Case Study 5: Using Technology to Manage the Safe Arrival And Welcome Processes For New International Students

Introduction and Context:

Due to COVID-19 and the National Public Health Emergency, NCI signed up to government protocols for the safe arrival of students in August 2020. The protocol was developed by a working group made up of HEIs and government departments over a short period of time in July/August and implemented on time for the September 2020 intake of students.   The protocols for new and returning international students included the following:

- Students must not travel to Ireland if they test positive for Covid-19 or have any symptoms, 14 days prior to their travel date.
- All new and returning students must inform their college when they will enter Ireland by confirming their flight and accommodation details.
- Students must confirm and declare that they have suitable accommodation to restrict their movement for 14 days on arrival.
- Students must not use public transport to travel to their accommodation.
- Students must complete a health symptom tracker for the first 14 days when they arrive. If students develop Covid-19 symptoms, their HEI must support the student and ensure they have access to medical care for testing and, if necessary, provide accommodation so they can isolate safely.

Summary of Initiatives Undertaken:

NCI first introduced technology to support the International arrival process using its CRM system (MS Dynamics) in August 2017. This system and associated processes were re-engineered and redeployed to ensure NCI met with the COVID Protocols for both new and returning students. Initiatives included:

- Updating the NCI Arrival Form to a Starting at NCI / Arrival Form. Allowing NCI to identify if students were new or returning. For new students we could further identify if they would start online & travel later or arrive on time for their programme of study.
- New workflows were designed to push pre-arrival health surveys to students via email every day for up to 14 days prior to traveling.
- Scheduling Airport Pick Ups, assigning students to drivers and emailing the details of the drivers to the students that included the drivers name, contact number and their photo.
- Creating Port of Entry Letters for students to provide to immigration officials.
- Identifying students that started online and for students from visa-required countries, capturing their visa details.
- Tracking the arrival of online students during the semester and scheduling their airport pick-ups.
- Creating new workflows to push post-arrival health surveys to students via email every day for 14 days after they arrived.
- Scheduling a welcome meeting with a peer mentors within a few days of their arrival. The welcome meetings were scheduled based on their arrival status so students who started online had a different meeting with students who travelled to Ireland.

Conclusion:

The repurposing of the CRM system helped provide a robust, accurate and complete mechanism for both supporting learners and providing reassurances to NCI and external stakeholders on

adherence to protocols throughout the crisis. The system will continue to be used throughout and beyond the crisis as appropriate.