

# NHS Trust Adapts Faster to Healthcare Change with Unit4 FP&A



## Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT) is re-imagining its financial planning with Unit4 Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A). Smarter budgeting, forecasting, and reporting are helping to cut through the complexity of financial planning and deliver agile, adaptive change.

- Supports faster, more informed financial planning, budgets, and forecasting decisions.
- Enables Trust to respond quickly to fast-changing, uncertain healthcare conditions.
- Saves three weeks during budget setting and one week for forecasting.
- Shortens planning cycles, centralizes data planning, and rapidly adjusts plans.

### More informed budgeting and forecasting decisions

The merger of Luton and Dunstable University Hospital with Bedford Hospital to become Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT) created a unified Trust that now supports 700,000 people in Bedfordshire and the surrounding areas. There are more than 1,100 inpatient beds across the sites, managed by 8,500 members of staff. Last year, the Trust cared for 175,000 admitted patients and treated almost one million outpatient and emergency department attendees.

One of the goals of the merger was to understand financial data better, using tightly integrated, real-time data to make faster, more informed decisions surrounding financial planning, budgets, and forecasting. “We had lots more data, a larger finance department, and some very old budgeting systems,” says Alison Upton, Finance Manager, BHFT. “We needed to create alignment across the organization so we had one single approach to planning and forecasting.”

Prior to implementing Unit4 FP&A, the Trust relied on a spreadsheet-based strategy for financial planning decisions. “We needed to take control of our business planning and forecasting processes,” Alison explains. “In the complex NHS finance environment, spreadsheets struggled to cope. Changes were difficult to implement, absorbed too many resources, delayed decisions, and increased risk.

With a turnover of £780 million and a £116 million investment in infrastructure to deliver modern NHS services, change was needed fast. “We are already a highly satisfied user of Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), so it was a small step to choose FP&A,” says Ricky Shah, Deputy Director of Finance, BHFT. “FP&A

#### Industry

Healthcare

#### Location

Bedfordshire, UK

#### Size

8,500 employees supporting >1,100 inpatient beds

#### Product

Unit4 Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A); Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

### Challenges

Newly merged NHS Trust needed to move away from slow, time-consuming, and potentially inaccurate spreadsheet-based financial reporting. The scale and complexity of the Trust demanded a modern, agile approach to budgeting and forecasting.

### Key metrics

**4 weeks**

#### TIME SAVINGS

Time saved in budget and forecast reporting.



#### CHANGE-READY

Quick response to fast-changing, uncertain healthcare conditions.

## “FP&A provides one complete platform to simplify financial processes, respond quickly to fast-changing, uncertain healthcare conditions, and collaborate more easily.”

**Ricky Shah**

Deputy Director of Finance, BHFT

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“We also spoke with other Trust users, including the East of England Ambulance Service, who gave us confidence that the system could be adapted to meet our needs,” he adds.

### Better financial planning for 8,500 people

The first phase of the project with FP&A was to implement the budget setting process. This is now used to build flexible, granular, and agile budgets — at the Trust level, right down to the individual cost center level. This unified reporting is vital in helping the Trust maintain control over its complex, changeable, financial operating model. “With 8,500 staff, it’s a highly detailed budget; we look at service developments and cost pressures over the coming year, as well as any savings that can be made,” Ricky says.

The intuitive nature of the platform also appeals. Ricky again, “The users find it simple to use. We can have multiple people working on the system, all updating it at once. It’s allowed us to speed up our processes significantly and manage the Trust’s financial position more dynamically, and report far more easily.”

Flexibility is the watchword of FP&A. The Trust can consolidate data from different sources, shorten planning cycles, centralize data planning, and adjust plans at short notice. Using dashboarding, the Trust can view numbers across actuals, plans, and forecast, drill down to identify root causes and dependencies, and track performance across key strategic drivers.

“FP&A is a quantum step forward for the Trust’s financial management. We now benefit from consistent, collaborative, and accurate

planning,” says Alison. “The automation saves the Trust about three weeks during the budget setting process. And it saves us at least a week in terms of pulling all the forecasts together.”

Integration is planned with Unit4 ERP to create one common Trust-wide financial model. “Integration with the ERP will allow us to consolidate financial data and create consistency across the Trust. It will also save a vast amount of time for group reporting,” Ricky concludes.

