# Case Study

## Managing 350 funds and 18 charities in a healthy operation: Sheffield Hospitals Charity recommends Harlequin's charitable accounting software



In 2001 when Sheffield's teaching and non-teaching hospital charities merged to form the Sheffield Hospitals Charitable Trust and related charities, Andrew Treherne, Head of Finance, decided it was a prime time to revise their charitable accounting software needs. Over a decade later, his team are still delighted with the service they receive from Harlequin. The organisation is now called Sheffield Hospitals Charity (SHC).

**Background to charity:** six finance staff (and five fundraisers) support three NHS Foundation trusts made up of 18 charities, 350 funds and over 10 cashier offices. In 2010, with a balance of £13,700,000, their income was c£2 million and their expenditure was c£2.1 million.

**Aims of charity:** to enhance the care and treatment of patients within the NHS in Sheffield through the encouragement of charitable giving, the management of charitable funds, grant making and other activities of the charity.

**Timeframe:** the charity first saw Harlequin's charitable accounting system in November 2001 at a regional Harlequin event; they then had an onsite demonstration and went-live in February 2002.

> " With Harlequin, accessing information is a lot easier and the software gives us the flexibility to set up our accounts as we want them. "

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Sharing best practice insights, Kate Ellis (Director at Harlequin) talks with Andrew Treherne (Head of Finance at SHC) and Pauline Watkinson (Assistant Manager) about their long term relationship with Harlequin and how they have improved the efficiency of their team. Andrew is a member of the HFMA Charitable Funds Special Interest Group.

### What advice would you give to other hospital trusts looking for a new charity accounting solution?

- ***Check SORP credentials:*** *most critically, ensure that the system meets the SORP charity accounting standards and that it incorporates any recent SORP changes.*

- ***Don't let the software limit the design of your accounts:*** *before you start, consider the structure of your chart of accounts; question whether the system can support you in the way you want to work and present the level of detail you want to show. Do you wish to use the old NHS categories for expenditure or be more flexible in your reporting? Do you wish to analyse the balance of every fund over each asset category? Can you produce an accurate set of accounts easily?*

*Tip: Ask to speak to an existing client to hear their views.*

- ***Think long-term:*** *ensure the company offers good aftercare support and services as you will be working with them for many years. Do they have a user group that you can get involved with? Do they listen to their customers when it comes to developing the software? Do they keep abreast of changes in charity accounting?*

### Why did Harlequin's charitable accounts system stand out from other suppliers?

*With our last system, it was hard to manage and extract information in the way we wanted. With Harlequin, accessing information is a lot easier and the software gives us the flexibility to set up our accounts as we want them. The system allows us to go to the deep level of transparency that we want to achieve. We can readily link ledger codes to the relevant line and column in our accounts and set up new lines as required.*

### How did the installation go and what is your experience of ongoing customer care?

*We had a painless migration from our previous system as Harlequin had done the same conversion numerous times before. We then had two days onsite training at the end of which we had achieved full usage of the software; from creating new records to producing our accounts. Initially, we needed to call Harlequin quite frequently, but were never made to feel stupid. The team*

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are patient and respond quickly, and they encourage us to feedback ideas to develop the software. Don't panic – Harlequin will hold your hand all the way through the journey until you're comfortable enough to manage.

> **Tip:** When it comes to the conversion, just let Harlequin oversee it for you. We would recommend that you take time to analyse your funds to the lowest level you require before the data is extracted.

## What benefits has investing in a new system brought to your organisation?

We have complete confidence in our annual Charity Accounts and they are presented exactly as we want them. We are also able to respond much more quickly to requests for information, such as from fund managers or the fundraisers, and have saved a lot of time on labour intensive tasks and improved communication across departments.

## Do you have any best practice examples to share about how the system has helped to improve the efficiency of your department?

- **Scanned signatures:** we have scanned the signatures of fund managers and added them to their contact record on the system, so when requests for payments come into the department we can instantly check the required signatures on screen as well as ensuring that sufficient money is in the fund. This saves a terrific amount of time.

- **Email fund statements:** instead of sending out monthly statements in the post to fund managers, we are now able to email monthly and ad hoc updates. The monthly mailings now take hours rather than days thanks to automation within the system.

- **Bottom up fund balancing:** for complete accountability and transparency, with Harlequin, we are able to produce accounts for every fund if required, as well as presenting results at the umbrella fund level.

Pauline Watkinson and Andrew Treherne, Sheffield Hospitals Charity

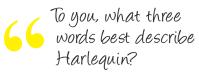> **Tip:** Look for a supplier with a charity accountants user group.

## Why have you continued to work with Harlequin for so many years?

Harlequin's charitable accounting system is exceptionally user-friendly and we know it has evolved over the years to meet changing SORP requirements and the needs of increasingly busy departments.

The Harlequin team provide great support and are very receptive to development ideas and user requirements.

We were pleased to be key contributors to the 2005 SORP changes in the system and, as active members of the Harlequin User Group (HUGs), are always keen to review new releases to ensure we are using the system to its full capability. The HUGs are a rewarding way to share ideas and meet other members of the community.

With a complete range of specialist solutions for the not-for-profit sector, we have also been able to invest in the Harlequin Fundraising, Purchasing and Debtors systems.

> " To you, what three words best describe Harlequin?
> Responsive, committed and supportive. "

### Further resources

www.charity-commission.gov.uk
see 'NHS Charities' in the Specialist Guidance section.

www.hfma.org.uk
visit the 'HFMA Guide' area.

### Find out more about Harlequin Software

For details of our forthcoming regional events or to book a demonstration at your office or enquire about pricing please visit www.harlequinsoftware.co.uk or call us on 01672 541541.

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