

Sapphire Case Study: NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale – IT Department



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Alaine Rose,
Service Support Manager



NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Primary Care Trust (The Trust) is at the heart of local health. The team works hard to improve the health and well-being of every person living within the Rochdale Borough. The Trust covers a population of 216,000, in 4 townships and 21 different wards.

The IT department at The Trust purchased SAP Business One a while ago, but did not implement it at the time. Alaine Rose, Service Support Manager, explained “In a short space of time we had quite a turnover of staff and people seemed to be afraid of using SAP, thinking – wrongly as it turns out – that the system would be too big. We implemented an Access database system instead, but this failed when it went live. As a result we decided that since we had SAP Business One, we should get it up and running.”

The decision was taken to implement SAP Business One, primarily for the warehouse in order to have a proper stock control system for booking-in and booking-out of The Trust’s medical supplies, with limited use of the finance module.

“Once we had made this decision” said Alaine, “I called Sapphire who were fantastic. It was all very quick; someone came to see us from their local Manchester office and ran through with us what could be done with SAP Business One – without trying to convince us to buy costly additional bolt-on software, which we were impressed with.”

One of the key product features that made SAP Business One the most appropriate fit for The Trust was Item Management. “95% of procurement is managed using the solution” said Emma Smith, IT and Asset Warehouse Manager, “Pretty much everything in the warehouse is controlled with SAP Business One; it used to be done manually using requisition books, so we are saving a lot of time now. We are able to tightly control everything: we can see who has what and where it’s gone. I find the queries I can run with SAP Business One are very useful – detailed information is available without my having to manipulate data. Also the options for reporting are fantastic – SAP Business One provides exactly what we need.”

Emma surmised “SAP Business One is 100% better than the Access database – there is no comparison. We were really struggling to control the warehouse and inventory before.”

“It’s a shame we didn’t think to use it sooner” added Alaine. “We’d be in complete turmoil now if we didn’t have SAP Business One in place.”



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The Trust was live with SAP Business One around 10 weeks from the time Alaine placed her call. “We had a tight budget which Sapphire worked within; focusing on the things we really needed to know about. The team at Sapphire did very well with the time that we had.”

Emma went on to say “The set up of our solution was a bit unusual, since we don’t operate in the same way as a profit making organisation. For example sometimes we sell products for the same price that we buy them at.” She continued “The Sapphire Consultant that provided our training during the implementation had endless patience with us. Now that we are using SAP Business One we wonder why we struggled with it, but during the initial training we felt it was a bit daunting, for example learning the terminology used in the system. When we went live we made very few calls to the Support desk, so we must have been well prepared!”

Now that SAP Business One is in place Emma and Alaine are very pleased with the benefits it is bringing. Many departments within The Trust buy their own items that are then stored in the central warehouse. Using SAP Business One Emma is able to give each department an instant report of what they have stored and who has what – compiling this information would have taken hours previously.

“Bearing in mind that SAP Business One isn’t specifically designed for what we use it for, it is doing a marvellous job” said Emma, “it is incredibly flexible and we are benefiting from improved organisation and practicality – we now have an overall view of all of the stock that we have, and we know exactly where each item is.”

When asked about the current level of service received from Sapphire’s Support Team, Alaine said “We don’t need to speak to them very often to be honest, which shows that the training we had more than captured our needs. The Support Team Manager is very proactive; she will call us to see how we are getting on and sends us through any new documentation that we might need. We couldn’t ask for better.”

Emma said “On the rare occasions that I do have queries, the way we use the system can be tricky to explain! If the Support Consultant doesn’t have an immediate fix, they will always find one then call me back.”

“SAP Business One is actually pretty easy to use once you know how” Emma tells us, “I find having test systems in place useful for trying out new things and further customisation. Our unique use of SAP Business One really shows that it can be configured to fit any organisation – using a test system has allowed me to manipulate work-arounds to the ‘out of the box’ set up of SAP Business One, without disrupting the live system or the risk of affecting our data.”

The Trust uses HP Open View for controlling service support and delivery and has plans to link this system with their SAP Business One solution in due course. This will enable more staff to have a view of existing stock and items available for sale, thus further increasing operational efficiency at The Trust.



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There are also plans in place to roll-out SAP Business One to more users and to additional departments in the longer term – “the more the better!” says Alaine.

To others reviewing their business management systems Alaine advises “Review what you already have and call Sapphire to see if it can be refreshed, perhaps with a bolt-on solution. Make sure you get proper in depth training from the word go so that you can make the optimum use of your system.”

Of the working relationship with Sapphire, Alaine said “One of the things we like about working with Sapphire is that we don’t receive a lots of sales calls and our Account Manager isn’t constantly trying to ‘up sell’ to us – it’s very refreshing.”

Emma added “We get all of the information we need, regarding seminars and new releases for example, but we are not bombarded. We can always get hold of the team at Sapphire and the website and Sapphire Online Support sites are never down.”

Alaine concluded “We are receiving absolute value for money. The system does what it says on the tin and more. Once you’ve got it, you wonder how you lived without SAP Business One; it can do almost anything you want it to.”