



Capacity Tracker is a web-based system built by NHS North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) in partnership with NHS England, Local Authority representatives and care home providers. It enables care homes to share their vacancies in real-time, meaning hospital discharge teams and other health professionals can rapidly search availability throughout England.



I'm Craig Lovatt, and I'm an information analyst at Telford and Wrekin CCG and Shropshire CCG.

Primarily I work for Telford and Wrekin, but we've come together as a single organisation, so I'm a CCG analyst

for both. My role is to extract and report the data. I work closely with Local Authority leads, and I've been heavily involved with care home projects within our area for some time.

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How have you been using Capacity Tracker?

Early in the year, we were aware of COVID-19 and the possibility of a pandemic. Because of my care home experience, I was asked to provide business continuity support so that we could maintain essential functions during this time. I work closely with Exec's within the health service here, and they wanted to look at how we could support the care homes, record data and have a clear view of what was happening. At this point, we also received national guidance that all care homes must use the business continuity aspect of Capacity Tracker.

It was mid-March, and the pandemic was escalating. We brought together a group of people across our STP, including the Local Authority, Execs within health and myself to instigate the use of Capacity Tracker across all care homes in our area.

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Were you using Capacity tracker before COVID and the guidance was issued?

No, some of my colleagues were aware of it, but we weren't using it. This was because locally there was already a brokerage in place with an alternative database source that we were using called SPICK. This was the data source for recording everything in care homes, including vacancies, Delayed Transfers of Care (DTOC) information about hospital care and discharges.

Apart from lead Exec's in the local authority and some care homes who were aware of Capacity Tracker, it wasn't widely used locally. We have approximately 155 care homes in our patch, and we had around 20 registered with Capacity Tracker because we were using our local system. Originally we were going to stay with the local system as we were familiar with it and people were using it. However, we found collating all the data in one place was clunky, and changing this would have required a lot of work.

I'd already started looking at and working with Capacity Tracker at this point. I recommended that we move to use it because the way it was set-up for business continuity meant we would be able to input, extract and monitor the data all in one place. The Local Authority leads took this on board and agreed. So, we put the local system aside and informed all care homes that with immediate effect, they must register for Capacity Tracker. It took us about four weeks to get every care home on board. It was quite a steep learning curve, but the national directive ensured that they moved swifter than they would have done. We also emphasised the benefits to them and why we needed them to be using it. That leverage was certainly helpful and speeded up the enrolment process.

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What benefits have you seen from using Capacity Tracker?

Because all local care homes are submitting data, it means from my point of view as an analyst; I can do my work. I've created a local business continuity dashboard by extracting critical data and pulling it down into our local version, which goes out twice weekly. This enables the Local Authority teams to identify areas of concern such as mini outbreaks of COVID-19, staffing problems, PPE requirements and update rates regarding ASC funding as this was time-critical. The dashboard that I've created has enabled the Local Authority to manage any business continuity concerns easily. Having the data all in one place has been the most significant benefit, and the fact that it is clean and easy to follow is a bonus. Often with systems, the data is hidden away, but this is very straight-forward. From the front page, you can export the data out, and it also allows you to copy and paste from the dashboard itself. This aspect of the design and functionality is excellent.

"It's a well-rounded system that is easy to use, and it works. It's a powerful tool."

Can you tell us more about the dashboard you've created to work alongside Capacity Tracker?

The local business continuity dashboard I created is based on the data reported in Capacity Tracker. This resulted in a single screen where teams could view any outbreaks and monitor infection rates easily. Rather than basing this information on capacity, I used occupancy level data, which in standard care home reporting aside from COVID-19 isn't easy to do because we don't usually see up-to-date live occupancy levels. I've also created system tables so we can view the current status of PPE and identify homes that haven't updated the system for more than 72 hours. I've also built trend charts to show occupancy status and the number of homes reporting COVID-19. At the click of a button, this allows us to see if a care home is improving or not. The dashboard has been well-received by everyone.

Once the immediate threat of COVID subsides, do you think you will ever go back to your local system?

I don't believe so. We've now got to the position where everyone likes it, and they are using it very well. We've also seen the benefits it provides. I can't see us reverting to the old system when we have 100% of the care homes in our area now using Capacity Tracker.

"It has been a vital business continuity tool and particularly valuable during the pandemic."

If you were going to tell other people about Capacity Tracker, what would you say to them?

The functionality and the data that Capacity Tracker gathers is well put together and thought out. The fact that it's all in one place is a benefit as it allows people to import and export information easily. It has been a vital business continuity tool and particularly valuable during the pandemic. I've also heard that there are future developments in the pipeline for Hospice and mental health care, and if they are implemented, the whole system will be very useful. It's a well-rounded system that is easy to use, and it works. It's a powerful tool.