

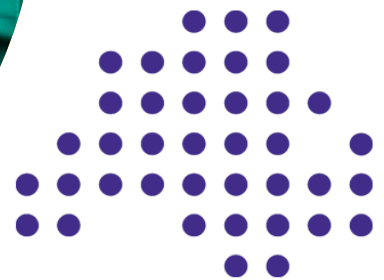


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CASE STUDY

South Western Ambulance Service

Helping deliver a highly successful roster review



We helped South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) complete a highly successful trust-wide roster review of front-line emergency services. Drawing on our shift planning, rostering and workforce management expertise and software, SWASFT has ensured resources are better aligned to changes in demand created by the 'Ambulance Response Programme' (ARP). Through collaboration between senior management, unions and employee groups, the project saw new shift patterns designed for 'Double Crewed Ambulances' (DCA) and 'Fast Response Vehicles' (FRV) across the entire trust.

Overview

- Ambulance trust responsible for covering 10,000 square miles (20% of mainland England).
- Serves a population of 5.3 million and supports over 17.5 million visitors to the region every year.
- Was one of three trusts running the Ambulance Response Programme (ARP) trial.
- Has 4,000 staff across 96 stations, and three divisions (North, East and West).
- Operates 600+ vehicles.

Our Role

- Central involvement from project initiation through to station-by-station votes on the new rosters.
- Establishing project core principles, analysing demand and designing new shift patterns.
- Ensuring new rosters meet the hour-of-day, day-of-week demand profile, by station and by vehicle type.
- Generating shift pattern options aligned to SWASFT's policies and that 'lock-in' Working Time and contractual compliance.
- Supporting engagement with management, employees and unions to generate rosters that benefit the whole organisation.
- Implementing powerful roster design software and training key individuals to ensure SWASFT can continuously improve working patterns over the long-term.



Outcomes

- Delivered shift patterns aligned to the ARP demand, ensuring more crews are available to respond to emergency calls. Reviewing rosters was crucial to delivering the change in practices required, particularly ahead of a national roll-out of the standards.
- Improved response times, performance and productivity by reducing 'double sends' and peak period 'job stacks' by 60%.
- Helped limit overworking and stress by reducing utilisation rates while on shift to more manageable levels.
- Improved work-life balance by cutting overruns, where they occur, by an average of 25 minutes, providing more predictable finish times.
- Established a more equitable use of relief planning.
- Early-stage analysis shows this reduction has the potential to generate significant savings within overrun budgets across SWASFT's c.2,500 front-line employees.
- Updated legacy practices to better align skill groups, strengthen meal break and relief policies, and remove risk of compliance breaches.
- Demonstrated commitment to best practice, innovation and efficiency in shift planning, rostering and workforce management.
- Fully engaged employees with the change process, with several stations adopting new shift patterns earlier than the planned 'go-live' date.
- Mitigated risks and realised benefits of roster review rapidly through effective project management and collaboration.
- SWASFT able to maintain performance by constantly adapting rosters in line with changing demand, rather than having to periodically undertake major roster reviews.
- The project has provided a successful template for future change management requirements.



The Organisation

SWASFT provides ambulance services across an area of 10,000 square miles...equating to 20% of mainland England. The operating patch includes the counties of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and the former Avon area (Bristol, Bath, North and North-East Somerset and South Gloucestershire).

The trust serves a total population of over 5.3 million people and the area is estimated to receive an influx of over 17.5 million visitors each year, with significant peaks in the summer months. Whilst predominantly rural, SWASFT is also responsible for services in large urban centres including Bristol, Plymouth, Exeter, Bath, Swindon, Gloucester, Bournemouth and Poole. Across three divisions (North, East and West), the trust employs 4,000 staff in 96 stations and operates over 600 vehicles.

The Situation

SWASFT had several reasons for undertaking a trust-wide roster review. Firstly, it was one of three trusts involved in the pilot of NHS England's 'Ambulance Response Programme' (ARP), new ambulance standards designed to:

- Prioritise the sickest patients to ensure they receive the fastest response.
- Drive clinically and operationally efficient behaviours.
- Put an end to unacceptably long waits.
- Implement a new dispatch model: Dispatch on Disposition (DoD), with a revised Nature of Call (NOC) procedure and revised Ambulance code sets.

This new model necessitated a significant change to the numbers and profile of demand for 'Double Crewed Ambulances' (DCA) and 'Fast Response Vehicles' (FRV). ARP meant that the previous 50 / 50 ratio of DCA to FRV vehicles would become 80 / 20, requiring significant changes to crewing rosters.

The second driver for the roster review was the need to harmonise working practices following SWASFT's merger with Great Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust (GWAS) in 2013. Employment contract terms and conditions differed in key areas such as meal break values and relief planning, so the review needed to implement a consistent, fair and equitable approach across all stations.

The third issue SWASFT faced was that working patterns needed modernising to align the needs of patients, employees, the organisation and wider stakeholders. Much of the East and West division were using shift patterns that were 10-15 years old. The North division (when it was part of GWAS) had undergone a roster review in 2010 but it was not deemed a success. In this instance, the patterns had been imposed with staff and local management having no input into their design.

“Resourcing lies at the heart of many strategic issues ambulance services face.

“We knew that modernising and optimising our working patterns was vital to help us meet commissioner expectations around patient care, value for money and productivity.

“Making the most of our existing resources was also going to be key to delivering the ARP changes. The additional funding made available to support the new model was limited to the equivalent of three additional DCA's providing 24/7 coverage.

“We needed a creative approach to reviewing rosters that could achieve buy-in across SWASFT and put us in a strong position to continue adapting our organisation in line with changing demand.”

Neil Le Chevalier, Director of Operations at SWASFT

Our Role

Due to the issues created by the unsuccessful 2010 roster review project, SWASFT partnered with us to leverage the design and management capabilities of our WORKSuite software and our expertise at delivering fully-engaged shift work optimisation projects. We were engaged thanks to our extensive experience delivering successful roster reviews, particularly in the emergency services sector. Our approach is based on a combination of an engaged workgroup process and the unique shift planning, rostering and workforce management tools within our WORKSuite software.

The solution devised for SWASFT included:

- In-depth analysis of demand data for the whole trust.
- Initial generation of a diverse range of shift templates (c.150) covering each station and vehicle type, which:
 1. Met the demand by hour-of-day, day-of-week, station and vehicle type.
 2. Utilised a variety of shift lengths to minimise over-rostering of hours.
 3. Met the contractual requirements of the trust, including relief requirements.
 4. Locked-in compliance with Working Time Regulations.
 5. Supported employee wellbeing and work-life balance.

Creating core principles for the project ensured management and unions could agree to prior to commencement of employee engagement activity. These were vital to ensure that a consistent and equitable basis was established against which all rosters could be designed.

A phased, two-stage engagement programme delivered through Working Parties involving staff representatives from all stations. Activity included:

- Collaborating with 17 groups, representing each of the areas within the three geographical divisions.
- Holding four Working Parties per group (over a three-month period) to detail the design and development of shift pattern options.
- Ensuring that by the final Working Party, each group had two roster options and the opportunity to vote for their preference to be implemented. With 200 staffing groups, around 400 options were generated for voting purposes.

“Given the challenges posed by major roster reviews, it was absolutely vital that employees were placed at the heart of the process.

“By engaging them around the need for change, the impact on them personally and the options that were available, we ensured they were able to directly influence and enhance the process.

“Using software to facilitate co-design, employees could visualise the demand requirements and used their experience and insight to help create solutions that deliver benefits for all stakeholders.”

Robert Crossman, Director of Working Time Solutions



Outcomes

In partnership with us, SWASFT has been able to successfully deliver the ARP trial and establish a new approach to roster design, implementation and maintenance.

The project delivered against its core objectives, including:

Improving patient care

The rosters have enabled capacity and demand to be balanced and better alignment of skill groups with the type and location of care required.

Improving performance

The rosters have ensured more crews are available to respond to emergency calls, improving response times, reducing 'double sends' and lowering peak period 'job stacks' by 60%.

Delivering efficiencies:

Early-stage analysis shows the reduction in overruns has the potential to generate significant savings within overrun budgets across SWASFT's c.2,500 front-line employees.

Improving employee wellbeing

The rosters have established a more equitable use of relief planning and helped strengthen meal break and relief policies. As more crews are available to respond to emergency calls, utilisation rates while on shift have been reduced to more manageable levels - helping limit overworking and stress. Where they occur, overruns have also been cut by an average of 25 minutes, improving work-life balance through more predictable finish times.

Securing adoption

Employees were fully engaged with the change process to reduce risk and deliver early realisation of benefits. This ensured over 150 new frontline rosters across 96 stations were agreed and implemented quickly, with only one roster requiring Joint Council intervention. Several stations were so keen, they adopted the new shift patterns earlier than the planned 'go-live' date.

“This project demonstrates our commitment to delivering the highest standards of patient care efficiently and supporting the wellbeing of our highly valued employees.

“We are now able to adapt and refine our working patterns in line with demand, ensuring major changes like ARP can be managed effectively.

“Working Time Solutions was central to the success of the roster review. They worked seamlessly with our HR and Operations teams, providing the software tools and knowledge we need to optimise our rosters now and in the future.”

Neil Le Chevalier, Director of Operations at SWASFT



What's Next?

To learn more about our products & solutions , visit

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Totalmobile is market leader in field service and mobile workforce management technology, helping organisations deliver more service, of the highest quality and at reduced cost.

Our SaaS based software provides a range of innovative products that deliver a step change in field service performance, mobile worker empowerment and management control.

This unlocks transformative cost savings, capacity gains, productivity improvements and empowers allows mobile workers to focus on consistently delivering the best service.

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