



Lean in Healthcare

An Holistic Approach



“Our broad experience of implementing lean, a deep understanding of health care and a proven methodology enables our clients to gain immediate hands on experience with minimal risk”

Tim Richardson
Managing Director

Lean in Healthcare

The real Challenge

The healthcare needs of patients continue to require increasing levels of service from the NHS at a time when associated levels of public investment are no longer rising year on year. This presents a particular set of challenges to service providers who are therefore looking to secure optimum efficiencies from within their existing systems.

Many NHS Trusts are looking at deploying the lean and six sigma techniques that have been so successful in manufacturing industry, to drive efficiency and effectiveness programmes within their healthcare delivery systems.

Do Lean and Six Sigma techniques transfer successfully to health care?

The answer is yes, provided the complexity, culture and diversity of healthcare system objectives are really understood.

For example, variations in demand within a healthcare system must be properly understood if lean and six sigma techniques are to succeed. Where these techniques are successfully deployed there is a growing body of evidence that shows:

- Greater capacity - allowing more procedures from the same resources
- Reductions in waiting lists
- Lower cost – removing under recovery of PBR
- Greater ownership, commitment and morale

And most fundamentally better health outcomes.

Our broad experience of implementing lean, a deep understanding of health care and a proven methodology enables our clients to gain immediate hands on experience with minimal risk.

Together, we deliver initial improvements and provide you with an understanding of the wider benefits and challenges of adopting a lean approach. This is a journey and like all journeys it has to start. But there are some fundamental questions:

Where do we start to make changes and what is the potential?

Most Trusts find the optimal approach is to find a person to act as a change agent, acquire some knowledge of lean, identify a crisis area and start the improvement process. Our intense initial “event” lasts no more than 5 days and will focus on a single discrete set of activities (the management and scheduling of patients through a single theatre would be a good example). We will impart the principles and basic tools of lean and together these will be applied to determine where the process is wasteful or disjointed, the root causes of the problems and potential solutions.

All of our consultants have extensive operational experience within the NHS, which is reflected in their pragmatic, mentoring approach.

An initial “Event” to deliver immediate benefit and grow understanding of the 5 lean principles

Lean and Six Sigma are all embracing philosophies with a vast array of tools of techniques, all valid but overwhelming to most organisations. At the core are some simple to use techniques that will deliver real insight that can be touched and understood by all.

Our approach is based on some initial training, reinforced by immediate application in a single process.

You will learn through the practical use of the techniques rather than trying to absorb the theory. Depending upon the complexity of the initial focus area, subsequent sessions may need to be run to ensure

that all of the principles are implemented with robustness and rigour. This will then provide the platform for on-going continuous improvements using tools, which our consultants will deliver and, which you can quickly learn and be used by NHS staff.

The principle of our approach which is described on the next page, is based on the practical application of the 5 principles of lean described by the **NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement**.

The initial event will be designed to meet the bespoke needs and challenges that you face and will cover as much or as little of the 5 principles as is appropriate, but whatever the approach it will be designed to deliver short-term benefits and an experience that will allow you to understand the wider opportunities and challenges.

How do we deliver the potential that has been identified?

There are a wide variety of options that can be taken. The benefits will be clear and compelling. Our consultants can support you to deliver these initial benefits and to develop practical strategies for enduring benefit. Our approaches include:

- Developing a trust wide lean strategy
- Creating a lean in healthcare aware and skilled workforce
- Cultural development to support effective lean in healthcare approach

Our support is always based on facilitating change and building the skills and confidence within the trust essential to deliver sustained and enduring healthcare benefits.



“The initial “event” is results driven and focuses on a few core tools, delivering real process improvements in a way that supports the current organisation and shows the potential of the wider benefits to the organisation.”

Anne Carter
Consultant
The Consultancy
Company

The Principles of addressing “Lean in Healthcare”



"Effective management, call it lean if you will, means thinking about flow from the patient's point of view. So we work with healthcare providers to improve the whole patient pathway."

Harry Longman
Lead Consultant
The Consultancy
Company

1. What adds value and what doesn't?

It is critical that any organisation understands what the patient or carer values and what employees want from the NHS.

Value is any activity, which improves the patient's health, well being and experience of the healthcare system.

2. What does the patient journey (value stream) look like?

Value stream mapping is a simple to use technique that will graphically illustrate where in the process value (as perceived by patient) is added and more crucially where it is not. Staff then work together to design a better way of working without the waste and delays. Action plans are created with clear timescales and individuals are responsible for implementing the improved process. It is important to understand the true causes of problems as opposed to the visible symptoms and tools such as fishbone (Ishikawa) diagrams are ideal for this.

3. How can we make this repeatable?

We need to align healthcare processes to facilitate a smooth flow of patients and information. This requires an understanding of demand planning and how to avoid batching and queuing. Tools such as 5S, process measurement charts and pareto charts can be used to understand issues and improve processes.

4. How can we “pull” resources and information as needed?

Every step in the patient journey needs to pull people, skills, materials and information towards it, one at a time, when needed. Once a pull system is adopted, resources are matched with demand, flow improves and utilisation increases.

5. What next?

The final step in lean implementation is to continuously strive for perfection. This typically comes from a number of small improvements once a basic level of stability is achieved from the first four principles.

But remember, this is a journey that has a beginning but no end.