutes, and alerts to managers in real time to warn of potential problems with their rosters. In addition it provides unrivalled fairness and transparency in dealing with shift preferences of staff, helping to improve staff morale and reducing staff turnover.

SMART provides comprehensive workforce management solutions to a significant proportion of the UK Healthcare market and was selected as sole provider of e-rostering and time and attendance for the National ESR programme and has unique, proven and fully automated integration with ESR.

Over 600 organisations worldwide benefit from SMART's solutions and services in both the private and public sectors. Customers include Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust, Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust, The Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust, Ocado, Gist, Habitat, Jaguar, JCB, Mandarin Oriental, Sainsbury's, Swissport, Trailfinders, Tussauds Group, and Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service.

For more information, please visit www.smart-workforce.com.

For information relating specifically to the NHS sector, please visit: www.smart-rostering.co.uk

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