

Transforming NHS Outpatient Services with Intelligent Automation

As of March 2023, there were 7.33 million people on a waiting list for elective care in England. This figure is up nearly 70% on the 4.39 million recorded in March 2020, as the NHS attempts to recover from the pressures of the pandemic.



As the UK population ages, and the cohort of individuals living with multiple long-term conditions continues to surge, there is a need for operational reform in the NHS to maintain the provision of healthcare services. Intelligent Automation is being used by NHS organisations to support Elective Care Recovery, and deliver tangible transformation across outpatient services.



Reduces the elective care backlog



Removes clinical risk and improves patient outcomes



Drives system wide **transformation** across pathways

System Priorities

- Expand capacity and reduce the elective care backlog
- Reduce waiting times
- Prioritise treatment based on clinical urgency
- Provide personalised care – including help and advice whilst patients wait
- Minimise health inequalities

Key Benefits of Intelligent Automation:



Reduces Referral Backlog



Improves Waitlist Management



Transforms Patient Care



Minimises Clinical Risk



Increases Workforce Capability



Enhances Data Quality

"The scale of the challenge facing the NHS to recover its elective care backlog is significant. Also, staffing shortages, coupled with high turnover rates, continue to be a concern for most NHS organisations. Not only is the NHS as a whole currently unable to meet almost every target performance metric, worryingly, the trends are worsening month-on-month. Change is undoubtedly required to maintain the provision of healthcare services and reverse the negative trajectory."

Sharon Osterfield – Transformation Director, Digital Workforce UK



Utilising Intelligent Automation Tools to Reform Outpatient Services

The demand for secondary care services in England is increasing at an unprecedented rate, and the traditional approach of addressing capacity issues with temporary staffing is no longer feasible. NHS organisations have recognised that in order to maintain the provision of healthcare services, whilst simultaneously reducing the elective care backlog, digital transformation is required at scale.

Many trusts have turned to Intelligent Automation tools to increase efficiency, plug interoperability gaps within outpatient departments, and free up staff time. The majority of services operate multiple legacy systems, with both clinical and non-clinical staff frequently required to transfer data between systems. Administrative processes such as taking referrals from eRS and processing them into the trust's Electronic Patient Records (EPRs), sending appointment reminders and executing re-bookings when required, and managing DNA processes to maximise capacity and ensure patient prioritisation, can all be automated, and have the potential to save significant amounts of time that can be repurposed to directly support patients.

"There is a pressing need for NHS organisations to accelerate digital transformation in order to support elective care recovery. A number of trusts that we work in partnership with at Digital Workforce are already using Intelligent Automation tools, such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and Conversational AI, to augment their workforce and address operational challenges. The benefits associated with automation are truly transformational for NHS organisations; for example, on average an acute trust can save around 10,000 hours per year by automating the processing of routine referrals."

Sharon Osterfield – Transformation Director, Digital Workforce UK

In 2021-22, there were **122.3 million outpatient appointments**, **6.4% of which were DNAs**

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-outpatient-activity/2021-22>



Use Cases:



Referral Management



Appointment Bookings



DNA Management



Waiting List Validation



Patient Initiated Follow Ups (PIFU)



Advice and Guidance Requests



Patient Discharge



Appointment and Patient Recall Reminders

Digital Workforce

Transforming Work – Beyond Productivity

Leveraging Intelligent Automation to transform patient care and deliver a better staff experience in the NHS.

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