

NORTHERN DOCTORS URGENT CARE IMPROVES PATIENT CARE AND CUTS COSTS BY £100,000 PER YEAR WITH BLACKBERRY SOLUTION AND ASTUTE



Over a decade ago, the UK's healthcare system began providing out-of-hours (OOH) primary medical care through groups of general practitioners (GPs) instead of through individual doctors' practices. In some regions, these groups evolved into private out-of-hours service providers. Northern Doctors Urgent Care (NDUC) serves nearly a million patients in Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Newcastle.

THE CHALLENGE

NDUC is one of the UK's leading OOH care providers, consistently exceeding Government standards for efficiency with an excellent track record in clinical care and patient satisfaction. "We are driven by the desire to provide the best level of service," says Ben Stobbs, IT and Telecommunications Manager, NDUC. The company responds to 180,000 phone calls a year, a quarter of which require a house call by a doctor. NDUC's network of 350 doctors and 13 vehicles serves one of the largest regions in England, including many rural areas where mobile coverage can be intermittent.

In January 2005, the National Health Service began requiring all OOH care providers to comply with stringent national quality requirements. Stobbs says that "We've always met or exceeded them, but I knew that we could meet them more cost effectively if we had a mobile solution that could give our doctors secure, instant access to patient records."

Stobbs and his team began by examining a wide range of mobile options, but none of them were satisfactory. "Different solutions that could provide live access were either too expensive, too complicated for the administrators or too cumbersome for the users."

THE SOLUTION

In early 2008, Stobbs was approached by Astute Mobile Data Solutions, a member of the BlackBerry® Alliance program. "I went into the meeting thinking that BlackBerry was for email only. When I came out I realised that I had found the mobile solution I was looking for," says Stobbs.

In just 12 weeks Astute developed a BlackBerry® application that provides live and secure access to NDUC's clinical records. When the NDUC call centre receives a call that requires a home visit, the dispatch system sends a message containing the call reference number and GPS coordinates to the vehicle's sat-nav unit. As the driver heads to the destination, the doctor looks up the patient records using the application on a BlackBerry® smartphone. On arrival, the doctor has had time to consult the clinical information before entering the home. If the device is out of mobile coverage, the doctor can still consult the patient records because the BlackBerry application caches the information temporarily on the device when the doctor first looks up the records.

The application also allows the doctor to record and submit the results of the consultation, and time stamp the call records with the time and follow up information. The Astute solution was deployed on BlackBerry® Enterprise Server for Exchange with BlackBerry® Mobile Data System, providing NDUC with secure access to email with end-to-end AES encryption, a mobile server administration application, access to network files and folders and a voice guided Sat Nav package from Telmap™ Navigator.

BENEFITS

EFFICIENCY – ONE HOUR OF TIME SAVED PER DOCTOR PER DAY

IMPROVED PATIENT SERVICE

EASE OF USE AND EASE OF DEPLOYMENT

HIGH SECURITY FOR PATIENT DATA

"The speed and cost effectiveness of the BlackBerry solution as well as the quality of the software and training provided by Astute have made this the most pleasurable project I've ever had to manage."

Ben Stobbs
IT and Telecommunications
Manager
NDUC

THE BENEFITS

The BlackBerry solution costs a fraction of other mobile data access solutions, which Stobbs estimates would have set NDUC back approximately £7,000 per vehicle. "The infrastructure investment of BlackBerry is significantly lower than any other solution," says Paul McCormick, Technical Development Manager at Astute. "And user adoption has been high. Training only takes 10-15 minutes; 95% of our doctors were using it within days of roll-out," adds Stobbs.

Prior to implementing the BlackBerry solution, NDUC relied on a paper-based system. Doctors could consult clinical information before leaving the office but if they received a call while out they couldn't access the patient's records. "The BlackBerry solution enables us to provide live access to clinical data whilst meeting all our security requirements – without any effort," says Stobbs.

Mobile access to patient records has improved the quality of care whilst also achieving greater efficiency. "We calculated that the BlackBerry solution would pay for itself if it saved doctors at least 10 minutes per shift, says Stobbs. "In an 8-hour shift, they were spending one hour doing paperwork," says Stobbs. "We've turned that administration time into patient time. And the quality of the care we provide has improved because doctors go into the appointment with accurate information about the patient in their pocket.

The improvements in administrative efficiency also mean that NDUC can handle the same daily caseload with fewer vehicles on the road: "It costs us £8,000 a month to operate a vehicle. One less vehicle a month translates to nearly £100,000 saved over the course of a year."

"The speed and cost effectiveness of the BlackBerry solution as well as the quality of the software and training provided by Astute have made this the most pleasurable project I've ever had to manage," says Stobbs. Word of the solution has begun to spread. Stobbs says he's "so proud and excited" about the BlackBerry solution that other OOH service providers have begun to show interest. "It's just the start of what we can do with BlackBerry," concludes Stobbs.

For further information: www.blackberry.com/go/success

BLACKBERRY CASE STUDY
NDUC

