



# Supply Chain

DELIVERING CLINICALLY  
ASSURED PRODUCTS  
AT BEST VALUE FOR FIVE  
LONDON TRUSTS

# FOREWORD



NHS Supply Chain are primarily known as a key part of the NHS procurement community. They've historically been regarded as a large purchasing and logistics organisation dealing with over 900 suppliers, 15,000 locations and millions of orders per year. They have a reputation for not just removing duplication of effort and overlapping contracts but also negotiating best value and saving trusts time and money. What is less well known is the key role that NHS Supply Chain can play in helping trusts, individually and collectively, evaluate what suppliers have to offer to ensure clinically assured products that contribute to safe patient care. In performing this role, they can help trusts understand and assess what's available in the marketplace and maximise solutions for their local area.

With the move towards system working and the formalisation of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in the impending health and care Bill, it is becoming increasingly important for members to not only get best value for money but to find procurement solutions that work for their broader localities and populations at system level. NHS Supply Chain are already working effectively in this area and plan to develop this approach further as ICSs become fully established. Their approach is aptly demonstrated in the case study in this document which involves a network of clinicians from five south London trusts. Effectively utilising the expertise of NHS Supply Chain, clinicians from all five trusts worked together to evaluate and agree which cardiac intervention devices their trusts should collectively procure as the best product for all their patients.

As part of the NHS Providers Connect programme NHS Providers is keen to work with suppliers who can provide our members with solutions to some of their key operational challenges while helping them achieve efficiencies. We deliberately only work with a small number of organisations whose solutions have proven benefit. We are therefore pleased to be working with NHS Supply Chain, the NHS's supply chain partner of choice and already part of the NHS family, as it evolves its offering in the new system landscape.

I hope this publication gives you a good idea of how working with NHS Supply Chain can help you think differently about procurement and deliver excellent patient care through innovative partnership working.

**Chris Hopson**

Chris Hopson  
Chief Executive  
NHS Providers

## Who are NHS Supply Chain?

NHS Supply Chain manages the sourcing, delivery and supply of healthcare products, services and food for NHS trusts and healthcare organisations across England and Wales.

Managing more than 4.5 million orders per year, across 94,000 order points and over 17,000 locations, NHS Supply Chain systems consolidate orders from over 900 suppliers, saving trusts time, money and duplication of overlapping contracts. It delivers 25 million lines of picked goods to the NHS in England annually and makes 500,000 deliveries, 1.5 million roll cages' worth, to NHS hospitals and community locations.

A new operating model, launched fully in 2019, aligned to Lord Carter's review of efficiencies in hospitals, had been designed to help the NHS deliver clinically assured, quality products at the best value, through a range of specialist buying functions. Its aim was to leverage the buying power of the NHS to negotiate the best deals from suppliers and deliver savings back into NHS frontline services.

The model consists of eleven specialist buying functions, known as Category Tower Service Providers, delivering clinical consumables, capital medical equipment and non-medical products such as food and office solutions. Three enabling services for logistics, supporting technology and transactional services underpin the model.

Clinical expertise runs through the whole of the organisation, with clinical colleagues working collaboratively with procurement specialists. The 11 Category Tower Service Providers work in collaboration with the Clinical and Product Assurance Team (CaPA), with all new frameworks assured via CaPA's quality assurance framework.



## Case study: Clinical partnership formed with south London trusts

In 2019, a partnership was formed between South London Cardiac Provider Collaborative, an existing Operational Delivery Network (ODN), and NHS Supply Chain for a project to work on a collective approach to understanding what the best percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) devices are to deliver safe patient care which provide the best value. Percutaneous coronary intervention is a technique for treating the narrowing of the coronary arteries leading to the heart.

As the South London Cardiac Operational Delivery Network was established in 2018, the trusts involved had already committed to a collaborative approach to procurement. This provided NHS Supply Chain with access to an existing network of clinicians to enable the establishment of a clinical council to assess these products. Their objectives were to remove unwarranted variation across several PCI devices, understand the best clinical choice of product for safe patient care and create a saving for the trusts.

A Clinical Council is a process whereby clinicians work collectively to review current usage of devices and opportunities to optimise this, with data being key in the decision making. Although the process is facilitated by NHS Supply Chain, it is the clinicians who lead the process and direction throughout. Once the council has concluded, a specification of requirement is then taken out to market, underpinned by clinically backed commitment.

The trusts involved were:

- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust
- Croydon Health Services NHS Trust

## A clinically evaluated approach

Three clinical council meetings were held during which the strategy was discussed and voted on. Although NHS Supply Chain's clinical consultants facilitated and guided the process, each part of the evaluation process was decided on by the interventional cardiology consultants forming the clinical council.

Emphasis was placed on clinical data and the criteria supplied. In addition, the process relied on clinical evaluations for the area of highest spend, which is drug eluting stents. The clinical council agreed to standardise 90% of drug eluting stents usage between two suppliers and standardise balloon catheters to 90% to one supplier.

Throughout the process suppliers were consulted and these relationships have proven to be significant to the success of the process. The project was explained to participating suppliers and communication kept open throughout. Collaboration, especially during the clinical evaluation process was vital.



*The outcomes of this project speak for themselves, demonstrating how successful an approach combining a physician-led process with the expertise of NHS Supply Chain's team can be - benefitting both patients and the NHS."*  
**Gerald Carr-White, Consultant Cardiologist,  
Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital**



## Delivering value to the South London trusts

This clinically led compliant procurement exercise has led to over 30% savings, on a total basket of spend in this area across all participating trusts. Over £1.3 million of projected savings per year will be realised.

Using their expertise, NHS Supply Chain's procurement team helped the Clinical Council understand and maximise all the suppliers' offerings submitted. A key part of this was the Clinical Council bringing clinically underpinned committed spend to the process. In addition, a standardisation in the use of medical devices has been achieved over the south London area which has patient safety benefits. Through the Clinical Council's process, the nine different stent suppliers that were used by the trusts involved were rationalised down to two primary suppliers.

NHS Supply Chain has committed to manage this contract for the duration of its life and to maximise the future savings potential. The team will keep the commitments made by the trusts aligned and manage the supplier relationships throughout the duration of the contract.



A clinically led  
procurement exercise



Over £1.3 million of  
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Standardisation  
in the use of  
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## Moving forwards - enabling collective procurement for Integrated Care Systems

One of the impacts seen over the last year has been the acceleration towards system working in line with the ambition set out in the NHS long term plan. As NHS trusts continue to work with their local health and care partners to drive greater value through joint working, NHS Supply Chain aims to work with Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to develop and test ICS level solutions that align with their clinical and procurement objectives.

Over the short-term NHS Supply Chain is looking to:

- Ensure that its customer facing teams focus on Sustainability Transformation Partnerships (STPs) and ICSs to enable engagement and system working
- Explore an ICS level pilot opportunity on wound care
- Continue to develop new savings opportunities for ICS's
- Model a collaboration between NHS trusts, the independent sector and NHS Supply Chain to deliver efficiencies for procedures outsourced to the independent sector.



## In summary

NHS Supply Chain is part of the NHS family and is evolving its services in line with the needs of the NHS in a sustainable way. A significant investment is being made in transforming NHS Supply Chain's infrastructure and systems to make them fit for the future and enable more agile working.

In common with other healthcare organisations, NHS Supply Chain has learnt lessons over the past year during the COVID-19 pandemic and has put in place measures to increase the resilience of its supply chain which serves every NHS trust. It is committed to building resilience and performance across the supply chain by continuing to invest in key tools and capacity.

NHS Supply Chain is committed to supporting NHS trusts to deliver safe and excellent patient care by continuing to build a service the NHS values as well as making it easier for trusts to work with the organisation. Through engagement activities and listening to feedback, it will ensure that trusts' needs are prioritised throughout its entire supply chain. In addition to the work with NHS trusts, NHS Supply Chain are keen to explore opportunities to work with collaboratives of trusts and ICS's to enable collective procurement opportunities with the involvement of clinicians, to deliver safe patient care while providing value.

## Contact

For more information about NHS Supply Chain please visit

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**NHS Providers** is the membership organisation for the NHS hospital, mental health, community and ambulance services that treat patients and service users in the NHS. We help those NHS trusts and foundation trusts to deliver high-quality, patient-focused care by enabling them to learn from each other, acting as their public voice and helping shape the system in which they operate.

NHS Providers has all trusts in voluntary membership, collectively accounting for £92bn of annual expenditure and employing more than one million staff.

## **NHS Providers Connect**

The NHS Providers Connect programme enables carefully vetted commercial organisations with proven value to our members to share insight and thought leadership with them. By doing so, we aim to help our members understand some of the opportunities available to them to become more efficient, move to new models of care, or reduce costs.

Each supplier has tried and tested solutions to service delivery problems, they are all already working with one or more NHS trusts before joining the programme, and have good reviews from the trusts involved.

To find out more about our connect and other partners and to view their case studies and publications please see the [partners section](#) of our website.

NHS Providers does not endorse or profit from the products or services offered by any of the commercial organisations working with us. To find out more about NHS Providers Connect or other opportunities please contact:

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