

Whitepaper

Supporting Healthcare's Digital Transformation Ambitions: Strategy, Implementation and Best Practice



Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Delivering the Digital Dream
- 6 Conquering the PaperMountain
- 8 Kodak Alaris
- 9 Case Study
- 10 Conclusion
- 11 References



Introduction

Much has already been achieved in the drive towards fully integrated health and care provision. As is ever the case, however, there is always more to be done in pursuit of the ambitious aims set out by governments in all four nations of the UK. With the NHS emerging from quite possibly the biggest challenge it has ever been called to face, strategies are being redefined to ensure the recovery continues to find traction. Work is underway to clear the immense backlogs that accrued as the fight against Covid-19 was prioritised ahead of other problems.



The idea of a paperless NHS has long been at the centre of Government thinking. As far back as 2013, the (then) Secretary of State for Health set out the ambition to make it, “the most modern digital health service in the world¹.”

It is a dream that has so far proved elusive. But as technological innovation continues to accelerate, its realisation draws ever closer.

The pandemic showed us that new ways of working are possible. This white paper will consider recent Government thinking on the rollout of digitalisation; it will look at efficiencies that have already been made and consider how best they can be exploited by organisations working to provide services right across the health and care spectrum. The ultimate goal is to build:

“Not just a national hospital service but a true National Health service”.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care²

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Delivering the Digital Dream



“Just as a crisis can spark incredible change, it can also provide an incredible platform upon which to build.”

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

As the NHS post-pandemic recovery gathers pace, the Government has continued to signal its intention to ensure digitalisation remains at the heart of its plans to transform the way health and care services are provided.

The pandemic created the necessity for organisations throughout the NHS to swiftly transition to new ways of

working. Teams proved themselves able to adopt new methodologies and practices at a much faster pace than might ordinarily have been expected. The Government is determined to build on the lessons that have been learned, and to ensure the NHS is able to move forward through the recovery phase and onwards towards a future of joined-up health and care provision.

Recognising these successes, and in order to further build on what has already been achieved, the Chancellor of the Exchequer made several key funding pledges in the 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review³. A significant commitment of £2.1 billion was confirmed for innovative use of digital technology in what was referred to as, “Investment for a step-change in the quality and efficiency of care.”

In November 2021, Chair of the NHS Digital board Laura Wade-Gery published a comprehensive review, examining what lessons the pandemic had taught and signposting ways for the sector to capitalise on what had been learned. Many of the digital strategies pursued by the NHS were led by the report, “Putting data, digital and tech at the heart of transforming the NHS”⁴.

The importance of accelerating digital transformation was underlined by the merging of the two organisations with responsibility for IT Strategy and delivery in the NHS. NHS Digital and NHSX are being incorporated into a new Transformation Directorate which will drive change forward.

Explaining the rationale behind the plan, Amanda Pritchard, NHS England Chief Executive Officer, stated: “NHS organisations have worked more closely than ever to respond to the COVID pandemic and these changes build on that success. Digital and workforce are central to transforming the NHS to tackle the backlog and recover services after the COVID pandemic, as well of course deliver on our Long Term Plan commitments and maintain momentum of the lifesaving NHS COVID vaccination programme, all while looking after thousands of patients in hospital with the virus. By coming together in this way, the whole health service can continue progress in delivering these goals.”⁵

In December, NHS England set out ten key priorities in its 2022/23 Priorities and Operational Planning Guidance document⁶. Recognising the challenges ahead, it emphasised the need for investment in the workforce, the expansion of the virtual ward model and further rollout of innovative solutions, calling for organisations to, “exploit the potential of digital technologies to transform the delivery of care and patient outcomes – achieving a core level of digitisation in every service across systems.”

The adoption of the Integrated Care System (ICS) model is continuing in line with the aims of the NHS Long Term Plan⁷. Across the country some 42 ICSs are bringing together hospitals, community and mental health trusts, GPs and other primary services with care providers and local authorities to further advance

the ideology of joined-up provision of service. This is already bringing profound changes to the health and care landscape, aiding the NHS recovery and building resilience against as-yet unseen eventualities.

Integrated delivery of service is also fundamental to long term strategy planning in Wales⁸ and Northern Ireland⁹, while in Scotland the ambitious NHS Scotland Recovery Plan¹⁰ signalled over £1 billion of investment over a five year period to increase capacity and deliver reforms ahead of its refreshed Digital Health and Care Strategy.

“We believe this strategy sets out a path for us to work together to ensure Scotland fulfils its full potential in this digital world.”

Scottish Government Minister for Trade, Innovation and Public Finance”

In February 2022, the Health and Social Care (HSC) Secretary, made a landmark speech at the HSJ Digital Transformation Summit¹². In it, he recognised the transformative effects that have already been experienced through the embracing of innovative technology and identified four priorities which will harness the power of digitalisation to, “drive a new era of recovery and reform.”

Outlining his intentions to ensure the NHS is properly set up for success, the Secretary called for levelling up across the NHS and social care, the pursuit of personalisation and encouraged breakthrough bets on emerging technologies and data.

The intention to level up digital provision across all health and care services is abundantly clear. Great strides have been made in the digitalisation at Trust and Board level. Now is the time for the knowledge that has been gained to filter through the entirety of the system, bringing the benefits of workplace efficiencies to every aspect of health and care provision. The pandemic necessitated the trial of new and innovative ways of working. These trials frequently produced impressive results. The Government is determined to capitalise on the lessons that have been learned, to advance health and care services beyond the recovery phase to a new, streamlined, joined-up system with tangible benefits for all.

“This is not a time to slow down and look in the rear-view mirror. It's a time to accelerate.”

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Conquering the Paper Mountain

“Our amazing clinicians are amongst the best in the country. But their efforts are sometimes hampered by our historical reliance on paper-based record keeping.”

Dr Hilary Lloyd, Chief Nurse, South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust¹³

The sheer volume of data accrued by the NHS is barely comprehensible. In 2018/19, there were an estimated 564 million patient interactions with GPs, ambulance services, hospitals and community and mental health care providers¹⁴. This equates to around 1.5 million patient contacts every single day, all requiring records to be produced and managed. In general, records are retained for eight years¹⁵ after the date of last treatment, although it is necessary for some to be kept for much longer periods. It all adds up to a vast mountain of data, much of which remains paper-based despite the long-standing aspiration to build a paperless NHS. Reporting on efforts to clear the pandemic backlog, the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee found a fifth of NHS trusts remain largely paper-based¹⁶.

Achieving this aspiration is a work in progress. The task is immense. The records library of Norfolk and Norwich

University Hospitals Foundation Trust holds 1.8 million hard copy records which are stored on 14 miles of shelving¹⁷. Digitalisation is helping to flatten this prodigious mountain of paperwork, with a process of Electronic Document Management (EDM) enabling greater ease of access to the data for clinicians and ultimately ensuring speedier patient care and improved outcomes. Anthony Lundrigan, CIO at the trust explains: “Although we’re very proud of our health records team, we know that paper’s only available to one clinician at one time to deal with one episode of care. So it’s really important to liberate that paper data and make it available, as part of a programme is to put more technology and information in the hands of clinicians, for better decision making.”

“When the new range of smart technologies are fully in place, they will do away with more than 5 million pieces of paper which teams currently have to use each year for everything from recording patients’ nutrition and hydration assessments to filling in prescriptions.”

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



Great strides have already been made with significant gains at individual Trust and hospital level. Once again, the pandemic effect is evident with the NHS Covid App considered responsible for changes in perception and behaviour. Driven in part by the vaccination programme, around half of the population of England now have access to digital healthcare¹⁸. Almost 28 million have registered with NHS Login, with 16 million signing up for the NHS App. There remains, however, much work to be done.

The intention to level up digital provision across all health and care services is clear. Identifying one of the success stories, the HSC Secretary said that the switch to Electronic Patient

Records (EPRs) at Birmingham’s Heartlands Hospital has been “transformational”, with staff able to call up patients’ medical history information at the “touch of a button”.

He went on to outline plans to build on these successes and announced some ambitious targets, calling for EPRs to be rolled out to 90 per cent of Trusts by December 2023 and 80 per cent of social care providers by the following March, emphasising once more the intention to fully integrate health and care provision.

The speech reflected on the fact that the main focus of digitalisation has so far been on medical and clinical settings, with successful projects



largely being demonstrated at hospital and Trust level. In setting out the reform agenda, the HSC Secretary recognised that these successes can be replicated throughout the whole of the health and care sector, easily scaling to fit requirements throughout the entire NHS organisational structure. GP Practices and partner organisations in the community are all able to benefit from the efficiency increases and productivity gains delivered through technological innovation. The direction of travel has been clearly signposted. As integrated service provision and collaborative working models are expanded, the transformative power of digital will be increasingly felt in acute and primary care services.

There are many benefits to converting paper to digital. Traditional records take up a vast amount of space, all of which adds cost to an organisation. By reducing this bulk, the data become more easily manageable and storage costs are drastically reduced. GDPR compliance can be easily implemented and information is kept secure. Authorised users requiring access to documentation can do so immediately and from any location, with every transaction protected by an audit trail. In reducing reliance on paper, teams are able to lessen their environmental impact, which directly contributes to delivering on plans outlined by NHS England to be fully Net Zero by 2045.

Kodak Alaris

Driven by data, integrated health and care provision is already revolutionising the delivery of services, powering the post-pandemic recovery and unlocking the door to a leaner, more efficient and sustainable NHS. Organisations are rethinking the possible, freed from the constraints of old. By choosing the right solutions partner, a partner with proven experience in harnessing the power of images and information, the digital journey becomes a transformative voyage of opportunity.



Trusted, experienced and with a legacy forged from a truly iconic brand, Kodak Alaris has a long history of providing document scanning solutions and services to the NHS. As an unsung hero in the technological strides that are being made in NHS digitalisation today, Kodak Alaris is often the go-to scanning solutions choice for projects already being implemented.

In January 2022, Kodak Alaris was once again presented with the prestigious Keypoint Intelligence Buyers Lab (BLI) Scanner Line of the Year Award¹⁹, marking the sixth time in the last seven years that the company has taken the accolade. Further recognition came with the first ever BLI PaceSetter Award for Distributed Capture²⁰, which recognised their industry-leading distributed capture technology portfolio.

UK-owned, Kodak Alaris has built a reputation for innovation and is trusted by clients in more than 100 countries around the world. A global leader in providing innovative solutions through ground-breaking technologies, Kodak Alaris is ideally placed to lead organisations of all sizes, whatever the stage in their digital journey.

Case Study

How working collaboratively with Kodak Alaris helped University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust on their way to achieving digital excellence.



With a catchment population of two million people, University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust (UHPNT) faced a mammoth task when it committed to create digital health records for its patients.

Driven by a desire to align with the Government's aim to achieve paper-free health and care provision, the trust also faced a very real need to tackle the physical bulk of its paper case notes, which were about to exceed their storage capacity.

Given the increasing complexity of care needs with patients requiring treatment across multiple departments, it was imperative that clinicians should be enabled to access records immediately and from a variety of locations.

When the decision to digitise the records was made, UHPNT understood that the process was

complex, requiring an advanced level of expertise to ensure both smooth implementation and ongoing management.

Partnering with Kodak Alaris, the trust established an in-house scanning bureau. Working in collaboration with UHPNT, the Kodak Alaris Professional Services team was quickly able to determine the capabilities of both hardware and software, and helped to define and support the strategy. It was imperative that every element was operating synchronously to ensure maximum efficiency throughout the process.

Beginning with paediatrics, patient notes were scanned live and the system quickly established its value. The trust then extended the process to incorporate hepatology ahead of a further rollout of digitalisation across all specialities. Rapidly streamlining its procedures, the trust has increased

efficiency, reduced costs and ultimately been able to deliver enhanced levels of service and care to its patients.

“We recognized that digital transformation is not as easy as simply pushing paper through a scanner, it’s considerably more complicated than that, which is why we chose to partner with Kodak Alaris to support us on our journey.”

Rob Harder, Head of IT Infrastructure and Support Services, UHPNT

Conclusion

A comprehensive Digital Health Plan will shortly be published. It will confirm that digitalisation will bring benefits to the whole of the health and care sector and promote its further adoption. Kodak Alaris can help organisations of all sizes increase efficiencies by revolutionising all traditionally paper-heavy processes, right across the sector from trust to individual GP level.

“Today, following the most successful vaccine programme in the world, we’re beginning the biggest catch-up programme in the history of the NHS.”

Prime Minister of the UK.



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