

Paperless by 2020

What's it all about?

The NHS and social care need to use digital technology more effectively to benefit patients, clinicians and the public. The health and care system in England is aiming to become paperless at the point of care by 2020. So, what will this mean?

Patient records will be paperless, accessible across systems and updated in real-time. This is vital for delivering the new care models described in the Five Year Forward View. There will also be paperless patient-facing services, and more effective use of data.

The benefits of a paperless system



- Digitise to promote healthcare's Triple Aim - better health, better care and lower cost
- Access to clinical information at the point of care - patient notes, care plans, imaging and investigation results
- Citizens given more control over their own health, with improved access to and better experience of care, access to apps and transparent care comparison tools
- Quicker, cheaper, and safer collection and transfer of data
- Better use of data for research, service improvement and population health management.

What's driving this?



In 2013 the Department of Health originally announced a challenge for the NHS to go paperless by 2018 and two important documents are now driving this strategy:

- The Five Year Forward View (FYFV) describes a vision for the future NHS and acknowledges the contribution that digital technologies can make in delivering new care models.
- [Personalised Health and Care 2020](#) builds on the FYFV and provides a framework for making the best use of technology and data.

Haven't we tried this before?



The National Programme for IT (NPfIT), launched in 2002 as an integrated electronic health records, appointments and prescriptions system, is often acknowledged as an expensive failure and was discontinued in 2011 due to escalating costs and delays. But NPfIT actually delivered some significant successes which are vital to the current functioning of the health service. This includes the Spine infrastructure which connects key IT services across the NHS, and services such as the Summary Care Record, Electronic Prescription Service and PACS.

What's the difference this time?



Local health providers will decide their own priorities for going digital. Investment in IT systems such as electronic health records and e-prescribing will be needs-driven and procured locally. There will be nationally specified accessibility and data standards to keep systems connected and it will be funded over the next five years from the £4.2 billion DH funding pot for NHS and adult social care technology.

Success is not all about technology - we need behaviour change too



To move to a paperless health and care system, it is not just a matter of introducing new technology and expecting it to work. We need significant behavioral change to ensure the transition to digital is successful. We need the sustained engagement of front-line users of the technology, with clinical insight and leadership, in order to ensure the application of technology is safe, of high quality, and reflects the needs of the population and clinicians.

To see how you can contribute, find out who your local Chief Clinical Information Officer is and offer your support at www.digitalhealth.net/ccio.

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