



Case study

Engaging staff on the EPR rollout at Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust

Synopsis



Ethical Healthcare worked with Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust (SHSC), as part of the delivery team, to inform staff about the new Electronic Patient Record (EPR) and boost adoption.

The need



SHSC faced a critical deadline: the rollout of their new EPR system, Rio, by 31 March 2025. A partial launch in October 2023 had not gone as planned, leading to disengagement and scepticism among staff. To ensure the success of the second launch in March 2025, the trust needed to re-engage and better prepare and motivate the 1,800 affected staff.

While a communications plan existed, the delivery team needed support with hands-on engagement to increase awareness, build trust, boost confidence, and drive adoption across a widely dispersed, multi-site mental health organisation.

The solution



Ethical Healthcare joined the project in November 2024, working through to post go-live in March 2025. Our focus was on preparing people for change. In collaboration with the trust's communications team, we designed and delivered a targeted engagement programme with a focus on awareness, practical support, and readiness.

Key Activities:

On-site Roadshows:

Held across January and February 2025, these roadshows brought Rio trainers and smartcard teams directly to staff across sites, offering:

- System demos and benefit overviews
- Smartcard checking and issuing
- Training sign-ups
- Face-to-face discussions to answer questions and reduce uncertainty
- "Are You Rio Ready?" printed checklists

Sentiment Survey:

Gathered real-time feedback on staff attitudes towards the EPR implementation to inform and adapt engagement efforts.

Service Manager Webinars:

Provided a platform to share critical go-live information, prepare team leaders, and address common concerns.

Rio Champions:

Supported staff champions by attending weekly meetings to understand what they needed to empower staff and troubleshoot early issues.

Ongoing Comms Alignment:

Ensured all messaging was timely, consistent, and responsive to emerging themes from the field.

Challenges



Like any major digital transformation, engagement around the Rio rollout faced some challenges:

- **Staff Engagement:**

Clinical staff often lacked time to engage. The first roadshow week coincided with the New Year and heavy snow, making attendance and logistics also tricky.

- **Apathy and Scepticism:**

Staff remembered the earlier rollout attempt for a smaller cohort of staff and were wary of "another change". Many doubted it would go live. We focused on showing them that this time was different – and that preparing for the new system was worth their time.

- **Logistical Constraints:**

Room bookings and navigating multiple sites added complexity to delivery.

- **Training Demands:**

The mandatory online training was lengthy (12+ hours), and feedback on it was negative. Our role was to support staff in booking on and starting the process. While we couldn't control the training format, we fed back frontline staff comments to the trust and Rio team to be able to adapt.

- **Digital Literacy Barriers:**

There is a scale of digital literacy across clerical and clinical roles and sometimes a fear of change and discomfort with digital tools.

Despite all this, once staff got hands-on with Rio, many recognised its value and potential – realising it was better than expected.

Impact



Rio is now live – and in use. From an engagement perspective, Ethical Healthcare played a key role in supporting the success of the launch:

- Staff were informed, equipped, and onboarded.
- A significant and impactful relationship was developed with the trust communications team. The communications team provided insight and corporate perspective, Ethical Healthcare brought invaluable boosting of the overarching messages to staff and face-to-face engagement.
- The sentiment among frontline teams improved through direct interaction, visibility, and practical support.
- Around 230 people attended roadshows and 93 per cent of staff surveyed found the roadshows helpful and informative
- 69 per cent of respondents to a post-go-live survey confirmed their team's confidence with using Rio is growing

Simon Barnitt, SHSC's Chief Nursing Information Officer, said:

“

The engagement team made a huge difference, supporting teams across the trust to understand and prepare for the new system. Staff were reassured through practical help and advice provided in a personable and engaging way. The team's proactive, hands-on approach added real value and was fundamental to a successful implementation.

”

Judy Smith, Chief Operating Officer, Ethical Healthcare said:

“

Successful digital transformation starts with trust. Our job was to reconnect people with the purpose of the change, meet them where they were, and make the rollout real. By being present, listening hard, and focusing on what staff needed to feel ready, we helped turn a fragile moment into forward momentum.

”

Next steps



While the initial support period has ended, we continue to work with the trust as they enter their optimisation phase, helping staff embed the system into staff's day-to-day routines and make it their own.

Looking ahead:

Additional Rio modules are coming soon – including patient-facing tools, bed flow management, and e-pathways – which will require further user support and awareness-raising.

We're exploring what future engagement support may be needed.

Get in touch



Contact us to find out how we could support with your EPR rollout.