

Odyssey saves East Midlands Ambulance Service £40m and 116,000 ambulance journeys a year

East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) has saved £40 million and more than 116,000 unnecessary ambulance journeys a year during a decade of using Odyssey software from Advanced

The technology is used by the service's team of clinicians at its Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) to accurately respond to the 2,000 999 calls it receives every day and ensure ambulances are only sent to those in need. It was implemented to meet the demand for ambulances which rises by approximately 6% every year, without the equivalent increase in funding. In 2015 the service also went live with Advanced's patient management system Adastra, which integrates with Odyssey to give its EOC staff automatic access to NHS Spine services.

Background

EMAS receives a 999 call approximately every 45 seconds. The service supports 4.8 million residents across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire. It has two Emergency Operation Centres in Lincoln and Nottingham and employs 2,700 staff. As well as responding to urgent and emergency calls and providing care and treatment at the scene, EMAS also responds to urgent requests for transport from GPs and hospitals.

Pioneering a new approach to spiralling demand

Prior to implementing Odyssey in 2005 EMAS had no clinical support system in place which meant an ambulance was dispatched to every 999 call. With the number of calls increasing, at a rate of 100% over the past 10 years, the service's management team realised that they needed to take action.

In 2003, the organisation became the first in the country to pilot a new approach by employing nurses in their EOCs to respond to low priority calls. This meant that ambulances that may have been sent out could be called back and advice given over the phone. The project was so successful that EMAS decided to invest in software that would provide more governance and support for the clinical staff responding to calls. Saving 320 ambulance journeys per day

Odyssey was implemented on the advice of EMAS' lead nurse who had previous experience of using the system at NHS Direct. Once a call has been identified as non-emergency by the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system it automatically passes into Odyssey. The software



Client >

East Midlands Ambulance Service

Sector >

Emergency Services

Project >

Odyssey

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Neil Spencer > Service Improvement Manager > EMAS

uses an algorithm based on patients' response to questions to guide clinicians to provide the right treatment – either self-care or directing the patient to the right service. This means ambulances remain free for those in serious or life-threatening situations.

Neil Spencer, Service Improvement Manager, EMAS, says, "We wouldn't perform as a trust if we did not have Odyssey. Without it we would not be able to save the amount of lives we are saving because we would have vehicles tied up on non-emergency calls.

"Every single day it saves us around 320 needless ambulance journeys."

16% of all the emergency calls that the organisation receives are now able to be resolved via telephone advice without an ambulance being dispatched.

Providing the most appropriate and convenient care

Using Odyssey has enabled the ambulance service to provide all of its patients with the most relevant treatment, rather than simply sending them to hospital in an ambulance.

"Saving ambulance journeys for those most in need is obviously a massive benefit for those in a serious situation," says Spencer.

"What it also means is that non-emergency patients also receive the best service possible. Rather than

having an ambulance arrive and take them to hospital, someone in a less serious situation will receive accurate and safe telephone advice for self-care or signposting them to a more appropriate and convenient care pathway.

"Patients want what is convenient for them and if we can provide that treatment for them then that is beneficial for patients, for the ambulance service and for the wider NHS."

Providing the most appropriate and convenient care

The demand for ambulances rises by approximately 6% every year, without the equivalent increase in funding. It was this dilemma that initiated EMAS' pioneering use of clinical staff in their EOCs and investment in the Odyssey system. As these pressures remain, the service is continuing to invest in its IT by implementing Adastra to ensure it is delivering the most accurate and safe care possible.

Spencer concludes, "Systems like Adastra and Odyssey provide us with all the support and information we need to be able to make decisions safely for our patients. Without them more patients would be unnecessarily taken to hospital, which is inconvenient for them and the wider NHS. Crucially, it also means that fewer ambulances are tied up on non-emergency cases. Keeping our ambulances free for when they are most needed is how we can keep saving lives."

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