



SynApps Transforms **West London NHS Trust's** Document & Patient Records Management with Modern, Easy-to-Integrate Alfresco System

West London NHS Trust, formerly West London Mental Health NHS Trust, is one of the most diverse providers of mental and physical healthcare in the UK, providing integrated services through 30 sites throughout West London and beyond. The Trust cares for over 99,000 people every year across 10 London boroughs and employs more than 4000 staff.

Challenge

The Trust had been using an old legacy system for its document and patient records management since around 2012, but this was coming to the end of its life and its functionality was starting to feel outdated, according to Graham Birrell, the Trust's central records and EDMS manager.

"The user interface felt old, giving the wrong impression to our users, and there was no way for them to search text in the Trust's millions of documents and individual patient records. Instead, records had to be searched by file name, which was often random and inconsistent," he recalls. "This made it very difficult to find documents and the reporting side of the platform was unusable."

Just trying to generate basic reporting metrics – about how many documents had been uploaded over the previous week – was clunky and slow, or impossible. "And if any user, anywhere in the Trust, made a mistake, or needed to delete or rename a file they uploaded, they had to refer that to me to do," Graham notes. "There was no way for them to do this themselves."

Not only was the old system proving unstable, cumbersome and expensive to manage, the outgoing support partner was not responsive to issues logged by the Trust.

Solution

The Trust had to decide whether to upgrade its existing system or replace it, and it was becoming increasingly clear that a replacement would offer the most potential for providing the more modern and improved experience users needed. It was important to be able to integrate the new system with Rio, the Trust's patient administration system, as well as increasing accuracy and productivity, and improving overall service delivery.



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At the time there was an NHS drive towards using open source software, Graham recalls. "For enterprise-level content management, Alfresco stood out as the obvious option. The software had a great modern feel to it, and came with some great APIs, opening up all sorts of possibilities for integration," he explains.

Alfresco introduced the Trust to its strategic integration partner, SynApps Solutions, to implement the new system, and Graham immediately felt the reassurance of being in capable hands.

"They looked at our old system, saw it was in a bad way, and provided support for it during the initial phase of the project. They went above and beyond to help us," he says.

Results

While the Trust was only really planning a like-for-like system replacement of one on-premise browser-based content management system with another, SynApps demonstrated that Alfresco offered a lot more functionality straight out of the box. "From the ability to preview content, drag and drop documents, easily upload files and display folder contents intuitively, it was clear that the new system offered us a much better experience," Graham says.

Even simple features really stood out. "With the new Alfresco system, we could empower users to rename or delete their own files, and edit documents online, maintaining version control," Graham says. "The whole experience of using the system is much easier, faster and clearer."

The integration possibilities are considerable too, he adds. "As a simple example, when we register smart cards to give new users access to the patient administration system, the database automatically creates an account in Alfresco via an API. Meanwhile, from my perspective, administration is much easier – the ability to add and remove users, for instance."

Reporting is transformed, too. "We use Apache Zeppelin for reporting, on its own server, and we can now see at a glance how many documents are being uploaded, when and what they are, plus how many document libraries and sites there are, and so on," Graham says. "There's a lot more we can do too, as this is an SQL database so we can simply write new SQL queries as we need to."

The future

Today, West London NHS Trust is using Alfresco primarily as a document repository, housing all kinds of documents with varying permissions and accessibility requirements. The plan is to ultimately extend the platform to other areas of the business, with SynApps' help as needed.

"Right now, Alfresco is acting as a repository for our clinical and employee records, but we plan to push it out to the rest of the business," Graham says. "Already we can effectively control access to our patient records, which works very well for us. Eventually, we want to have governance and compliance services sit on top of the repository, all automatically and centrally controlled by Alfresco."

Partnering with SynApps has helped the Trust move forward quickly with its plans: the Alfresco platform was up and running in just over three months.

Throughout, SynApps' help with realising all the various possibilities has been invaluable, Graham notes.

"I have been in the NHS for over 20 years and SynApps are by far the best support company I have ever come across," he says. "They're extremely responsive, even out of hours - which tends to be when we contact them, even though this isn't in their contract."

"I can't sing their praises highly enough," he adds. "They put enormous effort into the preparations and the transition to the new Alfresco system, smoothing the way and doing exactly what they promised. SynApps have a very good technical team and excellent support guys. We could not have been in better hands."



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