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NHS
Shared Business Services

CASE STUDY

Automation cuts finance processing time by 50% at The Princess Alexandra Hospital

To deliver accurate and scalable financial processing while improving efficiency, The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust (PAHT) in Harlow connected with NHS Shared Business Services and their automation partner UiPath for support.

The result? Four new automation solutions to streamline and automate core financial processes, saving time and money and boosting staff morale.

> **"The automation solutions introduced by NHS SBS to date have streamlined tasks and are viewed positively by the team. As a result, we are exploring where we can take this next in order to free up time for the tasks that really drive value."**

Chris Strong
Associate Director of Financial Services
The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust

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THE CHALLENGE

PAHT's finance department needed to deliver accurate, scalable and timely financial processing while improving efficiency.

Manual, time-intensive processes including high-volume invoice handling, complex spreadsheet manipulation and repetitive Oracle uploads slowed operations and increased the risk of errors.

Several key finance processes, including accounts payable journal uploads, monthly journal creation, NHS Professionals invoicing and pharmacy invoice processing, were managed through separate manual workflows, consuming valuable staff time and making auditing more challenging.

These were not isolated administrative tasks. They supported supplier payments, monthly financial control, workforce invoicing and pharmacy processing. Delays and rework placed pressure on reporting deadlines, reduced the time available for analysis and made it harder to absorb increasing volumes without additional resource.

PAHT's ambition was to create a faster, more controlled finance service - reducing manual handling and error risk while releasing skilled colleagues for analysis, assurance and other value-adding work.

PAHT therefore connected with NHS Shared Business Services and their automation partner UiPath for support.



THE SOLUTION

Four finance automations, designed around PAHT's processes and controls.

Working with PAHT colleagues, NHS SBS's Automation Consultancy team identified four core finance processes suitable for automation: Accounts Payable Journal Uploads, Monthly Journal Creation, Pharmacy Invoice Processing and NHS Professionals Invoicing. UiPath provided the underlying automation platform.

Together, the teams designed solutions to:

- Automate file retrieval, validation and formatting for each process.
- Streamline data uploads into integrated systems, including Oracle and the CMM pharmacy management system.
- Reduce both processing time and error rates.
- Create consistent audit trails and eliminate duplication of effort.
- Surface missing or inconsistent data as clear exceptions for finance colleagues to review, rather than processing it unchecked.
- Provide monitored, repeatable processing that could accommodate increasing volumes while maintaining financial controls.

PAHT specialists defined business rules, tested outputs and validated each automation before go-live. Solutions were introduced progressively to maintain service continuity and build user confidence. Performance and exceptions continue to be monitored to support ongoing optimisation.



THE RESULT

Within weeks of being deployed, the automations had saved the Trust both time and money, with a 33% ROI in year 1.

Across four live finance automations, processing time fell by up to 50%, error rates reduced from 5% to 1% (an 80% improvement) and PAHT achieved a 33% return on investment in year one.

Capacity for higher-value work
Reduced manual handling and rework gives finance colleagues more time for analysis, exception resolution and activities that add greater value.

Stronger control
Supplier discrepancies are flagged immediately for review, while consistent weekly and monthly journal uploads improve reliability, auditability and financial control.

Built to scale
The automations can accommodate increasing volumes without a proportionate increase in manual effort, supporting longer-term productivity.

Building on success
PAHT and NHS SBS are now exploring ledger reconciliations and further pharmacy automation.

For more information contact sbs.hello@nhs.net

SUMMARY

- Up to 20,000 pharmacy invoices automated annually
- Up to 50% faster processing
- 80% reduction in error rates
- 33% ROI achieved in year one
- Supplier discrepancies flagged immediately
- Consistent weekly and monthly journal uploads
- Improved staff morale

"Our collaboration with NHS SBS has highlighted the benefits that automation can bring to our processes. Building on the success of our initial solutions, we are now looking at further opportunities to use automation to support our teams and improve efficiency."

Loitie De La Luna
Transactional Services Manager
The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust