



Get set for a mobile workplace

Keiron Salt looks at the key digital possibilities and enablers for health and care starting with the potential of mobile computing and communication

In my previous article, *Long live the NHS!* (*HealthMJ*, October), I described how the NHS leaders are advocating a ‘technological revolution’.

Matt Hancock, the secretary of state for health and social care, described his ambitions of ‘changing NHS culture to make it tech focused at every level. This will look to address the challenges of financial sustainability and quality of care in a context of increased demand and an ageing population. Care for an 85-year-old costs more than five times as much as an average 30-year-old.

In this series of articles I will look further into some of the key digital possibilities and enablers, starting with the potential of mobility solutions (mobile computing and communication).

Care beyond the traditional settings

Care is no longer just delivered in hospitals and GP surgeries. It is delivered in the community, drop in centres, pharmacies and people’s homes.

In the future, certain care and tests will be delivered in say, supermarkets or opticians. An important segment of community care will be for our ageing population as demand increases in this demographic, combined with significantly higher relative costs. It provides the opportunity of keeping people out of hospitals with benefits to the individual and financial benefits to the NHS of preventing crises and avoiding costly and unnecessary admission to hospital.

Empowering the NHS professional

BT’s research looked at perceptions of digital transformation and how strategies are evolving with NHS chief information officers.

One key area identified was the ability to empower NHS professionals through use of mobile and mobility solutions. The research indicated that almost two-thirds of trusts have a mobile strategy, and 84% expect mobile adoption to increase over the next one-to-two years.

Care is incredibly information centric, so being able to access and update key patient information and access diagnostics in real-time at the point of care will support the clinician’s ability to make informed timely decisions. Improving the quality of time with the service user from an informed position and not about the patient reciting their previous medical history.

The broader NHS professionals are highly committed to do their best for patients but are under increasing pressure. The ability to flexibly support them whenever and wherever they work will boost staff satisfaction. It also provides the obvious time and cost savings of not being tied to a physical location.

Professionals should be able to benefit from colleague support regardless of location.

The ability to benefit from colleague support will also help health professional’s satisfaction. Being able to receive and share experience electronically via video

or chat from their mobile device supports the professional to deliver the best quality of care. For instance, collaboration through video and share high quality medical images with specialists to help diagnosis. This may be in community care or paramedics at the scene of an incident.

The public and staff have expectations of digital services, through their everyday use of consumer IT and in retail and banking.

Commercial organisations have realised benefits utilising mobility and collaboration technologies to be more efficient, reliable, cost less and provide a better experience for us all.

Preventative care for the citizen

Mobile technology, in combination with wearable technology, will become a key enabler to promote self-care and preventative care for the citizen, but also to support a sustainable NHS.

The combination of the latest consumer mobile phones, health apps, and sensors attached to a mobile phone offer increasingly sophisticated capability and importantly, lower cost for mass adoption. For instance, BT recently worked with the NHS to identify individuals with undetected heart conditions through ECGs from a mobile phone. This was then used in real-time to collaborate with specialists.

Devices with Internet of Things (IoT) sensors worn by patients can collect data on glucose levels, blood pressure, blood oxygen levels and sleep pattern. The connected

medical wearables can also check patients are taking their prescribed medicines and perhaps even administer drugs too in the future.

What technologies will enable this vision?

Many of the capabilities are available today to support this vision with the convergence of more powerful mobile devices, IoT/wearables, fixed and mobile connectivity, security, collaboration and field force automation will empower the professional and citizen.

As the scale, depth and frequency of information increases, then 5G offers a revolution of healthcare services.

5G-enabled capability will allow high-quality medical care, remotely and in real time. 5G combined with IoT sensors can further enhance patient care in the home.

Changing NHS culture to make it tech-focused at every level

To truly have an effect at every level of the NHS requires the empowerment of the health professionals and the citizens they care for.

Technology enables and brings increasingly powerful capabilities and flexibility for people in a mobile world. It must not be done in isolation and must embrace the cultural aspects of the NHS and be driven, applied, embraced and adopted by frontline staff.

This will unlock the powerful potential of empowering the NHS.

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