

LCHS4007 : Digital Skills and Research Methods

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Microsoft Teams and Communication at Greenfield Home Care Agency

What is Microsoft Teams?

"Microsoft Teams is a communications and collaboration tool that enables you to chat, call, and meet and collaborate with others in real time." (Withee, 2020). Teams supports rapid communication making it ideal for Greenfield where care coordinators and office staff may need to quickly share information.

Microsoft Teams and communication :

"In a Teams channel [...] all channel conversations are stored on the channel's Posts tab, and the distribution of each message is limited to the channel members" (McFedries, 2023, p. 90), therefore removing the clutter aspect of many emails sent back and forth between large groups, enabling easy-to-follow, relevant and effective conversations between carers, coordinators and nurses. Furthermore, the fact that posts can be pinned for every member of the channel allows staff to quickly find important updates without searching through countless inboxes and notifications, ensuring that key information, such as shift changes or urgent care updates remain visible to all members of the channel, supporting clear and effective communication.

"When you want a quick discussion that involves multiple people in the same Teams organisation, start a group chat. If you're in a Teams meeting and you want a quick discussion that involves something related to the meeting content or topic, start an in-meeting chat. When you want to start a more involved discussion that involves everyone in a particular team, create a new conversation in the team's General channel. When you want to talk about something that only relates to the topic of a particular channel, create a new conversation within that channel." (McFedries, 2023, p. 92). At Greenfield, this allows staff to share information with the appropriate people, improving clarity and reducing unnecessary messages and potential distractions from administering care, further improving clear communication between staff.

Teams also allows for easy and quick collaboration, "For example, you can create, upload, and edit Microsoft 365 documents without leaving the Teams environment. And you can share those documents with channel members for a fully collaborative experience." (McFedries, 2023, p. 146). This real-time document collaboration allows staff at Greenfield to update care notes, schedules, or risk information at the same time, ensuring everyone is working from the most up-to-date information, which enables carers, coordinators and nurses to work together on care plans and update things in real time, reducing delays and improving care.

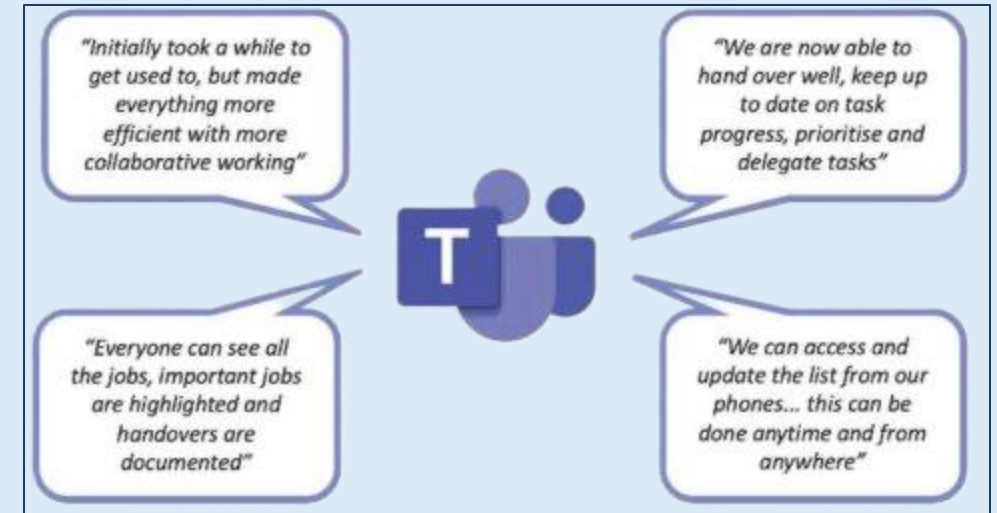


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Microsoft Teams in action :

"Following the implementation of Microsoft Teams, SHOs reported an improvement in departmental communication and teamwork. The electronic job list was unanimously cited as a feature that expedited high priority task identification and facilitated easier handover of unwell patients / outstanding jobs to on-call teams [...] This project showed that departmental adoption of Microsoft Teams and its file-sharing capacity improved junior doctor job prioritisation and task completion efficiency, with suspected faster delivery of patient care and reduced late finishing times." (Lawson et al., 2024).

This investigation shows how at Greenfield Home Care Agency, similar features could help to support effective communication between the carers, coordinators, and nurses, particularly during shift handovers or when escalating concerns about vulnerable clients. As a result, Microsoft Teams could reduce miscommunication, improve continuity and consistency of care, and support faster responses by workers to the client needs.



Feedback from staff members
(Lawson et al., 2024).



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Microsoft Teams and efficiency :

"The members of a team almost always have something in common. For example, they might all be working on the same project, or they might all be part of the same

department, division, or company" (McFedries, 2023, p. 20). For Greenfield staff this means Teams can create spaces specific to branches of staff. Care coordinators can quickly access relevant information and client data without searching through hundreds of emails or paper files, allowing them to spend more time focusing on actual care supporting vulnerable individuals. Additionally the calendar feature on Teams makes schedules and updates easy to access and edit from anywhere without having to return to the office, improving efficiency and collaboration across the organisation as a whole.

Microsoft Teams and digital safety :

"If you're the meeting organiser, one meeting option you might have set up is to have some or all attendees wait in the lobby for you to let them in to the meeting. This is a useful security feature because it enables you to deny entrance to anyone you don't recognise. The Participants pane maintains a Waiting in lobby section that tells you who's waiting to be let in. From there, you can admit or deny, as needed." (McFedries, 2023, p. 245). For organisers at Greenfield, cybersecurity is vital due to the potentially sensitive information and data on clients dealt with all the time, if this were to get into the wrong hands, it could be catastrophic and cause many issues for Greenfield.

Microsoft Teams and disadvantages, challenges and limitations :

Although immensely useful, access to Microsoft Teams is entirely dependent on wifi connection and internet access in the field, meaning carers and nurses in areas with poorer signal may experience delays in receiving messages or attempting to join meetings. Furthermore, some carers may find Microsoft Teams difficult to navigate and therefore not feel confident in using it meaning they would then require further training and support in order to not miss vital notifications and messages. This has the potential to lead to poorly structured channels which becomes unorganised and confusing, making information difficult to find. With the proper training, this problem can be handled.

Reference List

- Withee, R. (2020) *Microsoft Teams For Dummies*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- McFedries, P. (2023) *Microsoft Teams : step by step*.
- Lawson, L. et al (2024) *Being a 'Teams' player: a quality improvement project expanding the role of Microsoft Teams to improve communication and efficiency of junior doctors in a ward-based hospital setting, BMJ Open Quality*. Available at: <https://www-sciencedirect-com.uwtsd.idm.oclc.org/science/article/pii/S2514664524002935>