

NHSX tech plan for health and care on the day briefing

NHSX has published its tech plan for health and care, setting out its vision for how technology will support the ambitions of the long term plan. The tech plan, which NHSX is referring to as its first draft will be developed throughout the spring and the summer. **A website has been launched** alongside the tech plan for NHSX engage on how feedback, comments and the sharing of case studies. You can read the **full plan here**.

Key points

The tech plan builds on the principles set out in the secretary of state's statement on the **future of health care**, published in 2018 as well as the **NHSX mission statement** published last year. The aim of the tech plan is to describe how the deliverables in the long term plan will be achieved through digitisation. The long term plan committed every NHS provider to have achieved a core level of digitisation by 2024. The tech plan defines this level of digitisation as:

- Decent hardware (e.g. replacement of old laptops)
- Adequate networks (powered by full fibre and 5G)
- Integrated systems that allow flexibility in managing clinical and operational workflows

In the tech plan, NHSX diagnoses what it sees as the challenges facing the sector as it looks to deliver on these ambitions:

- Variable levels of digitisation and confidence
- Problems/Issues with data flow
- Difficulties scaling research and innovation
- Patients/services having limited tools to access their own care and records

NHSX describes what achieving this core level of digitisation will mean for health and care services:

- Clinicians will find tech makes their working lives easier and doing their jobs to the best of their abilities
- Social care workers will be able to access information wherever and whenever they need it
- Patients/service users will have the digital tools they need to drive their own care
- Healthcare leaders will lead data driven health and care systems
- Tech professionals and analysts will feel valued and integrated with the wider NHS workforce
- Health tech developers will see the NHS as a great place for innovation
- Researchers will have safe, secure, appropriate and streamlined access to high quality, curated and linked health datasets

Five missions

The tech plan sets out five “missions” NHSX will use to drive this work. NHSX will recruit small teams to lead on each mission, focussed on one year and five year plans for their work.

1 Reduce burden on the workforce

- *Immediate priorities:* improve staff login; enhance clinical communication (e.g. replace pagers)
- *Longer term:* digital staff identity/passporting; support innovation

2 Give patients, service users and carers the tools to access information and services directly

- *Immediate priorities:* NHS App functionality; improve usability of NHS website; enable NHS login for all system suppliers who meet NHS standards; roll out digital child health and maternity digital health records
- *Longer term:* enable proxy and delegated access to digital health and care systems; enable people to set contact preferences; integrate digital products with the infrastructure that supports the NHS App.

3 Ensure information about people’s health and care can be safely accessed, wherever it is needed

- *Immediate priorities:* provide national data sharing frameworks and standards; target funding through the new digital aspirant programme; share best practice through global digital exemplar (GDE) blueprints; support the development of locally-led shared records and plans
- *Longer term:* ensure entire country is covered by shared care records; put in place core record standards and support adoption of interoperability

4 Aid the improvement of safety across health and care

- *Immediate priorities:* design core standards underpinning digital diagnostics; develop medicines administration standards; develop antimicrobial standards
- *Longer term:* deliver communications based on HSIB recommendations; next generation electronic prescription service; develop a process to recognise and act on digital issues reported from the patient safety and incident management system

5 Improve productivity

- *Immediate priorities:* support outpatient transformation; scale proven innovations; improve bookings, referrals and advice management
- *Longer term:* corporate services efficiencies; community providers staff interoperability

Social care

NHSX recognises there is more to be done to integrate NHS and social care services digitally. In order to realise this and deliver improved services, the NHSX vision sets out the following “pillars” that are currently being developed:

- Set standards and support the adoption of standards to enable interoperability and integration between health and care
- Enable better collection, sharing and use of data across the system

- Increase capability and grow a digitally expert workforce
- Support research and innovation, adoption and a “vibrant ecosystem” for technology in care
- Support infrastructure and provider digitisation through measures to improve connectivity in the sector
- Deliver bespoke information and guidance to support the social care sector to prepare for the forthcoming digital migration of telephony, ensuring continuity of service for people reliant on analogue systems.

Enablers

A number of dependencies underpin the realisation of this vision.. These include clarity over responsibilities, sufficient spending on digital (including a minimum or optimum level of revenue spending, as mentioned in the planning guidance), targeted funding from the centre (i.e. the digital aspirant programme) and support from the centre on areas such as procurement and deployment. NHSX will be working nationally to enable providers and systems to progress digitisation.

Open standards

NHSX is clear there will be no unitary or single tech solutions advocated by the centre. However they also want to avoid a fragmented approach to delivering their vision. Therefore the intention is for NHSX to set clear, open standards for the NHS and enforce them to ensure NHS organisations build and buy solutions that can talk to each other. NHSX will introduce a new system of spend controls to ensure new technology is compliant, including a lower spend threshold for central approval.

NHSX will work with NHS Digital, the wider NHS, the social care sector and the health tech community to develop these standards and appoint a director of standards and interoperability. NHSX has already made some progress in developing standards for the following areas: NHS number, medications, pathology and SNOMED.

Sharing data

Work also needs to be done to improve data flow across the system. NHSX intends to build on the work of the local health care records (LHCR) programme to develop universal shared care records and ensure individual care pathways and processes are making use of patient data in an optimal way.

NHSX will also look to publish clearer and simpler information governance guidance, encourage federated data architecture and promote access to health and care data in the research and innovation industry. NHSX would like to see patients, service users and carers taking more control and have more access to /update their own care records.

Support from NHSX

NHSX will also provide support and clarity in a number of areas to support digitisation. This includes:

- Establishing a model of what good looks like
- Setting out who should pay for what
- Sharing best practice (building on the global digital exemplar blueprints)
- Establishing better ways of supporting the frontline
- Establishing a less onerous way of provider oversight
- Improving commercial support by setting up a small strategic commercial function
- Establishing a centre of expertise to provide particular support and advice to providers entering into commercial arrangements, particularly around data sharing

NHSX will also look to provide platforms on which innovation can develop, similar to the approach taken with the NHS App. This work will encompass a number of work streams, including “any to any” booking systems, a new modular national screening programme, development of the new NHS AI lab and a new contract to support IT within primary care – GPIT Futures.

Work will continue to train and upskill the NHS workforce as part of the existing programme, ‘building a digital ready workforce’. NHSX will focus on three themes: leaders with the confidence they need, tech professionals properly supported and networked, and clinicians entering the workforce knowing how they can use technology and data to help their patients. NHSX will also work with others to support digital inclusion to ensure everyone can access new digital health products.

Expectations of systems and providers

NHSX has said its vision will depend on every provider making digital transformation a foundational part of future plans, and every local system becoming built in part on digital technology. NHSX is therefore asking every provider to:

- Fully integrate digital transformation into their strategic plans
- Use data driven insights to inform continuous clinical and operational improvement
- Ensure all systems are compliant with national standards, information governance and cyber security
- Ensure the use of tech is clinically-led wherever appropriate
- Ensure that trust leaders have the confidence to engage with technology
- Make necessary investments in people, hardware, network and systems
- Share best practice with the rest of the NHS

ICs and STPs have been asked to:

- Have a plan for system working that makes full use of digital technology
- Ensure that patient data can safely flow across the system
- Drive decisions on the basis of data and analysis

Five phases

There will be five phases of consultation for the NHSX tech vision, each developed iteratively:

- 1 Publishing the tech vision
- 2 Objectives and missions: focussed on priorities for 2020/21 and the 3-5 year view on each mission
- 3 Enablers: defining what good looks like, setting out who should pay for what, and providing more information on standards and architecture
- 4 Deliverables up to the end of March 2024: developing standards, guidance or policies and establishing new funding routes
- 5 Defining and measuring success: reviewing progress against digital maturity and measuring the impact for patients and workforce

Measuring success and digital maturity

NHSX will look to measure progress against core objectives and develop a number of metrics. Over the next year a model for digital maturity will be developed that measures outcomes rather than technology. This model will apply to providers, commissioners and systems and should help organisations to identify their investment priorities. NHSX has committed to working with different parts of the system to develop this model.

Case studies

The vision contains a number of high level case studies that members may wish to review. More information can be found in the tech vision document:

- **Personal health records at Connected Nottinghamshire:** Providing patients and service users with the tools to access and drive their own health outcomes
- **Robotic process automation at East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust:** removing the need to print paper forms and reducing administration time
- **Connecting Care at South Gloucester:** providing care work works with access to up-to-date health and social care records
- **CogStack at King's College Hospital:** identify patient risk using health data extracted from the trust's electronic patient record.

NHS Providers' view

We welcome the publication of NHSX's draft tech plan which correctly identifies a number of challenges and opportunities relating to digitising services. Although less than a year old, it is clear NHSX has sought to understand the sector's needs before prescribing national policy initiatives and is committed to working collaboratively with providers.

We particularly welcome acknowledgement in the draft vision of the benefits digitisation could hold for NHS staff seeking to work more efficiently, and for patients, carers and families seeking greater input and information about their own care.

Nevertheless, the publication of the draft tech plan follows a number of national policy documents setting out the centre's approach to the digital agenda including Matt Hancock's statement on the future of healthcare, the long term plan and the NHSX mission statement. While this renewed and welcome focus at a national level reflects the growing importance of digital technology, there is a risk the sector may become overloaded with asks and priorities. This could exacerbate the difficulties many trusts already face in selecting where to focus their efforts with regard to the digital agenda. We look forward to working with NHSX and our membership during the engagement period on the tech plan to clarify the priorities for providers in the short and medium term.

The success of the digital agenda also relies on trusts being able to access sufficient capital and revenue investment to transform current approaches. The draft vision confirms the introduction of new spend controls to ensure new technology is compliant with core standards, and a lower spend threshold for central approval. Although NHSX says this process will be quicker and smarter, we remain concerned that it could lead to more burdensome administration for providers and other health and care organisations. There is reference to a minimum or optimal revenue spend on digital technology but no further detail on how this will be estimated or monitored. We have some concerns about spend benchmarking and would recommend NHSX prioritises a focus on the efficacy of digital products rather than seeking just to benchmark trust expenditure..

We particularly welcome the move towards developing a digital maturity model and providing more clarity for boards, staff and patients about what 'good' looks like. Trust leaders have been asking for greater clarity about the national bodies expectations, and for clearer benchmarks they can learn from, for some time. Alongside this, trusts will welcome support to access the expertise and advice they may need to progress the digital agenda.

We strongly encourage NHSX to engage with as many trusts as possible as it develops, and implements its vision, including seeking input from trust board members and the provider digital community. NHS Providers looks forward to supporting this engagement and working with colleagues in NHSX and the national bodies to ensure trust boards are prepared and fully supported to take forward this ambitious and important agenda.

NHS Providers will soon be launching a new three-year digital leadership programme for provider boards. The programme will focus on building board understanding of the potential and implications of the digital agenda, and increasing the confidence and capability of boards. Delivery of the programme will support the ambitions of the NHSX tech plan and equip trust boards to drive the digital transformation agenda within their own organisations and systems. The programme will reach directors in all 223 provider organisations. If you would like to find out more about this programme please contact adam.wright@nhsproviders.org