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Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

Adopting mobile working to transform patient care.

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NHS
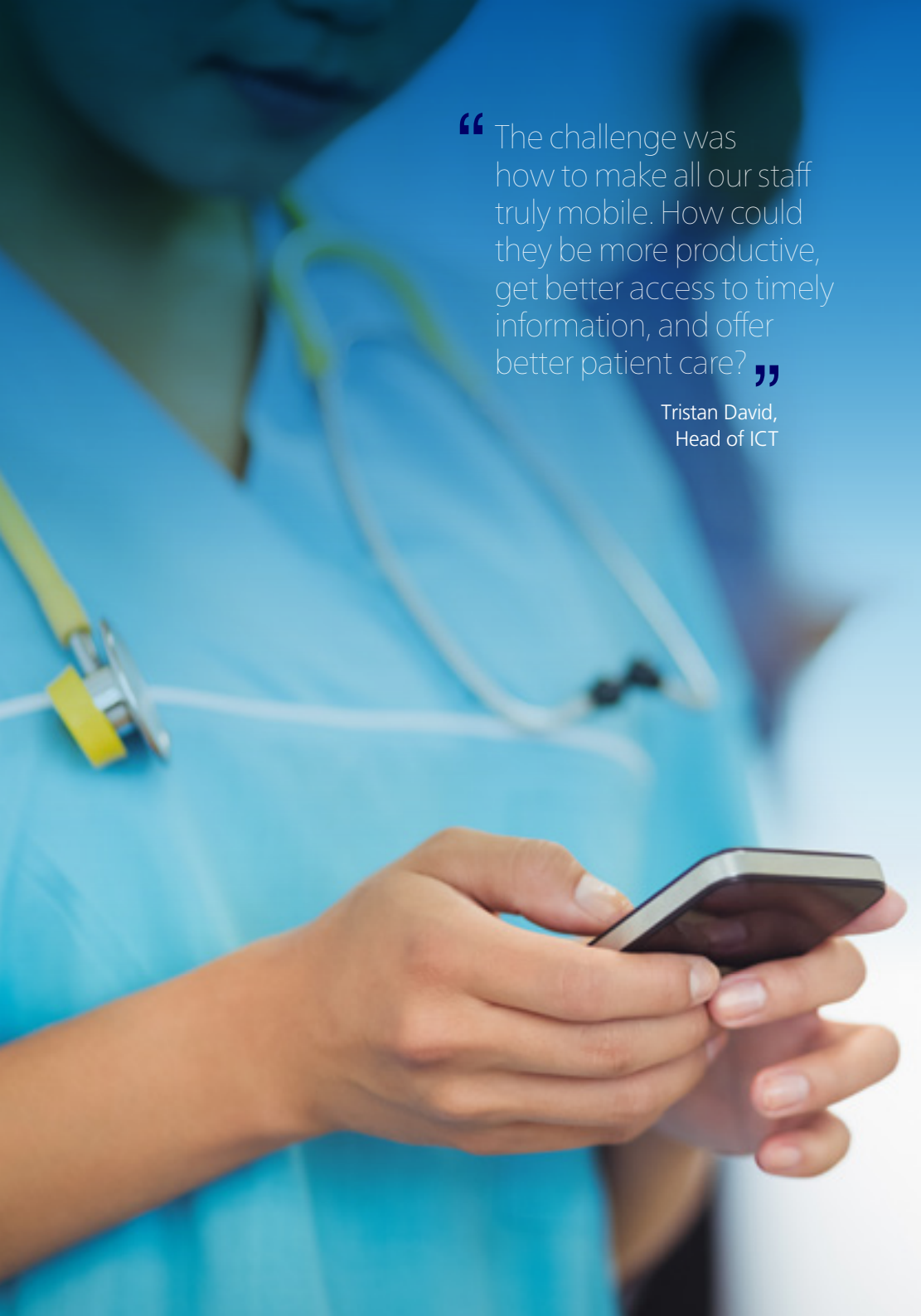
Identifying barriers

For NHS Trusts, one of the biggest challenges is how to do more with fewer resources. For Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, the demand for the community and mental health services it offers is increasing as the population ages. The Trust wanted to find a new way of working more efficiently while improving patient care. It had already implemented a paperless policy within its main offices, and it was clear that the next step was to look at how people worked in the field.

In the past, care workers in multi-disciplinary teams – who are visiting patients in the community – would have to come to a centre to check records, catch up with correspondence, look up details, update records and so on. Not only did this reduce the amount of time they could spend with patients, but it also led to delays when information was entered in to systems, which could be up to several days depending on a care workers schedule. There was also often a time-lag between information entering the system (eg, a patient calling in with an update on their response to a new treatment) and this being available to carers and clinicians.

The Trust launched a project to explore options to transform clinical processes. Having chosen the iOS ecosystem for use by its staff, it then needed to ensure that its staff had access to simple and secure connectivity that would provide seamless access to their own internal IT resources while they were out and about.

After exploring various options, the Trust opted for a fixed data link with a private APN, allowing workers to remotely connect over a secure and private link running over O₂'s mobile, Wifi and fixed networks.

> " We wanted to benefit from 4G for speed and performance, but in a way that had security built in and didn't require separate security layers over the top that would impact the speed of accessing content, but also make it easier for staff to simply pick up and use. "
>
> Tristan David,
> Head of ICT

Efficiency, security and better patient care

Clinicians and care workers now have access to the latest information about patients in real time, no matter where they are working from. They can in turn enter their own updates on their iPads without having to wait until they get back to central office. Mobile working has dramatically reduced bureaucracy, streamlined the Trust's processes and helped staff work more effectively and efficiently. It minimises travel time (saving money too), avoids the duplication of administrative tasks and supports the Trust's existing paperless policy.

With immediate, secure access to data, carers and clinicians are much more responsive to their patients' needs, significantly improving patient care. "If another appointment needs to be made, they can check on the iPad and book it in there and then, with the patient sitting next to them. It's a little thing, but it's little things like this that all add up and improve things hugely," says Tristan David. Both carers and clinicians can update records immediately meaning that all of those who are involved in the patient's care have the latest information at their fingertips.

There was an unexpected benefit, too. As soon as the private APN from O₂ was enabled, people began to use their iPads as clinical tools to support their care in ways that simply weren't possible before.

"Our clinicians now look up YouTube videos to show their patient exactly how to use an inhaler properly, or show the patient an app that might help them cope with dementia," says Tristan. "They also use them to support their own professional work such as easily sharing a short patient survey." Clinicians report that patients feel more at ease with iPads, reducing the barrier that a laptop screen sometimes creates.

For the IT staff, the peace of mind offered by O₂ in terms of security is paramount. Smartcard readers authenticate each user and load their personal profile. Mobile Device Management (MDM) allows the Trust's IT department to wipe the iPad if it is lost or stolen, as well as centrally managing the O₂ mobile and corporate Wifi connections, ensuring the secure link provided by the private APN from O₂ is always maintained.

> "I don't have to worry about securing connections over the internet or enabling internet connectivity. It's all managed by O₂."
>
> Tristan David, Head of ICT

Staff responded very well to the adoption of the new technologies, and mobile working has proved to be very popular. Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust currently has more than 1,800 users and plans to extend the service provision to several hundred more.

This puts the Trust in an excellent position to respond to future changes as healthcare provision extends to more services as professionals need to share patient care with partners outside of clinical practice.

> "Our staff have always got their devices and secure connectivity, so they can leverage those to save time, solve problems and improve patient care."
>
> Tristan David, Head of ICT

Oxleas NHS

About Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

The Trust covers more than 71 sites across three boroughs in South-east London. It specialises in community, mental health and learning disability services. It employs about 4,500 members of staff. It is the first NHS organisation successfully to use this kind of mobility solution at such a scale.

O₂ Private Access Point Name (APN): simplicity with security

The private O₂ APN provides secure access across a secure connection from O₂'s own network directly to Oxleas network infrastructure – without ever traversing the general internet. With full management provided by O₂ it takes the strain off internal systems, and provides staff constant access to simple, instant and safe connectivity, with users able to access and update data wherever they are, allowing them to be truly mobile.

> "We had challenging timetables, so O₂ came up with a very flexible solution that allowed us to implement a private APN to a very short timescale and then migrate to the fixed line solution very easily."
>
> Tristan David,
> Head of ICT

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