INDUSTRY

Healthcare

CHALLENGE

Improve indexing of patient files and reduce storage costs

SOLUTION

Off-site records management

VALUE

> Accurate and compliant patient medical records inventory

> Better productivity with records located in seconds rather than hours

> Consistent process with substantially lower storage cost

CASE STUDY

BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL MENTAL HEALTH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

MORE EFFICIENT AND COMPLIANT RECORDS MANAGEMENT AT LOWER COST

STRIVING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Department of Health regulations require all mental health trusts to retain patient medical records for 20 years after last treatment, and eight years after a patient's death. In serving more than a million people across over 40 sites, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust had built up a substantial archive.

Like all NHS bodies, the Trust strives to find ways to do things better. So, when its contract for off-site storage of inactive patient files was ending, it looked at other options.

Maria Kane, Head of Care Records Management and Clinical Coding, takes up the story: "In truth we were looking to improve how we manage our records. Costs were beginning to escalate and we needed to improve file indexation to speed retrieval."

ACHIEVING BETTER VALUE, FASTER

Wishing to avoid a time-consuming procurement exercise, the Trust looked for a different compliant approach.

"Moving from our existing supplier to Iron Mountain would offer the opportunity to review file structures and improve the way they are indexed to aid productivity," says Maria Kane.

SECURITY AND IRON-CLAD CHAIN OF CUSTODY

Before the contract was awarded, a team from the Trust carried out an audit of the Iron Mountain® storage operation to validate governance and process. "We were most impressed by the Iron Mountain facility," says Maria. "It's a professional operation, with robust procedures and technology to assure security and chain of custody."

The Trust appointed Iron Mountain as off-site records management sole provider under a five-year contract, with the option of two one-year extensions. Iron Mountain formed a dedicated team and created a project plan to manage the transition of files from the existing storage provider.

A key requirement was to maintain continued access to patient files at all times throughout the transition. The principal limitation was the rate at which the existing storage contractor was able to organise pallets of files for collection. Iron Mountain acted as intermediary to minimise the bottleneck.

RAPID FIVE-MONTH UPLIFT PROJECT

On receipt, each box of files was examined and re-boxed as necessary. Each box was identified with a new bar code and an index of its content created. Key metadata collected for each individual file included patient name, date of birth, patient or NHS number, and date of death if appropriate.

> " IRON MOUNTAIN PROVIDES US WITH AN EXCELLENT SERVICE – FRIENDLY, PROFESSIONAL AND EFFICIENT. I CAN'T RECOMMEND THEM HIGHLY ENOUGH. "

Maria Kane
Head of Care Records Management and Clinical Coding
Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Data was recorded in the Iron Mountain Connect™ records management system by a dedicated Iron Mountain data entry team. Badly contaminated boxes were photographed and quarantined for investigation.

In just five months, Iron Mountain transitioned 37,000 boxes of files containing over 800,000 patient files and 200,000 medical cards, some dating back to the 1940s. "It was a very successful, stress-free and painless project," confirms Maria. "We now have complete visibility of our archives and much faster access to files."

EASY ACCESS WITH 24-HOUR DELIVERY

Retrieval orders for individual patient files are now input via the Iron Mountain Connect portal by specially trained Trust co-ordinators in four care record rooms. Those files are retrieved by Iron Mountain and delivered to the Trust the next day. On average around 100 files are retrieved each week, served by a daily delivery and collection service to each of the care record rooms.

The off-site archive is being added to all the time. Typically, 150 boxes of files are transferred to Iron Mountain every month. At end-of-life, Iron Mountain quarantines files no longer required and, once approval is received, manages secure disposal. A destruction certificate is provided to the Trust.

LOWER COSTS AND IMPROVED EFFICIENCY

Having a better inventory of patient records has enabled the Trust to greatly enhance productivity in its care record rooms. "What before could take us hours we now achieve in seconds," says Maria. "Iron Mountain Connect is easy to use and gives us a complete inventory of our files, so we can manage them far more proactively than in the past."

More proactive management means the Trust has managed to reduce its inventory to less than 31,000 boxes, equating to 42,200 cubic feet. That, coupled with the best value provided by the contract, has enabled the Trust to substantially reduce ongoing storage costs.

There are compliance benefits too. The quality and integrity of the Iron Mountain storage environment coupled with more consistent processes means it is far easier to demonstrate adherence to NHS information governance and data protection rules.

Maria Kane sums up: "Iron Mountain provides us with an excellent service – friendly, professional and efficient. I can't recommend them highly enough."

Looking to the future the Trust is assessing the benefits of digitising patient files for electronic transfer rather than physically transporting them. This has speed and sustainability benefits and is a task Iron Mountain is fully equipped to perform.

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Maria Kane
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Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

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