



Totalmobile

CASE STUDY

London Ambulance Service

Designing new shift patterns for 5,000 employees



By rationalising shift patterns, rotas and rosters and ensuring they are closely aligned to demand, Ambulance Trusts can create significant cost savings by releasing thousands more hours from the same core workforce.

Using accurate demand and capacity data, expert insight and powerful specialist shift planning software Ambulance Trusts can design, implement and maintain demand-led crewing patterns that not only reduce private ambulance costs, but help tackle overworking and ensure high service standards are maintained.

We worked with London Ambulance Service on a project which implemented 200 new frontline rosters across 70 ambulance stations, releasing an additional 3,414 people hours. The project utilised our shift planning, rostering and workforce management software and consultancy.



Key Drivers

- Be “a world class ambulance service that responds appropriately to all our patients”.
- Improve response times at evenings and weekends.
- Match station rosters to new ORH demand levels for the trust and protect training time.
- Develop paramedics so that they have the skills and confidence to provide the high-quality care that patients expect and deserve.
- Improve the quality of care LAS provide to their patients, whatever their clinical need, so that they get the best health outcome.
- Address misaligned shift patterns and spend money wisely.

Key Challenges

- Existing shift patterns, rotas and rosters were not in line with demand requirements.
- Large number of stakeholders.
- Over 100 rosters required as shift patterns, rotas and rosters needed to be agreed at station and vehicle level.
- Huge overtime expenses and use of private ambulance services (PAS).
- High levels of staff utilisation while at work had huge impact on work-life balance and paramedic retention.
- Difficulties in gaining acceptance in previous roster review projects from some complexes and stations.

Key Outcomes

- Minimised overtime.
- Reduction in use of PAS.
- Training time provisioned.
- Successfully proved to commissioners ability to meet demand.
- Improved patient care - variable cover that met intra-day demand 365 days a year.
- Manageability of resources - maximum 4 rosters per station, reduction from current levels.
- Better work-life balance for employees through reduced utilisation rates and improved shift planning.

Key Learnings

- Involve representatives from all areas of the Ambulance Service from the beginning.
- Consider all options, be responsive to suggestions and alternative shift patterns from the work group.
- Commitment from key management is vital to ensure success.
- Communicate clearly, consistently and constantly.
- Utilise an objective third party for expertise, insight and credibility.



Our Customer

London Ambulance Service was established in the late 19th century and is now the busiest emergency ambulance service in the world. It has 8,000 staff and volunteers based at stations and offices across the capital. London Ambulance Service has seen demand grow exponentially, each year receiving a record number of 999 calls.

The Situation

In order for London Ambulance Service to receive their full funding from commissioners, they needed to be able to demonstrate that they had a future proof process to meet the demands of the London area for frontline healthcare. Part of the modernisation project incorporated new ways of working, based on Demand-Led Rostering which was agreed by London Ambulance Service commissioners, senior London Ambulance Service management, unions (GMB and Unite) and staff.

In order to improve the patient experience and reduce high levels of staff utilisation, London Ambulance Service committed to change a number of key areas regarding how patients were responded to. This process was analysed from the initial call into the service, to how patients were categorised, and the kind of response that was subsequently provided. One of the areas investigated was with relation to shift patterns, rotas and rosters.

Our Role

We were briefed to support the creation of new shift pattern designs. Rosters would need to meet the patient demand for specific CCG's and take into account parameters provided by London Ambulance Service, which included contractual obligations, estate sizes and vehicle capabilities (ambulance, car, motorcycle and bicycle).

Part of the challenge was that once the data was provided to us and utilised within our WORKSuite shift planning, rostering and workforce management software, the project team were aware that the initial data set had not accounted for estate sizes.

A second iteration needed further work to ensure that no station ran without at least 1 DCA 24x7 and no pattern was night work only. These updates did not affect the overall demand requirement, however, they did impact where the demand would be serviced from.

London Ambulance Service stipulated that the shift patterns:

- Must not exceed the existing 37.5 hour weekly equivalent contract.
- Must provide an allocation of 24 hours for training purposes (Individual Learning Account) for each employee over a 12 month period.
- Must meet the demand requirements of the service.
- Must be in keeping with the contractual obligations of the employees.

Internal roster reviews in the past suffered from high levels of mistrust in the data and the process from staff. Consequently, many of the shift patterns, rotas and rosters designed were either imposed or implemented late meaning they were no longer in line with demand, and in some cases not implemented.

In light of this the organisation took an engaging approach to the shift work optimisation project which involved three key meetings, plus interim sessions to work through specific rosters with workgroups from the 22 complexes. The workgroups included representation from central management, complex management, staff-side union representatives and staff from each of the 70 stations.

In total, 88 meetings were conducted over a 6 month period which gave employees the opportunity to direct questions and thoughts to the project team. Using our WORKSuite shift planning, rostering and workforce management software, we created alternative shift demand 'templates' that could be presented at the initial meetings to enable the workgroup to seek shift pattern preferences from staff back at station. Employee feedback was collated and shift pattern designs were created with these preferences in mind. Following further modifications with work groups, two different shift pattern options were selected and staff were invited to vote for their preferred option.

During the process it was agreed that there could be multiple rosters per complex to increase flexibility and meet local requirements. For example, preferences may differ regarding shift length (12 hour shifts or shorter shifts), number of night shifts and shift pattern design (longer runs of shifts with longer, less frequent breaks or shorter runs of shifts with shorter, more frequent breaks).

Outcomes

92% of the new shift patterns, rotas and rosters were signed off during the shift work optimisation project, with only 8% requiring escalation to Joint Secretaries in order to progress through to implementation.

This was a significant improvement on previous internal roster reviews which had successful sign off of less than 50% of the roster patterns. We worked closely with the project team, senior London Ambulance Service management, the trade unions and staff to ensure that the options generated took into account the aspirations of the employees while ensuring they met the underlying demand. This was key to improving patient care, staff utilisation levels and future funding levels.

Benefits

- Minimised overtime.
- Reduction in use of PAS.
- Training time provisioned.
- Successfully proved to commissioners ability to meet demand.
- Improved patient care - variable cover that met intra-day demand 365 days a year.
- Manageability of resources - maximum 4 rosters per station, reduction from current levels.
- Better work-life balance for employees through reduced utilisation rates and improved planning.



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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.