

Case Study



Patients at Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust given bedside phone, web and TV for free.

"We chose ANS Group to help us deliver the best possible service to our children. Working together we've been able to develop the BedHead system to provide free access to patients and their parents within a very secure environment."

Russell Banks, Head of IM & T, Sheffield Children's Hospital

Company Background

Sheffield Children's Hospital is part of the Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust. Since it opened in 1876, the hospital has been extended numerous times to make room for additional child healthcare facilities. The hospital currently has around 130 beds for acute care and caters for many different care services for children such as mental health, acute and chronic long term care and a day surgery unit that accommodates up to 30 children a day. Located in Western Bank, Sheffield Children's Hospital provides accident and emergency services for all minors in the city and beyond, seeing over 35,000 children a year and offers an extensive range of surgery facilities. To coordinate fundraising projects, it has its own internal charity, Sheffield Children's Hospital Charity.

The Challenge

Hospitals around the UK have installed bedside units to allow their patients to make phone calls, watch TV and surf the web. This government initiative to provide services for patients whilst not requiring organisations to cover the costs was initiated a few years ago with the market's major players providing these services to organisations free of capital costs whilst recouping costs from patients and relatives by charging for the services. For children's hospitals the services were to be free.

There has been much debate in the media over the last year around the costs for these services to the public and the restrictions placed on organisations around management of contracts with suppliers. This Trust opted to withdraw from contracting with a supplier for a number of reasons but still wanted to provide the services for the children.

An opportunity arose which made this possible and the Trust embarked on a full scale Trust-wide implementation following an initial pilot on one ward. The pilot commenced in October 2007 and the main aims were to offer free calls phone calls to the children, access to six SKY channels, Internet access and freeview TV to its patients. However, instead of engaging with a national supplier to install and subsequently run the service in line with NHS guidelines the Trust opted to take a very different approach and topurchase the equipment and manage the system internally. This would achieve greater benefit to the staff and children within the Trust, improve the security and provide a solution that fitted the Trust's needs.

Russell Banks, Head of Information Management & Technology at the Trust, explained, "We explored the possibility of an externally managed system from a number of large, national suppliers. But, as well as cost issues we found that contractual obligations were often prohibitive. Deals offered would have tied us in for up to 15 years and restricted the use of the facility. We wanted something that gave us the initial solution but then enabled us to build on that infrastructure to take advantage of the changing needs of the service and technology."

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Case Study

What Russell Banks and his team were looking for was a high quality and cost-effective phone, web and TV bedside service that could be managed as part of the hospital's internal IT and telecoms infrastructure and could be used by both the children and the staff. The IT team at the Trust had worked with technology infrastructure specialist ANS Group on a number of projects, including the installation and management of its Novell and Cisco communications platform.

The Solution

After coming up against obstacles with some suppliers, including high costs and lengthy contracts, the team decided to trial the BedHead phone, Internet and TV service, working with ANS Group to tailor the project's new IP telephony solution to meet the hospital's individual needs.

Installing the BedHead system and providing a free service to children required significant development work from ANS Group. The system is designed to be paid for by users but in order to ensure free access and calls for children, it had to be adapted to link directly to the hospital's existing IP and analogue telephone network.

A major challenge within the pilot has been to maintain the safety of the children whilst allowing them to communicate easily with family and friends on the phone. The Trust wanted to allow the children to have free access to the phone and also allow appropriate individuals to contact the child without causing additional work to the nursing staff on the wards. This significant problem could have restricted the phone use severely unless a novel way of managing this issue could be found. ANS Group solved the security problem with the phone using the CISCO IP telephony solution and writing bespoke software which links into the Trust's clinical discharge summary system.

The system was adapted so that nurses, as a by-product of their normal updating of the information for each patient at admission and discharge, can enable the clinical system to automatically assign each child with a secure personal identification number information. This then would be controlled by the telephony system enabling unique information for

each child's visit and a secure means to access each child.

In November 2007, 25 BedHead units were installed in the pilot with the view to rolling out another 100 over the coming months, to allow children to contact their parents, surf the Internet and watch free view and Sky channels on TV from their bed. The units will allow children to call any national number from their own phone and enables parents or anyone the parent authorises to dial them directly using a direct dial number and unique pin code to ensure the child's safety. Furthermore, the service is completely free for the children as it is funded by Sheffield Children's Hospital Charity.

The solution is neat and tidy with minimal setup and maintenance and minimises the work needed by clinical staff but gives the children the most freedom whilst maintaining their safety. "We chose ANS Group to help us deliver the best possible service to our children", said Russell Banks. "Working together we've been able to develop the BedHead system to provide free access to patients and their parents within a very secure environment."

The Future

While the implementation of the BedHead units at the Trust is still in its pilot stages, the feedback from the children has been phenomenally positive according to Russell Banks. With the service managed internally, ANS Group experts are on hand to offer technical support should the hospital need it.

"The children absolutely love it" Russell Banks said. "The Play specialists ran a poll to see whether we should add a sport or a film channel, so naturally the kids chose both! But we're also introducing more and more learning programmes onto the TVs to make sure the children are getting a good balance between entertainment and education."

"We're still looking into how to make the service as cost-effective as possible, and how to integrate the children's phone service with our internal clinical calls, he continued. "It's been a very successful experience, it's great that we can make our kids as happy as possible throughout their stay in hospital."

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