

NHS 24 Increasing service efficiency through platform migration and software upgrade



NHS 24 is a telephone based service that offers clinical assessment, health advice and health information for the 5.1 million people of Scotland. The aim of the service is to help patients find the right care, from the right people at the right time.

The service began in May 2002 and currently takes in the region of 150,000 calls per month. NHS 24 operates from three regional contact centres and a further five local centres. All centres are virtually linked giving staff access to core information. Incoming calls are routed to the nearest regional centre and picked up by the first available call handler. The average time to answer is three seconds and 99.1 per cent of calls are answered within thirty seconds.

Frontline members of staff include nurses, health information advisors, pharmacists, dental nurses, breathing space professionals and call handlers.

Developing the infrastructure

In early 2006, NHS 24 identified a need to upgrade the technology behind the service in order to make it operate more efficiently and ultimately improve patient care. Chris Stewart, director of clinical development at NHS 24 explains, "The technology was running on a Microsoft Visual Basic platform. We felt that with the volume of calls being taken and additional emerging services offered by NHS 24, there was a need for a more robust and stable model. So we opted for two key changes: to migrate to a .NET platform and to upgrade our clinical decision support and case management software to improve its functionality."

Migration issues

The primary challenge with this programme was the management of what was a complex project, dependent on different suppliers each contributing a critical component of the service. To tackle this issue, NHS 24 and its suppliers adopted a strong collaborative approach, ensuring that project management principles were adhered to. Part of that process meant having fully transparent communication and each party taking absolute responsibility for their contribution being delivered within tight deadlines. Suppliers involved include LSC, BT and Adastra, with Clinical Solutions leading the commercial side of the project. Ian Kerr, Business Manager at Clinical Solutions comments, "With so many parties involved it was vital that we

communicated effectively and worked together to make this project run as smoothly as possible."

Software upgrade

In addition to the platform migration, NHS 24 opted to upgrade its call management and clinical decision support software. Having previously provided software to NHS 24, Clinical Solutions was selected to provide an upgrade of the current application – an agreement which will see the two parties working together for the next three years. Designed for the call-centre environment, the Clinical Solutions application is a patient encounter tracking and decision support system that helps expert advisers in assessing callers' needs, with a nurse triage service for all calls.



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About IntefleCS Contact Centre

IntefleCS Contact Centre equips your organisation with new ways to expand your services and deliver high quality urgent care, in the right place and at the right time.

To date over 60 million calls have been made to centres. Our systems can support your advisors in determining callers' needs and help improve your financial, operational and clinical performance.

About Clinical Solutions

Clinical Solutions is a leading supplier of flexible decision support and clinical software solutions to the healthcare industry that help healthcare professionals safely and consistently assess (and in the face to face setting, treat) a patient's symptoms and direct them to the most appropriate level of care when needed. This results in more efficient management of resources and alleviates pressure on emergency and primary healthcare services. The software is designed for use in both call centre environments and face-to-face encounters with patients.

Chris Stewart, explains, “Clinical Solutions has been a partner of ours for a number of years – they understand our challenges from both a technological and clinical perspective. We have always received outstanding training and support. Together with their reliability, these key issues formed the basis of our decision. It made perfect sense to extend the relationship.”

He continues, “We have worked with Clinical Solutions to develop additional functionality suited to the specific needs of the service. Priorities for us were access to the Community Health Index, improved clinical content including single select functions, and improved clinical information with the ability to transfer to local Out of Hours services.”

Benefits to patients and staff

While the new platform and functionality are in early stages of use, NHS 24 believes that the principal aim of the project is being achieved.

The new platform allows greater flexibility for NHS 24 to adjust the system to meet its workflow needs without the need for lengthy “hard code” changes to be made. The interface of the Clinical Solutions software has been transformed to make it more user friendly with a similar look and feel to Outlook. Immediate feedback from staff has been very positive and anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been some increase in the number of patients handled.

Chris Stewart concludes, “Ultimately this technology upgrade is all about making the NHS 24 service more efficient and improving patient care. We have been delighted with the feedback so far and impressed with the way that our staff have embraced the change.”

IntefleCS Contact Centre Benefits

- Fast
- Scalable
- Consistent
- Adaptable
- Economical
- Proven
- Trusted
- Safe

IntefleCS Contact Centre Features

- Clinical and Non-Clinical Triage
- Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) compatible
- Rapid response assessment
- Extreme precision in service configuration
- Reception and sorting of incoming electronic transfers
- Supports triage and assessment with a variety of clinical content:
 - CS TeleGuide 111 content
 - Your own, or third party content
- Dedicated N3 connectivity and hosting services
- Integration and transmission of data across third party systems

Equip your organisation with new ways to expand your services and deliver high quality urgent care!
 Want to find out more, or arrange an IntefleCS Contact Centre demonstration?

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