



Intelligent e-rostering for junior doctors could save most NHS trusts 10% of their locum spend per year, says Zircadian

Savings of £300,000 per year per trust are a conservative estimate

Zircadian, the leading supplier to the NHS of software and consultancy for hospital doctors, has stated that using e-rostering can save trusts significant sums each year, while ensuring patient services are maintained or even improved. Recent changes in working practices for junior doctors means that trusts are often forced to use expensive locums to fill gaps on rosters. As well as being an expensive option, anecdotal evidence has shown that external locums are often not as efficient or knowledgeable of local working practices as internal locums and therefore could be putting patient safety at risk.

Dr. Masood Ahmed, Director at Zircadian stated, "Locum spends across the NHS are high at the present time because of the number of vacancies on rosters and a reduction in hours worked due to the European Working Time Directive. In our experience it is not unusual for trusts to be one or two doctors short on a roster, which puts huge pressure on the other doctors. Trusts are in a position where they either rely on internal doctors to work extra hours, which can result in breaches of the New Deal and EWTD, or they must appoint an external locum."

Use of e-rostering solutions could help trusts solve the problem of filling gaps on rosters with the most appropriate doctors. The system makes it much quicker and easier for administrators to find all suitable doctors that can potentially fill a gap. By identifying more of their own doctors in the pool, trusts can offer them the extra work and keep track of their hours. Also, by appointing more internal locums, use of more expensive external locums is minimised and quality of care is maintained. External locums typically cost between 30% and 60% more than an internally sourced locum.

The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is currently implementing Zircadian's junior doctors' rostering software. John Slade, who is Medical Staffing

Manager at the Trust commented, “The new doctors e-rostering solution enables the trust to be more cost effective in the appointment of doctors to fill gaps on rosters. We expect to be able to employ an internal locum at NHS rates, rather than at agency rates. This alone is a significant saving of hundreds of pounds per shift. When fully implemented the e-rostering system will enable admin staff to quickly identify all the doctors that are available to work an additional shift, even out of hours, because it is a web-based system that is updated in real time. An important additional benefit is that we know the capabilities and quality when we use internal doctors whereas with an external agency we do not. This further ensures that patient safety is maintained.’

Dr. Ahmed continues, “A typical NHS trust can have an annual locum spend of between £3m and £6m depending on its size. By being able to manage doctors’ rosters more effectively and find replacement doctors internally without contravening the New Deal and EWTD regulations, trusts can not only minimise the reliance on external locums but can reduce costs associated with using internal resources. A saving of 10% on locum spend per year is a conservative but achievable estimate of how much trusts can save while potentially providing a better service to patients.”

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About Zircadian

Since its beginning in 2000 Zircadian has expanded and diversified rapidly to become the leading provider of software and consultancy for all hospital doctors in the NHS. Its solutions are used by 139 NHS organisations. The company has two suites of workforce solutions. It’s junior doctor workforce portal is the secure online gateway to solutions for rota management, e-rostering, e-monitoring, and locum management. Zircadian’s consultant workforce portal provides secure online access to solutions for consultant job planning, leave management, activity rostering, and revalidation. Zircadian’s software is user-friendly and comes supported by a professional, dedicated help-desk team.

For more information please visit: www.zircadian.com

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