

CASE STUDY

“Ada” automates Bedfordshire and Luton referrals

When processing incoming paediatric referrals became onerous, Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) NHS Trust, which hosts Bedfordshire and Luton children’s services, turned to NHS Shared Business Services and UiPath for assistance.

With each referral taking up to 40 minutes and a risk of error rates of around 10%, CCS knew their system could be improved.

They partnered with automation experts at NHS Shared Business Services and UiPath. The result was Ada – a digital worker who streamlines referrals, reduces admin and improves efficiency.



The team see Ada as part of the workforce. She has a backstory, and she’s been welcomed with open arms.”

Mark Crannage

Associate Director, Business, Information and Digital Systems
Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust

THE CHALLENGE

Paediatric referrals at Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust were admin-heavy, causing delays in patient care and stress for staff.

Processing each referral took around 40 minutes, with data needing to be extracted from each referral then manually input into CCS's downstream system.

The routine, unrewarding work was stressful for staff, who had other tasks to complete, and unpopular with patients and colleagues, who frequently had to deal with errors.

Worst of all, the manual nature of referrals meant that children were waiting longer than necessary for the outcome of the request for support and acceptance onto the community paediatrics referral pathway.



THE SOLUTION

A new automation, “Ada”, went live in the trust in April 2025. A digital workforce solution designed to revolutionise the way referrals are handled, Ada processes around 240 referrals each month.

Referred to as “she” by her colleagues, Ada “reads” incoming referrals from GPs and other professionals, and is able to automatically input the data they contain into CCS’s downstream system.

By automating data extraction, validation and input, Ada – named after the mathematician Ada Lovelace – not only speeds up referral processing, but also standardises referral handling across the trust, ensuring it’s compliant with referral protocols.

Built on UiPath’s automation platform, Ada also:

- When triggered, automatically sends Conner’s Assessment questionnaires to parents, carers and teachers when recognising the presence of ADHD in children over five years of age.
- Sends real-time notifications to referrers to let them know their referral has been processed.



Ada Lovelace, 1815 – 52, pioneering mathematician and inventor of the computer program. The referrals automation is named in her honour.

THE RESULT

Ada has reduced the average time taken to process a referral from 40 minutes to less than five.

A 90% risk reduction of errors ensures rework and manual intervention is kept to a minimum. Response times have reduced by 50%, ensuring that referrers are kept informed of the progress of their referral at all times and are less likely to send follow-up enquiries.

With over 116 hours saved per month, staff have more time to devote to value-add front-line patient care and improving the patient experience, reducing stress levels. And projected cost savings of c. £16,000 per year mean that service levels can be maintained without increasing headcount, and Ada will have paid for herself in two years.

Ada's success has not gone unnoticed, with other trusts across the region now investigating the possibility of implementing their very own Ada to handle referrals.

SUMMARY

- Processing time per referral reduced from 40 minutes to five
- 116 staff hours saved per month
- Risk of error rate reduced from c.10% to less than 1%
- Referrals acknowledgements sent within 12 hours, compared with 48 hours previously
- Cash savings of c. £16,000 per year



NHS SBS have been brilliant. They've listened to us, they've bought into the concept. We see the NHS SBS team as part of our team, not a third party. I can't tell you how much of a positive impact that has."

Mark Crannage

Associate Director, Business, Information and Digital Systems.

Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust

For more information, email sbs.hello@nhs.net