

CASE STUDY

COLTEN CARE

SAFE AND RESPONSIVE: HOW WE HELPED ONE OF THE UK'S TOP CARE HOME PROVIDERS ACHIEVE AND DEMONSTRATE NURSING EXCELLENCE

THE BACKGROUND

Among the most fundamental qualities of a great care home are that it is both safe to live in and responsive to its residents' needs. Indeed, so vital are the questions of safety and responsiveness, they are explicitly set down as key lines of enquiry in inspections by care sector regulator the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

At Colten Care, which owns and runs 21 care homes across the south, achieving the highest standards of safety and responsiveness is not only a demonstration of external compliance, but perhaps even more importantly, an essential step on the company's own continual journey to excellence.

Five of its homes have been officially declared Outstanding by CQC with the others to be inspected all rated Good. This success, coupled with consistently high scores on the public review site Carehome.co.uk and the fact that all its homes are registered for nursing, makes Colten Care one of the top care home providers of its size in the UK.

To underpin their total focus on the individual care of residents, all home managers at Colten Care have access to group-wide operational support including nurse care technology solutions from Courtney Thorne.

These are designed to collate and show homes' responsiveness to residents' call bells including whether or not any set time period for response is being breached.

THE PROBLEM

In previous years, staff would manually count call bell breaches recorded on a physical print-out, divide these into separate times of day on a Word document and submit a home period report every four weeks to the Colten Care head office.

Here, the operational and audit managers would analyse each home report in turn and use it to prepare a group period report identifying any areas of concern.

The basic data they needed in order to do this was the total number of calls at each home, the average calls per day and the average response time.

The group report was returned to the homes up to six weeks later so they could check and assess how well they were performing when compared to other homes.

The whole process was fraught with problems of consistency and took far too long to produce to be meaningful.

In more recent times, home administrators switched to a spreadsheet to insert the call bell data which they obtained via USB from a Courtney Thorne touchscreen server in each home.

This was a more automated way of showing breaches logged at different times of the day, but it only went so far. It was still a time-consuming task for head office to collate, analyse and send back the data, so there continued to be a waiting period before action could be taken.

In addition, the process led to inaccuracies in the data and required training for administration staff in how to compile it. A certain amount of IT knowledge and capability was demanded too.

The need for a more user-friendly, efficient, dynamic and informative process was recognised



THE CHALLENGE

The relationship between Colten Care and Courtney Thorne has grown and evolved over many years with the introduction of technological innovations along the way.

To tackle the call bell response problem, Courtney Thorne's Head of R&D David Hollings met with Colten Care managers including Richard Upshall from Colten's IT Business support team, to discuss and try to solve their need.

The challenge was to find a way to gather the essential data quickly and accurately from each home, consolidate it and enable automatic collating, monitoring and analysis.

David suggested Courtney Thorne's CT Cloud. This has the advantage of enabling reports to be generated and shared automatically.

Colten Care Operations Director Elaine Farrer says: "We piloted the CT Cloud at two of our homes, Braemar Lodge in Salisbury and The Aldbury, a dedicated dementia care home in Poole. The pilot lasted six months during which staff were interrogating the data and checking for discrepancies. Courtney Thorne then created an automated period report for us. Once we were happy with this, we rolled out the CT Cloud service across the remaining homes."

Elaine continues: "The roll-out involved our IT team visiting each home to connect the Courtney Thorne touchscreen servers to our central IT network. This was to ensure the data could be uploaded autonomously. Right at the beginning a few discrepancies arose when all homes were connected but David and his team responded swiftly to fix that and maintain our complete confidence in the accuracy and integrity of the data."

A few home managers and other senior managers took a little time to get used to navigating the system and so needed some guidance to be able to generate their reports. All are now adept at drilling down into even the most granular data.



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THE BENEFITS

Now that CT Cloud is up and running across all Colten Care homes, the benefits are clear:

- The solution has improved the understanding of when and where calls are originating and how well they are being responded to.
- There are cost savings in avoiding the time previously taken in generating breach reports. Administrators used to spend up to 30 minutes a day counting call bells. While this improved with the spreadsheet and USB approach, the time spent still amounted to several hours each period. Now, the information can be collated with the click of a button.
- As they have complete faith in the data, home managers can be confident in what they are saying when seeking to reassure relatives that their loved one is being seen in a timely manner if concerns ever arise. They can do this instantly and accurately.
- Instant access to reports helps demonstrate responsiveness and safety to CQC.
- Previously, head office-based managers only had visibility of a home's call bell data by actually visiting and sifting through paper records. The only real understanding they had was when the monthly period report was submitted or group reports were collated. Now, they can access all the information, from a quick overview to a detailed analysis of specific individuals, anytime, from anywhere.
- The solution enables users to drill down and look at call bell data in granular detail, with tiered reports that allow excellent visibility at every level.
- Accurate data and swiftly generated reports make it easier to share examples of best practice in call bell handling across all homes.



WHEN IT COMES TO CQC INSPECTIONS, HAVING INSTANT ACCESS TO REPORTS HELPS PROVE OUR RESPONSIVENESS. IT'S EASY FOR OUR HOME MANAGERS TO DEMONSTRATE HOW RESPONSIVE WE HAVE BEEN OVER ANY PERIOD IN QUESTION.



SUMMARY

Summarising the success of the implementation and its benefits, Elaine says: "When it comes to CQC inspections, having instant access to reports helps prove our responsiveness. It's easy for our home managers to demonstrate how responsive we have been over any period in question.

At the same time, we can clearly show that our homes are very safe places. You can't put a price on the visibility we now have on a daily basis. It means we can spot trends, hold staff accountable for any breaches, and identify good practice so we can confidently ask the question: 'Why is this not always the case across our entire portfolio?'. We can see what is happening now, not just what happened before.

We can adjust and improve staff allocation and deployment, and improve our governance and quality assurance. We certainly recommend Courtney Thorne and the CT Cloud. Ultimately, it is helping us drive down response times, ensuring our residents receive the very best care in a timelier manner. It is playing an important supporting role in our objective of being our region's care home provider of choice and employer of choice."



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