



Shared Business Services

» CASE STUDY

The new finance and procurement service for the NHS

Designing, building and deploying critical national infrastructure across the health service to handle over £355bn+ each year.

SUMMARY

- Critical national infrastructure
- £355bn spend managed
- Ground-breaking service design and implementation
- 30+ systems unified and 450 processes simplified
- £19bn payments on day one

www.sbs.nhs.uk

» The Background

The new national finance and procurement service is formally designated as Critical National Infrastructure, reflecting its essential role in ensuring the continuity, security and integrity of NHS operations across England.

Every non-pay NHS transaction depends on it operating without interruption.

Together, it underpins £355bn of annual expenditure, processing more than 7.1 million invoices, recovering £7.4bn in debt and reclaiming £1.2bn in VAT each year.

Today, thousands of NHS workers and suppliers operate through a single national service. On day one, £19bn of payments were executed without disruption.

This is not a technology upgrade. It is a nationally critical operational capability, designed to operate continuously, securely and consistently across the entire NHS.

At the centre of this transformation is NHS Shared Business Services (NHS SBS), the only organisation with the mandate, system-wide reach and specialist knowledge to redesign finance and procurement as a single national service.



» Why Was Transformation Necessary

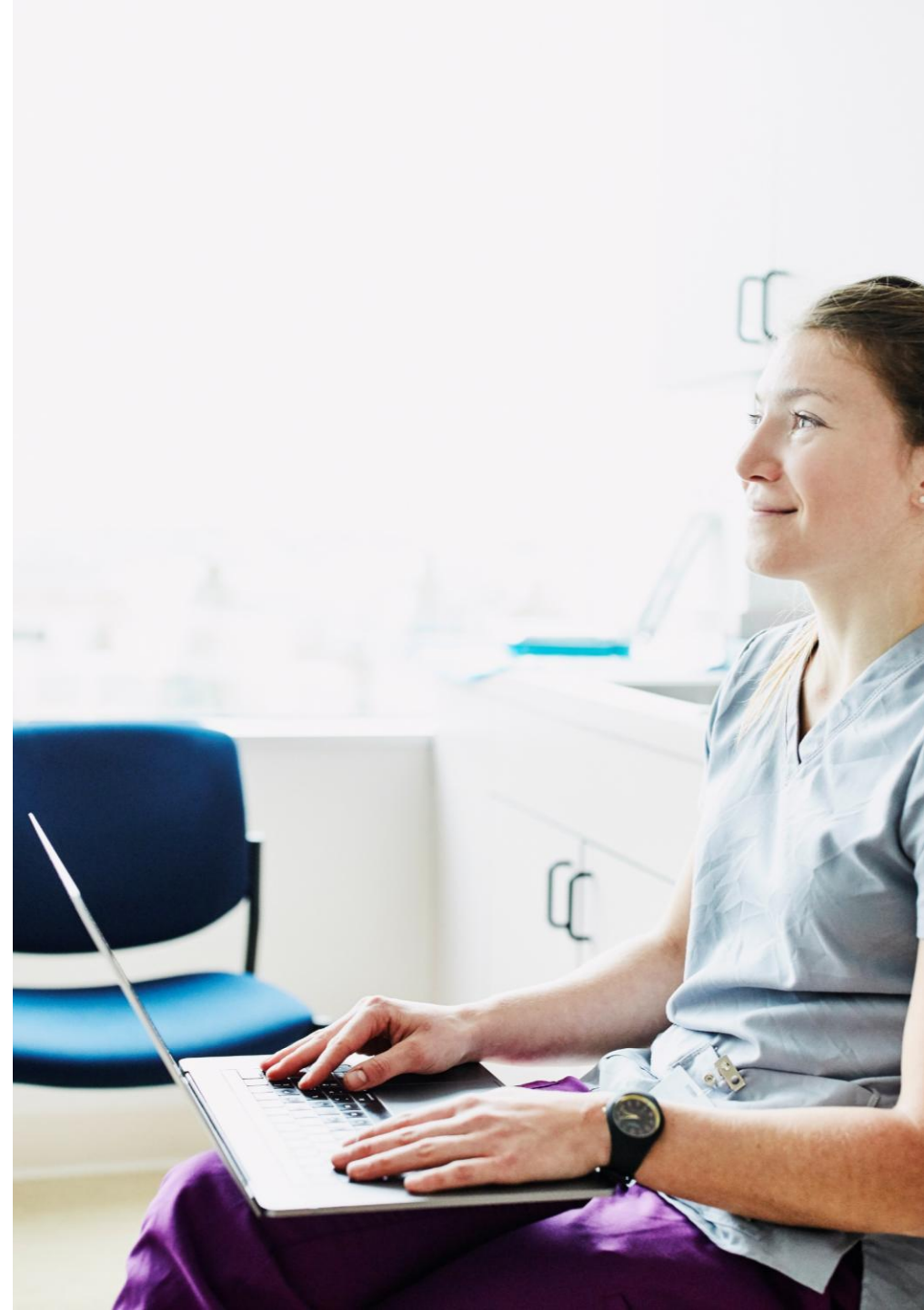
For many years, NHS finance and procurement operated effectively at national level. Over time, however, local variation increased. More than 30 systems evolved across organisations, supported by inconsistent processes and manual workarounds.

What began as flexibility gradually became fragmentation.

Staff were required to navigate multiple disconnected systems, re-enter data and manage processes that were increasingly time-consuming and difficult to reconcile. This created inefficiency at local level and operational risk at national level. Limited standardisation reduced control, lack of real-time visibility constrained decision-making, and legacy complexity limited the ability to modernise.

The operating model was no longer sufficient for the scale, consistency and responsiveness required of a modern health system.

When the national contract came up for renewal, a clear decision was taken not to incrementally improve a fragmented landscape, but to replace it with a new platform and operating model.



» Why This Could be Delivered

This transformation required more than technology. It required an organisation capable of operating and redesigning national services across the NHS.

NHS SBS is a public–private joint venture combining public sector accountability with private sector delivery capability. For over 20 years, it has operated national corporate services on behalf of the NHS, developing deep operational understanding of how finance and procurement function across the system — and where complexity creates risk, inefficiency and duplication.

That experience enabled a fundamentally different ambition:

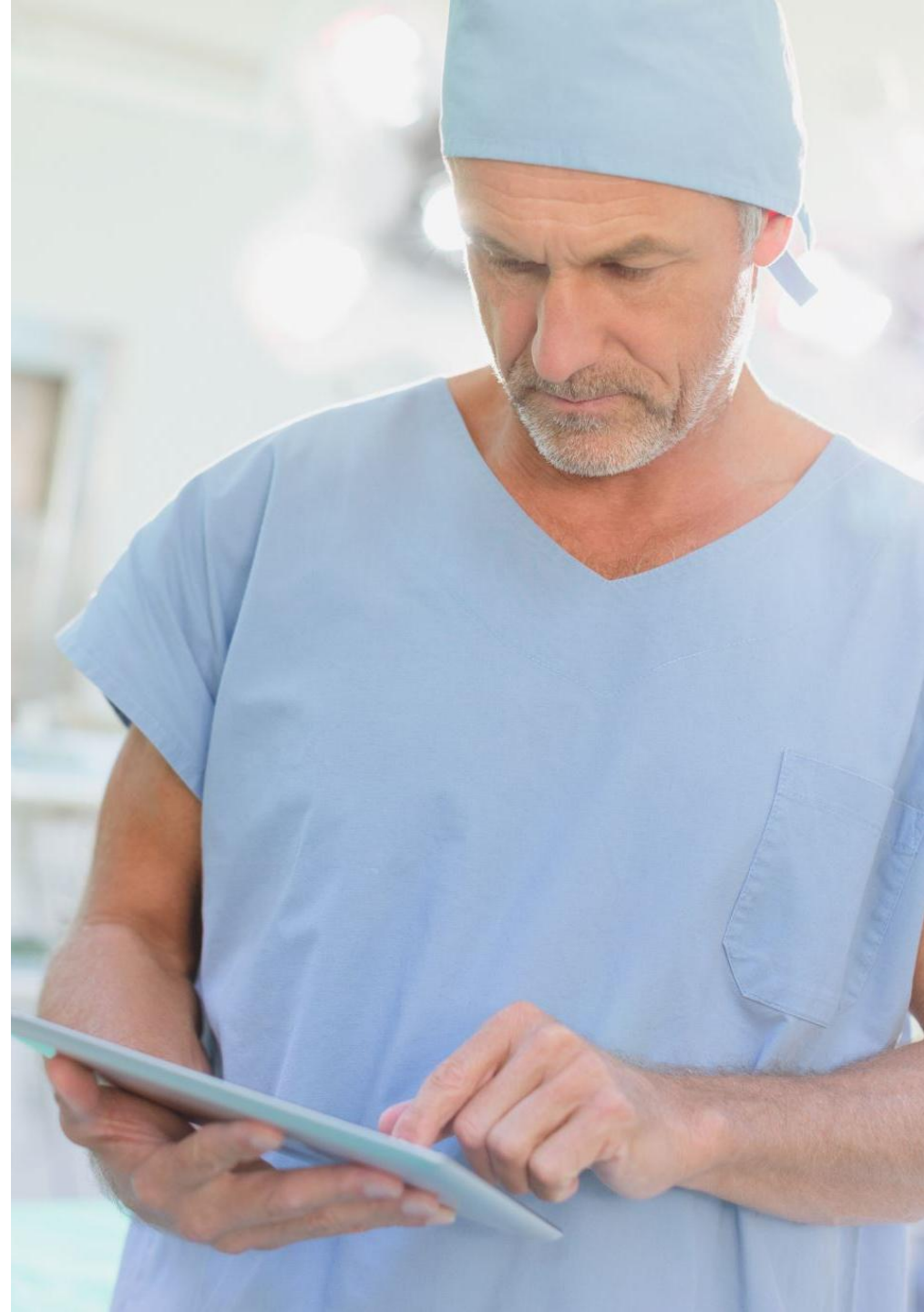
- One national service.
- One operating model.
- One front door.
- One source of truth.

» Designing the service before the technology

The transformation began with service redesign, not system selection.

More than 30,000 hours of engagement with NHS finance, procurement and operational teams informed the end-to-end redesign of over 450 end-to-end processes. These were standardised, simplified and re-engineered to operate consistently across all organisations.

An “adopt, not adapt” approach ensured alignment to proven best practice, reducing variation and enabling automation at scale. This replaced local interpretation with national consistency and created the foundation for a unified operating model. Only once the service was defined was technology introduced to enable it.





» Building a single national platform

The redesigned service is delivered through a secure, cloud-based platform that consolidates more than 30 legacy systems into a single national environment.

The platform provides the operational backbone for finance and procurement across the NHS, enabling end-to-end workflows, real-time visibility and embedded automation across processes that were previously fragmented.

A single digital front door provides access for NHS staff and suppliers, removing duplication and ensuring a consistent experience across organisational boundaries.

Rather than replicating legacy complexity, the platform was configured to support a redesigned national operating model.

» Making the NHS safe to transition

Alongside redesign and build, significant focus was placed on ensuring the NHS could transition safely to a single national service.

A critical foundation was data readiness. Financial and procurement data from legacy systems was consolidated and standardised, creating a single trusted source of truth across all organisations prior to migration.

Testing was used as a national assurance mechanism rather than a technical exercise. Over a 14-week period, more than 8,000 test scenarios validated end-to-end financial and procurement processes under real operating conditions, confirming readiness across the full-service model.

The final stage was a carefully orchestrated national cutover. All organisations transitioned onto the new platform in a controlled, coordinated deployment designed to ensure continuity of critical financial operations at all times. The service went live across the NHS without disruption.

» THE RESULT

The impact of the new service is both operational and structural.

Core finance and procurement processes are now standardised and automated at scale, with 94.5% of Accounts-to-Report activity fully automated.

Efficiency gains are visible across the system:

- Ordering time reduced from 5 minutes to 90 seconds
- Non-PO transaction times halved
- VAT return cycles reduced from 25 days to 12
- Service performance has also materially improved:
- 400,000+ service requests handled annually
- 97% first-time resolution rate
- Resolution times reduced from days to hours
- Supplier onboarding reduced from 5 days to 15 minutes
- In selected areas, AI-enabled capability is already delivering up to a 50%-time savings, releasing capacity across finance and procurement teams.

To learn more about the new finance and procurement service please visit www.sbs.nhs.uk

» SUMMARY

- The new national finance and procurement service is designated as Critical National Infrastructure, reflecting its essential role in ensuring the continuity, security and integrity of NHS operations across England.
- By replacing fragmentation with standardisation and local variation with a unified operating model, NHS SBS has fundamentally changed how £355bn of annual expenditure is managed across the health system.
- The impact of the new service is both operational and structural.
- The new service could save the NHS £3bn if all NHS providers opted to use it.