

Finance & Accounting - Strategic Partnership

## North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust



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**When two NHS hospital trusts joined forces as a single organisation to provide acute healthcare to a population of around 700,000, the newly-formed North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust required a modern finance and accounting service that could be implemented quickly and professionally. For the Trust’s Chief Executive, Caroline Walker, there was only ever one provider that would be up to the job.**

### The challenge

The existence of two separate finance systems and hundreds of different processes within them, meant the merger between Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust, needed the proven finance and accounting service, provided by NHS Shared Business Services (NHS SBS), to help guarantee a seamless transition.

**With NHS SBS systems already well-established at one of the two merging organisations, the challenge was around introducing the same digital processes as standard across three different hospitals.**

Caroline explained: “At Peterborough and Stamford we had been using NHS SBS for years and were happy with the service. I therefore didn’t for one minute consider a backwards step of reverting to doing things in-house.

“Hinchingsbrooke was using a mix of in-house and a different outsource provider.

But it was apparent fairly quickly that the best option would be to bring the new Trust onto NHS SBS systems.”

### The solution

Key to ensuring a successful implementation in time for the launch of the new North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust, was a well-managed migration process that used NHS SBS’s knowledge of hospital mergers and extensive experience in introducing modern finance systems into NHS organisations.

Caroline said: “NHS SBS made strong recommendations to us early on in the process and its experience in this area was something we relied on. There was no need to reinvent the wheel. The NHS SBS team really handed it to me on a plate when it came to what we needed for a successful implementation.

“Not only did NHS SBS develop a migration plan that was modelled on what had worked in other trusts, but crucially they provided an expert project manager who led a lot of this for me with my internal team. This meant I had the guarantee of somebody who knew exactly what was needed for the installation of NHS SBS systems, rather than having to find a generic project manager, which might have derailed the project.”

As part of the migration, almost 100 new Trust-wide processes were introduced to ensure efficient financial transactions across all three hospitals.

The most up-to-date technology improved the look and feel of the finance systems, making them easier to navigate for budget holders and requisitioners. The implementation of devolved electronic sales ordering, meanwhile, has enabled users across the Trust to raise their own outbound invoices, instead of everything going via the finance team. This has eliminated printing costs and the duplication of effort with the previous paper processes.

End-to-end electronic approval and authorisation limits are now also in place, providing an assurance that all transactions have been appropriately approved and helping to align working practices across the newly merged organisation.

Similarly, purchased goods and services are now pre-coded and have VAT treatment automatically applied. This saves the finance team time and reduces the need for any rework, whilst also providing them with greater assurance on accuracy.

## The result

Having such robust systems in place across the entire Trust has reduced the need for time-consuming manual interventions and, therefore, the potential heavy burden on the finance department.

Caroline added: "Providing a transactional service to keep our hospitals going day in day out requires a certain level of resilience. With NHS SBS you get access to a well-resourced national infrastructure, which means we aren't exposed if, for example, one person from the finance team is off sick and another is on annual leave."

With a new ledger now fully operational, the North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust is benefitting from a modern platform that facilitates a single way of working.

The unified ledger and standardisation of reporting has provided the Trust with a much clearer overall financial picture.

Caroline said: "There are of course other outsource providers, however, in terms of managing a large scale implementation the service from NHS SBS was second-to-none. From the outset they were able to tell me exactly what I needed for a successful installation – having done the same thing for many other NHS trusts over the years.

"The NHS SBS team I had on site was of an extremely high calibre and worked particularly well with my internal finance team. They were very user-friendly and kept everything to plan, which meant we got a guaranteed product that was implemented in the exact timeframe we needed."

## Key benefits:

- Devolved electronic sales ordering enables users across the Trust to raise outbound invoices
- Elimination of printing costs and duplication of effort with previous paper processes
- End-to-end electronic approval and authorisation limits provide an assurance that all transactions appropriately approved
- Purchased goods and services pre-coded and have VAT treatment automatically applied to save time and reduce need for rework.

To hear how your NHS organisation could also benefit from partnering with NHS Shared Business Services, contact us at [sbs-w.corporatemarketing@nhs.net](mailto:sbs-w.corporatemarketing@nhs.net).

