

# Altrix

## **CASE STUDY**

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust reduces agency costs with help from Altrix.



**Maidstone and  
Tunbridge Wells**  
NHS Trust

## Overview

When a large NHS Trust in South East England wanted to reduce their agency costs, they used Altrix to help get the monthly six-figure total under control.

## Background

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust is a two-hospital Acute Trust in Kent run by Chief Executive Miles Scott. The Trust provides a full range of general hospital services and some areas of specialist complex care to around 560,000 people living in the south of West Kent and the north of East Sussex.

The Trust also provides specialist cancer services to around 1.8 million people across Kent, Hastings and Rother, via the Kent Oncology Centre, which is sited at Maidstone Hospital.

## About Altrix

Altrix is new recruitment technology which is underpinned by a dedicated support team and specialises solely in the supply of band 5 general nurses. Our vision is to eliminate high recruitment costs from the NHS - keeping much needed taxpayer money where it should be: in the care system, treating patients in their time of need.

Altrix provides:

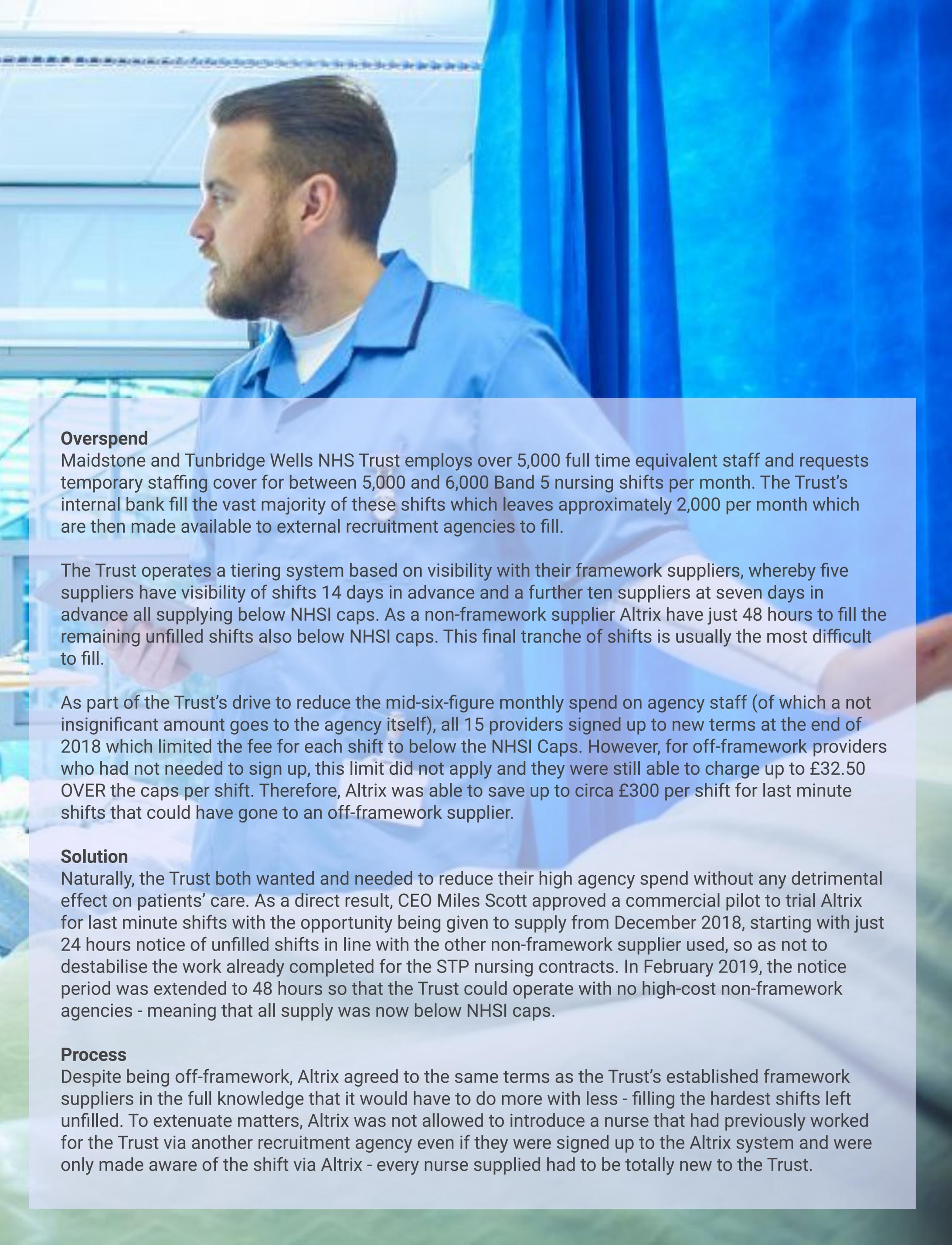
- A large database of band 5 nurses compliant to framework standards and available to the Trust at the touch of a button
- A much faster way to fill shifts, especially last-minute shifts without incurring extortionate agency fees
- A service that takes care of all the necessary interviewing and compliance of nurses
- A cost-effective way of cutting out the traditional agency, reducing NHS agency spend by up to 85%
- No need to do anything differently - there is no extra work and no technology to integrate into the NHS infrastructure

## Compliance

Altrix compliance is led by an ex-NHS Director of Nursing and CQC advisor. At the heart of our technology is a stringent, framework-standard compliance process, which won't allow a nurse onsite until they are 100% compliant.

Altrix is audited quarterly by an NHS and framework auditor who has rated Altrix as Diamond Standard, the highest one can achieve.



A man with a beard, wearing a blue uniform, is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The background is a bright, blue-tinted view of an outdoor area, possibly a hospital courtyard or garden. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box.

### **Overspend**

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust employs over 5,000 full time equivalent staff and requests temporary staffing cover for between 5,000 and 6,000 Band 5 nursing shifts per month. The Trust's internal bank fill the vast majority of these shifts which leaves approximately 2,000 per month which are then made available to external recruitment agencies to fill.

The Trust operates a tiering system based on visibility with their framework suppliers, whereby five suppliers have visibility of shifts 14 days in advance and a further ten suppliers at seven days in advance all supplying below NHSI caps. As a non-framework supplier Altrix have just 48 hours to fill the remaining unfilled shifts also below NHSI caps. This final tranche of shifts is usually the most difficult to fill.

As part of the Trust's drive to reduce the mid-six-figure monthly spend on agency staff (of which a not insignificant amount goes to the agency itself), all 15 providers signed up to new terms at the end of 2018 which limited the fee for each shift to below the NHSI Caps. However, for off-framework providers who had not needed to sign up, this limit did not apply and they were still able to charge up to £32.50 OVER the caps per shift. Therefore, Altrix was able to save up to circa £300 per shift for last minute shifts that could have gone to an off-framework supplier.

### **Solution**

Naturally, the Trust both wanted and needed to reduce their high agency spend without any detrimental effect on patients' care. As a direct result, CEO Miles Scott approved a commercial pilot to trial Altrix for last minute shifts with the opportunity being given to supply from December 2018, starting with just 24 hours notice of unfilled shifts in line with the other non-framework supplier used, so as not to destabilise the work already completed for the STP nursing contracts. In February 2019, the notice period was extended to 48 hours so that the Trust could operate with no high-cost non-framework agencies - meaning that all supply was now below NHSI caps.

### **Process**

Despite being off-framework, Altrix agreed to the same terms as the Trust's established framework suppliers in the full knowledge that it would have to do more with less - filling the hardest shifts left unfilled. To extenuate matters, Altrix was not allowed to introduce a nurse that had previously worked for the Trust via another recruitment agency even if they were signed up to the Altrix system and were only made aware of the shift via Altrix - every nurse supplied had to be totally new to the Trust.

## Results

In short, the pilot has been phenomenally effective. In fewer than five months the Trust now fills on average c100 short notice shifts per month by using Altrix, which now supplies equal to, or more than some of the framework suppliers - despite the fact that Altrix is filling the hardest shifts which others have not been able to fill in the last 48 hours before the shifts start.

## Quality

Of equal importance is the consistently high quality of nurses introduced through Altrix - there has not been a single complaint in over 560 shifts. This is a hugely important factor as the nurses were well-liked and managers wanted them back, which quickly overcame any initial scepticism to Altrix when being compared to traditional off-framework providers.

The reasons behind this are manifold, but are primarily due to the Altrix nurse feeling more in control. Rather than waiting for a call that may or may not come from a traditional recruitment agency, all Altrix nurses are made aware of all available shifts simultaneously. With compliance all taken care of at the point of registration, they can then choose which shifts best suits their individual needs rather than only being offered a handful of unattractive shifts - which means every nurse turns up to work motivated and positive.

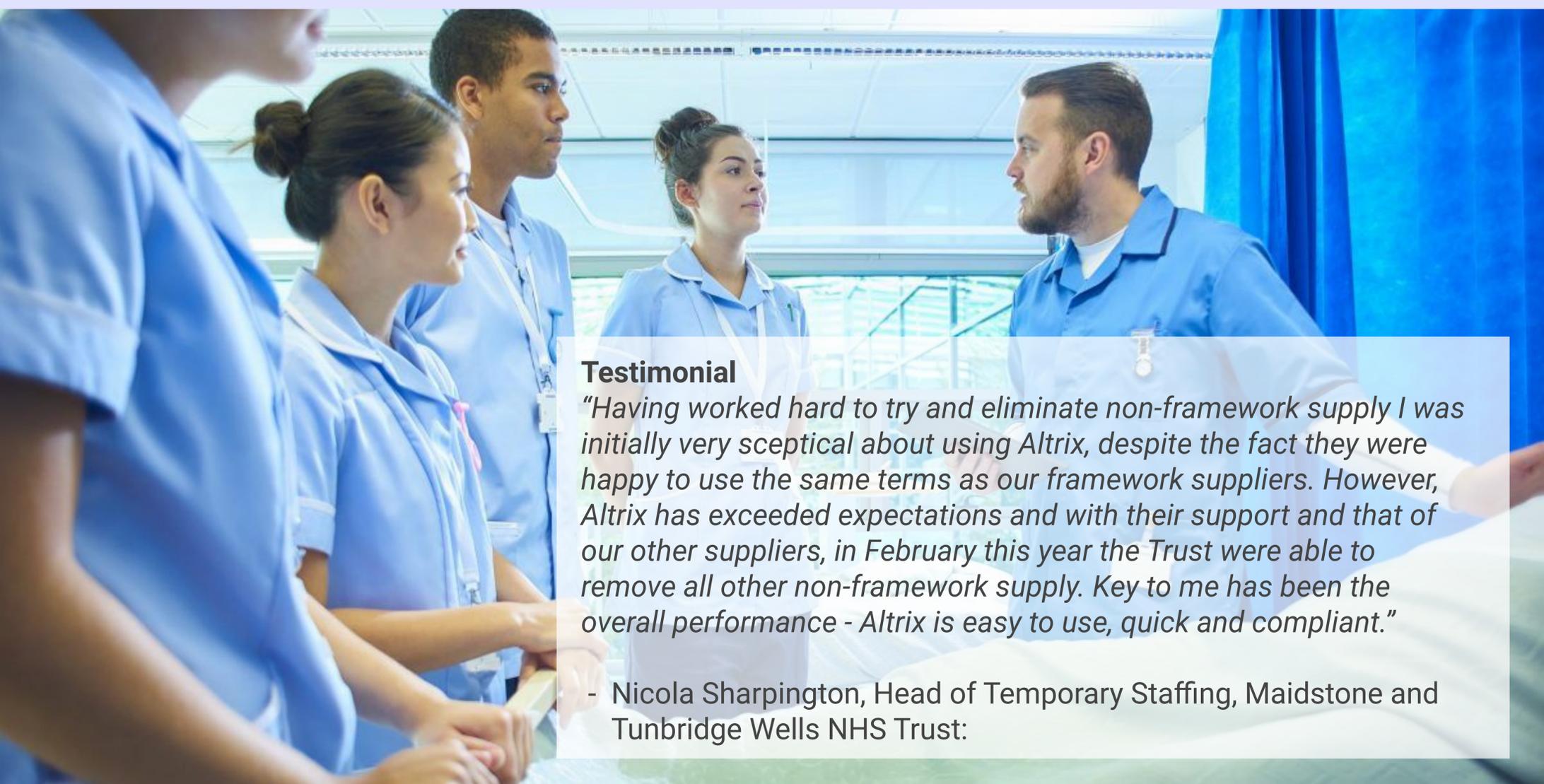
## Outcome

The pilot has been such a success that Altrix has enabled the Trust to no longer use any other off-framework provider, keeping valuable money each month where it should be - in the care system, directly benefiting those people who have paid for it and need it most.

Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP), which covers all seven Trusts in the region, are now considering a commercial pilot and if approved each Trust will decide if they wish to be involved.

## Feedback

After every pilot Altrix conducts comprehensive feedback to ensure we are always improving our service. As well as both the CEO and nurses loving the app, we also are recommended by both the Head of Temporary Staffing (see testimonial below) and the HR Director at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. We are similarly championed by both the Programme Manager and the Procurement Lead of Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Programme (STP) - the group of Trusts who share best practice and new ideas in the region.



### Testimonial

*"Having worked hard to try and eliminate non-framework supply I was initially very sceptical about using Altrix, despite the fact they were happy to use the same terms as our framework suppliers. However, Altrix has exceeded expectations and with their support and that of our other suppliers, in February this year the Trust were able to remove all other non-framework supply. Key to me has been the overall performance - Altrix is easy to use, quick and compliant."*

- Nicola Sharpington, Head of Temporary Staffing, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust:

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**Miles Scott**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Maidstone and  
Tunbridge Wells**  
NHS Trust



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