C3
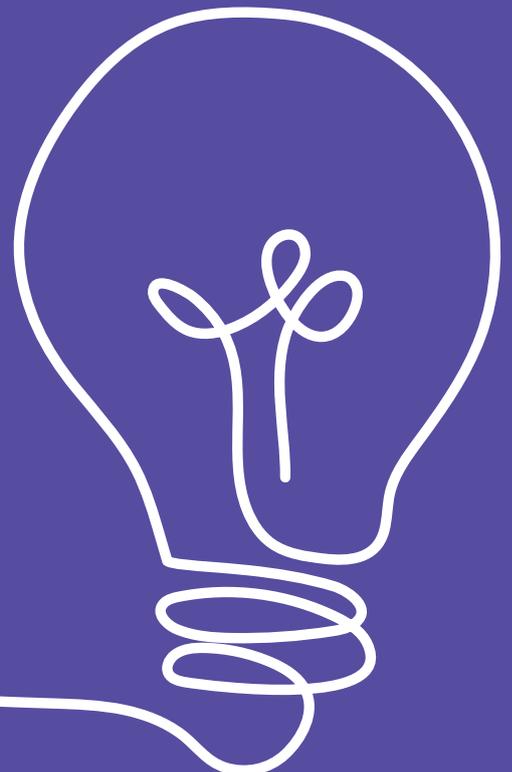
DIGITAL BUDGET MANAGEMENT

UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS OF MORECAMBE BAY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

NORTH WEST, ACUTE

FOR INFORMATION ON THE
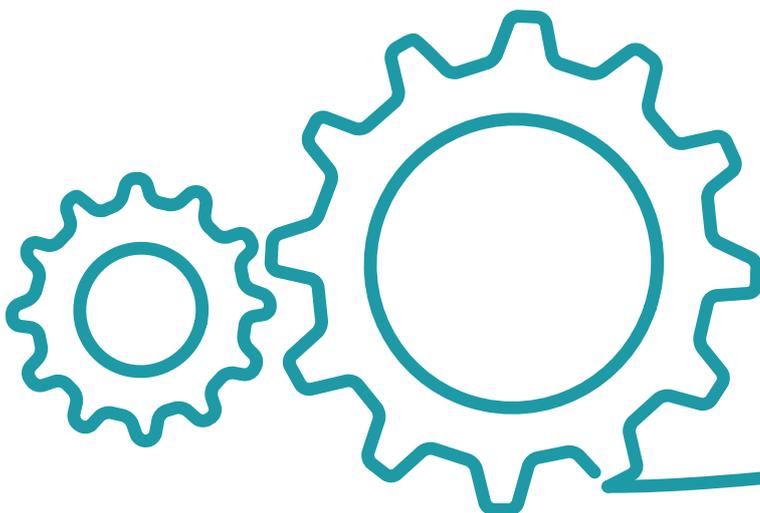INNOVATION PROGRAMME
CLICK HERE

THE INNOVATOR

Ruth Hadwin, senior finance analyst.

THE PROBLEM

The financial management team needs to maintain lists of budget holders, authorised signatories for specific budget codes and the staff who should receive monthly budget reports. This information is used by other finance staff, such as the accounts payable team to ensure compliance with the trust's SFIs approval levels and so that only approved staff are authorising expenditure against the relevant budget codes. In addition, an accurate list is necessary to ensure that the right staff receive monthly budget reports.

THE CHALLENGE

- **How might we develop a paperless and easy to maintain list of authorised approvers and their cost centres? This needed to be available to all members of the finance department as a reference guide to ensure queries are directed to the right person the first time and systems are set up to ensure the approvers can access their relevant budget statements.**

THE INNOVATION

Mapping out the process allowed us to understand the requirements of all finance staff. We worked with the IT department to develop some bespoke software which made use of existing information (to avoid duplication of data) and which integrated with other systems the trust uses such as the electronic staff record (ESR) and email.

By moving away from static excel based lists the time required to maintain the system is significantly reduced as we have been able to simplify and automate tasks. For example, the system is updated daily with an extract from ESR to ensure compliance with the trust's SFIs and updates staff location and banding, which affects the authorised signatory level. The new system replaces the static excel based lists which could contain out of date data without continual manual updating.

By creating a dataset that everyone working in finance has various levels of access to, we have a system which shares information with other finance teams in an accessible manner and contains the most up to date information.

THE LESSONS LEARNT

We learnt:

- **to re-use existing data already held by other departments by integrating with the key data sources such as ESR and Microsoft Office email system**

- **a new way of working using a tool which was not Excel based through developing a broad requirement which focused on the whole process, not just one part of the process**

- **to manage the system when staff were working at home**

- **to use Microsoft Teams extensively for collaborative working through video calls, sharing screens and Teams meetings.**

THE OUTPUTS

- We have a dataset that fulfils a number of financial requirements from a single source.

- The data is constantly updated.

- The data is used for multiple purposes (issuing budget reports, managing the authorised signatory list, identifying budget holders) with everything linked together between the finance ledger, ESR staffing and emails.

- The system can be updated by any of the financial analysts as appropriate.

- Because the system is essentially a full piece of software, the finance team can audit compliance and monitor budget holder awareness of budget positions.

THE OUTCOMES

- We have accessible and up-to-date information, that is easy to maintain and use, which optimises staff time.

- It has helped the accounts payable team to process invoices faster because they have signatory information readily available to them.

- As a finance department we have recently adopted faster closing at month-end and due to the automated process of sending out budget reports, we have been able to meet the target of getting budget reports out in a tighter timeframe.

- We are saving staffing time and have removed the need for manual manipulation of data as it is now automated.

- We have been able to manage the authorised signatories process efficiently while working offsite/at home etc.

THE QUICK WINS

- By moving away from Excel for data lists, you can store huge amounts of data in one place that everyone can access and use for other purposes and even include historical values for reference.

- By storing data in Microsoft SQL Server you can feed other trust information systems and reduce manual staff time manually looking up information.

- You can tailor budget reporting from month to month and can also modify the supporting email and include other information or web links as appropriate which reaches all budget holders with a single click of a button.

- We have reduced data duplication and email addresses are automatically updated in the system if they are changed by the IT team.

THE REVIEWERS SAID

"THIS IS A BRILLIANT INNOVATION WHICH UTILISES DATA AVAILABLE WITHIN THE TRUST AND REDUCES TIME FOR MANUAL REVIEW."

"THIS DEMONSTRATES HOW FINANCE CAN UTILISE TECHNOLOGY TO FREE UP STAFF TIME FROM MANUAL TASKS TO FOCUS ON MORE VALUE ADDING ACTIVITIES."

"THE INNOVATION HAS SAVED TIME FOR STAFF IN THE DEPARTMENT, ADDING VALUE BY HAVING AN ACCESSIBLE AND TIMELY DATA SET."

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

SUBMIT INNOVATION

If you recognise the problem stated and have implemented your own innovation to overcome it please submit this innovation to the programme and give others more examples to learn from.

REGISTER INTEREST

If you recognise the problem stated and would like to know more details about this innovation in particular, we will be hosting showcase and workshop sessions throughout the year, so all interested staff can gain ideas and inspiration from innovators in a manageable one-to-many format.

SUBMIT PROBLEM

If you have a problem but don't currently know of a solution to it, then please submit it here and in 2022 the Forum intends to crowdsource solutions to problems that don't currenlty have known innovations.

LEARN MORE

If you would like to learn more about about the innovation programme please click for more details.

ENDORSEMENT DISCLAIMER

The Finance Innovation Forum's Innovation Programme asks NHS Finance peer reviewers whether the "Innovation overcomes, successfully addresses, or solves the problem identified". The programme does not endorse, recommended or provide any assurance of software used or mentioned in any of the published innovations. If you think a published innovation is being used to falsely validate a commercial product or company please contact **finance.innovation@nhs.net**

IN SEPTEMBER 2021 THE FORUM LAUNCHED...

· A national Innovation Programme for NHS Finance staff to submit their innovations for peer review. Successful innovations will be published and accessible to all on the One NHS Finance website

· A 'Software Skills For Finance Staff' event series taught by NHS Finance for NHS Finance including MS Excel, PowerBI, SQL etc.

· An 'Art of the Possible' briefing which explains two new technologies AI & Blockchain and discusses the opportunity for NHS Finance

· An Automation Group to review and improve the efficiency of existing national processes and returns

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

· Submit your innovations for peer review
· Sign up to be an innovation peer reviewer
· Read Art of the Possible

· Sign up for Software Skills for Finance
· Register your interest in automation and all things innovative

Innovation Programme	Software Skills	Automation sign up	Be a peer reviewer	Art of the Possible

FURTHER INFORMATION

Website: **FinanceInnovation.nhs.uk**

Email: **FinanceInnovation@nhs.uk**

LinkedIn: **One NHS Finance**

Twitter: **@OneNHSFinance**

One NHS Finance brings together the Future-Focused Finance, National Finance Academy, and the Finance Innovation Forum programmes and networks to make sure that everyone working in NHS Finance has access to skills, knowledge, methods, and opportunities to influence and enhance patient services.

An NHS Finance platform for the discovery and development of problems, ideas and innovations.