Hc

CASE STUDY

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN & DEVLOPMENT SERVICES

NHS Southampton City reduces costs with Healthcare Computing's Infrastructure services

One GP Domain Project

NHS Southampton City's IT department identified a requirement to update IT systems and simplify processes, in order to better manage their GP practices. They turned to HC, their supplier of primary care IT solutions, to advise and assist them in creating a new infrastructure. The infrastructure would deliver more centralised management with better monitoring and would encourage collaborative working, while reducing the costs involved in deploying software and day to day administration.

NHS Southampton City is made up of 37 GP practices and operated under the strategic health authority. HC is a specialist provider of NHS IT Infrastructure and Support services, supporting NHS organisations to improve digital maturity and patient care.

Complex Project

With over 1,200 users and 80 servers, the PCT wanted to move from a reactive model of support, to a more proactive one, where issues could be identified before causing downtime. The project's aim was to simplify the model and manage IT more centrally by creating a single Active Directory domain covering all sites, as well as implementing advanced monitoring of every server, network switch and backup job. HC had already deployed Novell ZENworks throughout NHS Southampton City in 2008. Using new technology found in the very latest version of Windows Server, each location has a redundant server for added fault tolerance.

HC created a central console for the PCT which can be used to carry out a range of functions: from deploying software, to carrying out backups. The team set up organisation units for each practice, and sub-groups for users based on job function. This means that all staff can be viewed from one central place and tasks such as re-setting passwords which used to be onerous processes, can now be completed immediately. HC started the pilot in November 2009, and successfully completed the project seven months later.

"One of the problems we had in managing IT for our users was that every site had been developed in its own way, with no common structure, no standard configuration and aging individual email/domain servers. We wanted to get everything configured and to start again in a more structured way whilst migrating users to NHSmail. We already had a longstanding relationship with HC and they have been supporting GP surgeries in this area for a long time, with excellent relationships."

Damien McCann, Primary Care IT Development NHS Southampton City

Improved management

Damien McCann says: "The project has been really successful and the end result is excellent. We were really pleased with the team at HC, who worked very hard and came up with a lot of creative ideas. The team was flexible and adaptable and was able to meet any changing needs that arose. In addition, HC was able to assist us with our communications strategy to the staff. Some staff were struggling to understand the project, and the team was able to communicate effectively."

"One of the main benefits is that we can now roll out software really simply. It is now possible to be confident that our entire estate is fully patched with security updates and that anti-virus software is operating correctly. We can manage everything from one central location, and we also now have a really good foundation that will mean any future changes will be less complex and cheaper to implement. We believe the One GP Domain Project along with the associated work puts Southampton amongst the most technically advanced GP IT estates in the UK."

Not only have the benefits been felt at PCT level, but GPs are delighted too. Dr Hoghton of St Mary's surgery says: "I have known and worked with HC since about 1996, and during this time they have always been excellent and very responsive. I know that this project has been very complex, but we experienced absolutely no problems at all. The team was flexible, adaptable and worked around us. We are already feeling the benefits: the recent roll out of the Map of Medicine took place with no interruption at all. The solution just suddenly appeared on my desktop. We are delighted."

Jon Cook, Chief Technical Officer for HC says: "We were delighted to be chosen as the technology partner for this project, and believe it has great relevance to the future of IT support for GPs. Using best of type products from both Microsoft and Novell, we were able to deliver real improvements to the GP IT systems, providing better manageability and monitoring for the whole network while proactively reducing downtime and associated costs due to lost productivity."

"A few mouse clicks can roll out an entire solution, which reduces costs across the board, as there is no need to disrupt services by going into the surgery."

Damien McCann
Primary Care IT Development
NHS Southampton City

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