

Newcastle City Council improves Social Worker Services and Staff Safety with a new Visits Mobile Working App

MX

MX is a scalable and easy-to-use toolkit that puts you in control of your mobile app design, deployment and management. The toolkit allows you to create bespoke, cross-platform apps that can be used online or offline to improve your service delivery, security and integration.

Reduced admin allowing more time for
frontline care

Improved data security

Improved staff safeguarding

Fully integrated with back-office system



What challenge was Newcastle City Council facing?

Newcastle City Council's social workers are required to work flexibly within the community, visiting service-users in their homes. The organisation has 155 social workers who make over 2500 visits each month, on average.

Handwritten notes detailing observations and actions required for the service-user are taken on site and entered into the back-office system, CareFirst, on arrival back at the office. The time spent rekeying and updating digital records consumed half of the social worker's week - time that could be better spent on frontline care.

Senior Social Worker, Leigh Graham, said *"A huge part of our time is spent typing things up and it really takes away from the time we get to spend with families. Around half of the week is spent typing up notes because there is so much reporting to be done and being able to evidence the fact that we have had those discussions and that we have put safety plans in place or addressed risks, is important."*

Not only does this process have an impact on the quality of care given to the service-user, due to wasted time, it also poses several security and safeguarding risks. Paperwork containing sensitive data has the potential to be lost and workers could be entering situations that are potentially unsafe without any prior knowledge or warning. It is also important to Newcastle City Council that the service is entirely auditable - being able to ensure that visits are being made on time and the services-users are receiving the care they require.

What was its solution?

NDL's mobile working toolkit, MX, allowed Newcastle City Council to quickly develop an app alongside the social workers to satisfy their needs and make improvements to the services they provide.

The app collates case information from CareFirst and presents it to social workers on site, usually at the service-user's home. New case notes, observations and actions can be added to the same file and synced automatically with back office systems, eliminating the need for social workers to return to the office to rekey data – improving service quality and data security.

Newcastle City Council is aiming to address potential safeguarding risks with the use of this app by including a feature which displays associated warnings about the visit environment to the social worker – warning them of any potential dangers prior to their visit.

Geo-tagging supports Newcastle City Council in further safeguarding the social workers, allowing the relevant authority to determine whether the worker has been inactive in their current location for too long and requires assistance. The second benefit of geo-tagging is the auditing opportunities it presents. Workers can rest assured that their work is being recorded, allowing them to focus on the care and support needed.

This new Social Worker Visits app has been implemented primarily as an 'improvement to service' solution and by using this app Newcastle City Council aims to make significant progress on their target to process case notes in a more timely manner. The app was initially tested by 10-12 Social Worker 'guinea pigs' and proved to be successful, as a result Newcastle City Council will now begin to roll out the app to all its social workers.

What benefits has it seen?

The Social Worker Visits App allows the Social Workers to:

- Improve timekeeping with a digital schedule of appointments and maps of visit locations
- Improve communication by providing contact details of the family/child they are visiting
- Update information in real time on site, with pre-defined assessment questions, increasing the accuracy of the data
- Produce an audit trail, showing that the worker has arrived at the visit and allowing them to mark if they are unable to contact the family or have been denied access
- Improve safeguarding by displaying any warnings about the family, child or environment and allowing relevant authorities to see they have completed their visits
- Contribute to Newcastle City Council's Agile agenda and embrace mobile working

"Our teams of social workers are really excited by this new mobile working app as they are freed up to spend more time with the service users"

Joe Bradshaw
Senior ICT Solutions Analyst



For more information, visit www.ndl.co.uk or email info@ndl.co.uk