Digital transformation and the NHS Long Term Plan

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Health and care leaders have come together to develop a Long Term Plan to make the NHS fit for the future, and to get the most value for patients out of every pound of taxpayers’ investment. Our plan has been drawn up by those who know the NHS best, including frontline health and care staff, patient groups and other experts.

To transform the NHS for the digital age, the NHS Long Term Plan will:

- Create digital access to NHS services and digital tools to help patients manage their own health and the interaction they have with the NHS.
- Protect patients’ privacy and give them control over their medical records.
- Give every patient in England access to a digital GP offer by 2023/24.
- Ensure that clinicians can access complete digital patient records, wherever they are.
- Enable clinicians to use digital tools to enhance decision-making and patient care.
- Mandate standards to ensure data is interoperable and accessible, and improve cyber-security.
- Make the NHS a more satisfying place for staff to work, freeing them up from routine administration tasks and enabling them to spend more time with patients.

The NHS faces unprecedented demand. Harnessing the power of technology and data is vital to meet this challenge, ensuring we have a health service which meets everyone’s needs and is sustainable for future generations.

The NHS Long Term Plan’s vision for the future is of a fully integrated health and care system where digital tools and services are the norm. Increasingly, people will be supported with digital tools that help them to take responsibility for their own health.

Those who wish to will be able to access NHS advice or care online. The NHS App, rolling out this year, will provide people with a consistent, digital means of access to 111 services, booking GP appointments, viewing their medical records, ordering prescriptions, setting data sharing preferences and registering for organ donation.

In the future, digital transformation will revolutionise how the NHS cares for patients. Patients will increasingly be treated at home, monitored remotely through apps, wearables and other connected devices. Some specialist referrals, such as in dermatology, will be managed digitally, using apps, smartphone cameras and online questionnaires.

Also, care information will be captured automatically by intelligent virtual assistants and routine tasks will happen automatically, freeing up frontline staff for more face-to-face time with patients.

Joined-up systems will give clinicians access to digital patient records, wherever they need them, and depersonalised data will enable the NHS to continually improve, plan and target services to meet areas of greatest need and become a world leader in research.

Case study

The BadgerNet Maternity Notes App at Gateshead Health NHS Trust gives women real-time access to their maternity records, as well as blood test results, appointment reminders and information on antenatal classes, all on their device.

It allows expectant mothers to add their preferred birth plan, any allergies or other relevant health information before appointments.

It also provides a valuable resource for clinicians who have all the information they need to make the best decisions for the women in their care.

The app cuts paperwork, saving the trust over 400 hours of staff time a year.

Upgrades will also enable the adding of photos and diary entries, creating lasting memories for mothers of their pregnancy and baby’s journey.