

## The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust\*



*“Through ePay we are not only saving time and money that can be better spent elsewhere, but have also taken a significant amount of paper out of our workforce processes.”*

With NHS providers under increasing pressure to achieve national back office efficiencies, The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust has been leading the way in using automation to modernise its workforce systems. By partnering with NHS Shared Business Services (NHS SBS) to implement ePay for almost 6,000 employees, the Trust has forecast around £450k savings over the next five years, by improving the accuracy of staff timesheets and expense claims, whilst eradicating around 1,000 paper forms every month.

### The challenge

Like many NHS trusts across the country, when it came to submitting timesheets and expense forms, staff at The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust were required to use paper forms to make their claims. These were prone to errors, often missing information and subject to the lengthy delays that are common to paper-based processes.

**David Everett, HR Information Manager at The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust, explained:**

“One of the main problems we had with our traditional paper-based expense system was that it was open to interpretation. This led to inconsistency across the Trust and meant mistakes were more likely. This had an obvious financial implication but it also meant staff resource was wasted dealing with and correcting errors.”

### The solution

The ePay system was developed by NHS SBS to help the national drive for a paperless NHS, whilst delivering financial savings and greater staff productivity through more accurate, user-friendly and faster workforce admin processes.

Designed to interface seamlessly with the NHS ESR (Electronic Staff Record), ePay has four modules – expenses, salary, absence and HR forms – that can be deployed separately or together, depending on the specific needs of an NHS trust.

To introduce ePay to The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust successfully and ensure the organisation realised the maximum benefits, NHS SBS collaborated closely with the Trust’s workforce team on its implementation, adapting the technology with bespoke rules to fit the hospital’s own existing policies.

This led to increased staff understanding of – and better compliance with – correct Trust procedures, as new standardised processes removed any potential for different interpretations in the many departments and teams across the Trust.

\*now East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust

By automating the expense and timesheet systems, The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust management team can now see the status of all claims submitted by employees at a glance. The staff user and the manager providing the approval can input, update and track claims electronically, with receipts easily attached as necessary. Electronic forms have replaced the previous paper versions that were sent in the Trust's internal post or left on desks for signatures and written explanations.

**David said:**

"The introduction of ePay has made it easier for staff to track their claims and for managers to have full visibility of what is going through the system. The technology is user-friendly and the vast majority of staff have embraced it and view it very positively."

Where a paper-based system gives limited visibility of the reasons behind an expense or overtime claim, meanwhile, the new digital process provides much more comprehensive and useful data, enabling The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust to make better-informed management decisions when it comes to its workforce and how it is deployed.

**David added:**

"NHS SBS has provided ongoing support since go-live and this has helped us get the absolute most from the system, particularly in terms of reporting and other functionality for managers."

## The result

In just the first six months of using ePay, The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust saved over 26 per cent on employee expenses alone – far in excess of what was expected. One of the key features of the technology that led to such a significant saving, is the enhanced process of reimbursing staff who use vehicles for work. The ePay system includes, for instance, an in-built postcode-to-postcode calculator to ensure precise and more accurate mileage claims.

Meanwhile, by simply eliminating the costs associated with processing paper forms, such as postage and courier charges, The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust is in line to save almost £2k a year – improving its carbon footprint at the same time.

With all of the efficiencies associated with introducing ePay, the Trust hopes to achieve around £450k cost savings over a five year period, whilst also releasing the countless hours of staff resource previously wasted on time-consuming and often duplicate admin tasks.

**David said:**

"The big drivers for us when it came to introducing this more modern way of working, were the NHS paperless agenda and the requirement for the Trust to meet the national efficiency targets that came out of the Lord Carter review.

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## Key benefits:

- **£450k cost savings over five years, plus countless hours of staff resource previously wasted on admin tasks**
- **Eliminated around 12,000 paper forms every year**
- **Automated system allows employees and managers to input, update and track claims electronically**
- **Digital process provides comprehensive data that enables better-informed management decisions about workforce deployment**
- **Postcode-to-postcode calculator ensures precise mileage expense claims**

To hear how your NHS organisation could also benefit from partnering with NHS Shared Business Services, contact us at:

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