

Special Report

Building smart digital and data foundations

A guide for integrated care systems

by Jamie Innes, Inhealthcare product director

inhealthcare

Setting the scene



There is nothing like a deadline to focus the mind. NHS England has told the new integrated care systems they must have smart digital and data foundations in place by April, just a few months away.

NHS England wants Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to use digital and data to drive collaborative working, connect health and care providers, improve outcomes and put citizens at the heart of their own care.

As part of her role as the new chief executive of NHS England, Amanada Pritchard will be expected to drive digital transformation across the entire health service.

Health and care organisations have made huge advances in the adoption of health technology since the start of the pandemic, but digital maturity and data quality remains “variable”, according to NHSE. This means professionals do not always have access to the information that could be useful in caring for their patients.

To help the ICSs unlock the full potential of digital and data, we have produced a checklist of credentials to look for in a trustworthy technology partner.

This will help local leaders meet the requirements of the NHSX What Good Looks Like programme to digitise, connect and transform services safely and securely.

This special report is based on our extensive experience of working with clinicians at the cutting edge of technology-enabled care in NHS organisations across the UK. We hope it is helpful when you are evaluating potential providers.

Get in touch at contact@inhealthcare.co.uk if you would like to find out how we can support your trust or ICS.

What to look for in a health tech partner

Collaboration, not competition, is the direction of travel for the NHS. Health technology will help break down barriers between organisations to turn the ambitious vision of joined-up care into a reality for every patient in England. And it will help reduce the backlog of 5.5 million people on NHS waiting lists.

Meets real need

All digital health technologies should meet a need in the NHS. Whether it is reducing costs and bureaucracy by introducing more efficient processes, or making a condition easier to manage at home for patients, technology should offer new solutions to existing problems.

Evidence-based

All digital health partners should be able to provide a credible evidence base, with a clear breakdown of benefits, outcomes and limitations, to meet the NICE evidence standards framework for digital health technologies.

The framework is intended to encourage the confident use of innovative, effective tech in the health and social care system.

Accessible to all

Applications and websites should be as accessible as possible. Check with potential digital health partners that any patient-facing software works for any disadvantaged users and offers enhanced readability and navigation. It is worth remembering that nearly half of all pension-age adults are disabled.

Person-centred

Any health or care technology should be person centred – designed with the user at its heart. It should do what it's supposed to for the patient and provide a positive user experience.

Technology should be pleasing and easy to use, otherwise people simply won't use it.

NHS login is a great leap forward for users, giving patients a single, secure login for their health and care apps and websites, and NHS organisations should look for this integration in their potential partners.

Digitally inclusive

Not everyone has access to WiFi or the latest smartphone. All digital health partners should offer a choice of communication channels – including video, landline, text, apps, web and voice assistant - to make NHS services as inclusive as possible.

Patients can then choose the right technology for them, regardless of age, where they live, ability to pay or how tech savvy they might be.



Co-designed

Digital services should be co-designed, with input from clinicians, users and digital providers.

This brings together expert knowledge from the NHS and the technological know-how of digital partners to create innovative solutions that work in the real world.

Purpose-built for the NHS

Digital health partners need to understand the complexities, pressures and challenges of working in the NHS and design technologies to fit existing NHS services.

Experienced suppliers should be able to identify and work with key stakeholders to make sure new technologies are adopted and rolled out successfully.

Agile design

Digital health partners should be willing to design, and redesign, their service on the go, to meet changing needs in the NHS.

They should take a flexible, agile approach to conceptualisation, development and evaluation. Technology moves fast and so should any potential partners.



Working with Inhealthcare, we were able to launch our Lateral Flow Testing Service in just 3 weeks.

We were really impressed by how fast Inhealthcare were able to respond to our needs. They managed to develop and roll out the service extremely quickly, allowing us to get staff tested and enabling us to easily collate results for the National Sitrep.

Lee Russell, Project manager, CHCP

Jamie Innes, Inhealthcare product director



Economies of scale

NHS organisations can end up with many different technology partners providing services of all shapes and sizes, adding to cost and workload.

Inhealthcare can deliver multiple services for a wide range of morbidities through a single, robust platform, unlocking economies of scale for the NHS.

Value for money

It is now widely recognised that digital technologies offer an exciting opportunity to drive efficiencies and savings across the NHS.

Any service chosen should offer clear economic value and evidence for the savings they can offer the NHS.

Interoperable

Services should be fully interoperable, with open APIs. They should be compatible with existing NHS systems, including third party wearables, self testing devices and apps, and clinical IT systems, such as EMIS Web and SystemOne.

Login and MESH

NHS login is the secure way to sign-in to a wide range of health and care services. Digital health partners should offer integration with NHS login to make it quicker and easier for patients to access their services.

They should also offer integration with MESH, the main secure large file transfer service used across health and social care organisations.

Data insight

NHS organisations should have access to the data being generated through their services.

Dashboards give clinicians the latest insights into pathways, alerts and communications and enable them to pinpoint any issues with treatments and identify operational improvements to enhance planning and avoid bottlenecks.

Data secure

Digital health partners should be totally transparent and accountable about data use and make data security a priority, in line with the government's code of conduct for data-driven health and care technology.

Free lunches

Finally, some partners give their services away for "free", especially in times of need as we saw during the pandemic. When they are fully embedded, do not be surprised to see big price hikes at contractual renewal for the continuation of services.

There really is no such thing as a free lunch!



The Inhealthcare view on ICSs

As a digital health innovator, we welcome the move towards greater collaboration between health and care providers.

Technology helps to break down barriers between organisations by making the right information available to the right people at the right time to improve patient outcomes and reduce the burden on front-line staff. Our Oximetry@Home service demonstrates this.

Oximetry@Home

Inhealthcare is providing the technology for the breakthrough Oximetry@Home programme for the remote monitoring of people with confirmed or suspected Covid.

Hospital length of stay was reduced by an average of **6.3 days** for COVID Oximetry@Home (CO@H) patients in comparison to non-CO@H patients.

Only **3.6%** of CO@H patients were admitted to ICU compared with **8.2%** for non-CO@H, and **5.8%** of CO@H patients died within 30 days compared to **20.5%** of non-CO@H patients.

The service is a fine example of collaboration between different NHS organisations and spans seven ICS areas across southern England.

Researchers at the University of Southampton said **"The service has demonstrated considerably improved patient outcomes"**.



Research shared by Dr Matt Inada-Kim, national clinical director for deterioration at NHS England, shows the Oximetry@Home service:

"Considerably improved patient outcomes reducing the odds of longer length hospital stays, intensive care admissions and mortality".

Health Call

Technology also helps to build links between different providers, as we have seen in our work in parts of the UK, including with Health Call.

Inhealthcare was a co-founder of Health Call Solutions Ltd. Health Call is now a collaboration of seven NHS trusts in the North East and North Cumbria to design, develop and roll-out digital health services for a population area of three million people.

Today, the NHS-owned organisation provides a wide range of digital health and remote monitoring services across England – all using Inhealthcare's market-leading technology. These include an NHSX-backed self-testing service for patients who take anticoagulation medication which has been deployed from Newcastle to Bradford.

Other Health Call services provide support for people with gestational diabetes, frailty and musculoskeletal disorders, among other conditions.

The Inhealthcare approach

Both these examples highlight the Inhealthcare approach in action – a single technology partner for the rapid roll-out of multiple, scalable digital health and remote monitoring services to enable care to be delivered at home for a diverse range of conditions.

The Inhealthcare platform, registered as a Medical Device with the MHRA and listed at the GOV.UK

UK Digital Marketplace, allows for automated monitoring, self-care, monitoring of long-term conditions, immunisations, digital e-consent, monitoring of care homes and delivery of behavioural change programmes.



About Inhealthcare

Inhealthcare is a UK market leader in digital health and remote patient monitoring. More than 20 million people across the UK can now access technologies developed by the company in partnership in the NHS.

The underlying technology platform and its associated patient and clinician-facing applications are registered with the MHRA as a Medical Device. Inhealthcare has integrated the platform with NHS login, making it even quicker and easier for patients to use its digital health services.

Inhealthcare is based in Harrogate, North Yorkshire and is led by CEO, Bryn Sage (pictured above).

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