



## SynApps Accelerates Digital Transformation at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust with Integrated, Trust-Wide Paperless Patient Administration Solution Based on Alfresco

**Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust** is one of the largest NHS teaching Trusts in England. The integrated care organisation spans Sandwell General Hospital in West Bromwich; City Hospital, Birmingham; and Rowley Regis Hospital; plus 10 community hospitals and health centres, alongside 15 primary care networks encompassing over 85 GP practices. A further acute-care hospital, the Midland Metropolitan, is under construction and due for completion in 2022, when the acute services from Birmingham and Sandwell hospitals will move to it.

### Challenge

Across the Trust's diverse operations, clinicians and administrative support teams process around 3,000 live or new patient records each day, and call up a further 250 legacy records from its archives. Before 2016, all of this activity was paper based, relying on large teams of people to access the correct files in advance of patient appointments and get them to where they needed to be. As well as being very labour intensive, this was highly inefficient. Records sometimes went astray, and if they were needed simultaneously by healthcare professionals in different locations, this could cause delays, or require that faxed copies were sent between premises.

Deputy chief operating officer, Liam Kennedy, admits that before 2016 Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust was not one of the forerunners in digital innovation, and he says the Trust committed to turn that situation around. "We were behind the curve, relying too heavily on paper records and manual processes," he explained.

To improve efficiency, reliability and the quality and consistency of patient care, and to be able to meet the latest Government and Department of Health requirements around digital patient records management and information security, the Trust needed to modernise its processes and capture and manage patient records and correspondence electronically.

### Solution

Finding the right partner to take Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust on its transformation journey was critical. It chose SynApps Solutions because it was a proven supplier of integrated healthcare record solutions to the NHS but, as an independent provider, could tailor its systems to the needs of each Trust and deliver in their required timeframe.

The Trust's first priority was to eliminate paper from current patient case-handling, so it engaged SynApps to provide Alfresco Content Services, a full-featured electronic content management system, as its digital repository for scanned medical records. Now, any new or live patient records in paper form are scanned by the Trust's bureau service provider, Iron Mountain, into this secure central repository, so they can be quickly called up by any authorised healthcare provider at the point of need, via the Trust's in-house Electronic Patient Record (EPR) system. SynApps provided the integration between Alfresco and the Trust's EPR system to enable this.



**"The solution SynApps has provided makes a huge difference."**

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Deputy chief operating officer  
Sandwell and West  
Birmingham NHS Trust



Rather than create a huge scanning backlog, the Trust scans patients' medical records on demand, as each file is needed. SynApps has provided an integration server to enable records to be 'ingested' in real time and stored in the Alfresco repository.

## Results

Today, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust does not keep any paper records on site. All legacy folders are stored remotely and, as needed, are scanned by the Iron Mountain bureau straight into Alfresco, where clinicians anywhere in outpatients or inpatients have ready access to them on demand.

"Whether it's a consent form for surgery, notes from a previous outpatient appointment, or trend information about outpatient cases, clinical notes can be called up at the click of a button now," Liam says. "The ease of access, and ability to spot trends, means better patient care and patient outcomes, which is our priority. The solution SynApps has provided makes a huge difference."

Efficiency savings have been substantial too, he says. Closing on-site medical records libraries has freed up valuable space for use as part of the Trust's investment in research and development, and more than 26 administration staff have been freed up for other work elsewhere across the Trust.

## The future

The Trust's ambitions do not stop here. A full electronic patient record (EPR) system has just gone live, which means no more paper case files will be created from now on. "This is the full wraparound for patient records," Liam explains. "Most documents will be created electronically now, including prescriptions for medication, and health information exchange with GPs, who will be able to see patient appointment and diagnostics via their systems."

The Trust also wants to gradually move patients across to email-based correspondence, and away from letters sent by post. "SynApps is helping us with a workflow and engine, which will look up patient data, check for an email address, and, if one is found, make contact through this channel first. If there is no reply, we would then issue a letter. It's in initial design at the moment, and will be an important first step in the digital transition for patient correspondence. Eventually we will have a patient portal, so that patients can look up their own records and appointments online."

SynApps is also working on a proof-of-concept solution involving the capture and archiving of inbound referrals from the NHS eReferrals service. Currently, 2-3 people have to transfer referrals from the national system to the Trust's patient administration system. "This is laborious," Liam says. "The aim is to automatically upload referrals to our system so that consultants can triage them directly and move them to clinics."

Having SynApps as a sounding board and advisor has been empowering for Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust as it has formulated its plans for digital innovation. "Nothing fazes them: whatever we ask about, SynApps will think about how it could work," Liam says.

"Because they're external to the NHS, they're not bound by the same bureaucratic constraints, which means they're fast, efficient and deliver on time. Indeed, partnering with SynApps has meant our digital transformation strategy has come on in leaps and bounds. Before we implemented the Alfresco system, we were overly reliant on paper - so that first deployment was a huge step forward for us. Now we're in the top quartile among NHS Trusts for digital advancement, and we are very ambitious in our vision and plans for transforming how we operate. With SynApps' support, we're storming ahead."



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