

Case Study

NHS Fife
Healthcare
Print/data sharing

Ricoh print and data management system set to transform healthcare information sharing at NHS Fife



NHS Fife is implementing a Ricoh print and data management system that is set to transform the way healthcare data is shared between hospitals and community healthcare providers. It is expected to make discharge treatment details available to GPs instantly

instead of two-three days by post. Already the service has delivered substantial cost savings, reduced print waste by 1.2m pages and is on course to cut print device numbers by 90 percent.

Executive summary

Name: NHS Fife
Location: Fife, Scotland
Size: 9,000 staff
Activity: Design, marketing, print and direct Healthcare mail services

Challenges

- Make sharing healthcare information between clinicians easier, quicker and more efficient
- Tackle the increasing cost, waste and lack of control over print resources

Solution

- Ricoh print and data management system

Benefits

- Set to transform healthcare information sharing, communicating and making it accessible instantly
- Cuts paper waste by 1.2m pages in one year
- Expected to save £18,000 a year by managing information securely and electronically
- Delivers immediate cost savings in print resources and energy use
- Targeted to reduce a print estate of 1,500 devices by almost 90%

Challenges

NHS Fife is the healthcare authority serving a community of some 360,000 people in the county of Fife on the east coast of Scotland. There are two main hospitals in Fife, Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy and Queen Margaret Hospital in Dunfermline.

These are supported by a network of Community and Day Hospitals, as well as 58 GP surgeries and other healthcare providers such as dentists, opticians and pharmacies.

In delivering high-quality healthcare services, one of the NHS Fife's main objectives is the ability to share and exchange information between healthcare providers. One of the most critical aspects of information sharing is when a patient receives treatment in A&E and how that treatment and any follow-on requirement is communicated to the patient's GP, or to the next provider in the patient healthcare path.

Every A&E patient has a discharge letter outlining the treatment they have received. This letter is sent to the patient's GP and to the next clinician providing follow-on care. Issuing the letters is a huge logistical operation for NHS Fife as there are around 100,000 A&E visits every year. Each letter comprises, at minimum, one and often several pages. It is prepared by a doctor, printed and then posted out.

NHS Fife faced two main challenges. One challenge was an immediate fulfilment one, related to ensuring A&E doctors could print letters quickly and easily. The other challenge was more strategic and centred on the ability to manage and share information quickly, efficiently and securely across the whole healthcare community.

Around its various healthcare locations, and specifically in A&E, NHS Fife has an estate of around 1,500 printers. But this estate has grown up over time and comprised an ad hoc mix of different device brands, needing different types of consumables and with a wide variety of ages. Typically, departments and even individuals, would buy their own printers, so there was little centralised control over how print was used and managed. This meant increasing costs and wasted resources, highlighted by the fact that a third of all IT support calls were related to print problems.

The impact was felt acutely in A&E because printers were becoming difficult to maintain, with IT being called out to repair a printer at any time to ensure discharge letters could be printed. *"This was becoming a real headache for us; we were having to constantly fix and repair printers. As the IT*



department, we have certain service level agreements around printer support, but because of the criticality of its function, SLAs for A&E are much tighter," says Mark Quinn, eHealth Support Team Leader, at NHS Fife. So there was a drive in NHS Fife to improve print efficiency and manage print effectively.

Solution

NHS Fife had approached Ricoh - a preferred NHS Scotland supplier - for a solution. Initially, the approach was for a refreshed print strategy. But following further consultation with Ricoh, Quinn and Lesley Halliday, an eHealth Delivery Specialist at NHS Fife, who also worked on the project, both had what they described as *'one of those light bulb moments'* and took the solution to a more strategic level, not just to improve print, but also to deliver effective information sharing.

The print strategy of replacing NHS Fife's existing desktop printers involved deploying Ricoh Multifunction Products (MFPs) and integrating them into a single, centralised print service managed with cost recovery and @Remote software applications. There is an ongoing programme to replace NHS Fife's entire printer estate of around 1,500 devices with around 150 Ricoh MFPs. So far around 500 devices have been replaced with just 99 Ricoh MFPs at the Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy and one or two other locations. In the meantime, both the new Ricoh MFPs and the remaining devices are now handled using a sophisticated print management and cost recovery application.

continued overleaf

The other aspect of the Ricoh print strategy is a system designed to help NHS Fife manage information sharing more effectively. Once a discharge letter has been created the Ricoh system applies an intelligent and secure workflow process. It creates a pdf of the letter, finds a relevant email address and sends the documents to the patient's GP. Where email communication is not appropriate - for example outside of NHS Fife's secure environment - then the letter automatically goes into a centralised queue for printing and posting.

NHS Fife is currently deploying and testing the full system. There is also potential to roll this process out to other areas of NHS Fife, such as hospital wards or specialist departments, where discharge and similar information needs to be shared.

Benefits

NHS Fife is already seeing a significant improvement in print services. "When we deployed the Ricoh solution and replaced our existing printers with the new and powerful Ricoh MFPS, the hope was that it would eradicate the support problems we were having, particularly in A&E. Almost immediately this started happening and it has been very reliable and successful. Very quickly we were able to see and demonstrate savings both in terms of cost and improved efficiency," says Quinn.

One area where the Ricoh solution has delivered huge savings is in the number of pages printed. The print management and cost recovery application has enabled print on demand and Follow Me printing at NHS Fife, where a document is only printed when a user goes to a printer and swipes their own security access card. Using @Remote, NHS Fife was able to calculate the number of pages that were sent to a particular printer but were never actually printed, and found it was 1.2m in a year. Quinn adds that the reduction in toner and energy consumption, and the overall shrink in the printer estate represents a significant cut in output costs.

@Remote also provides NHS Fife with information on the environmental performance of the Ricoh solution, which is protecting around 140 trees each year.

Perhaps the most significant benefit for NHS Fife, clinicians and even patients, will be the impact of the Ricoh system in improving the speed and security of information sharing.

Quinn says, "For a GP to know 10 minutes after their patient has left A&E what treatment have been provided, I think, is fantastic. A letter can take two or three days. And there will be other efficiency benefits from the Ricoh solution because the format enables GPs to drag and drop information into their own systems. At the moment the hardcopy letter has to be scanned. To further improve this process NHS Fife is looking at sharing data automatically between hospital and GP systems using the EDT system, taking away the need for an email or any data processing at the surgery."

NHS Fife estimates that automating discharge letters and electronic communication will save around £18,000 every year, just from a reduction in postage and stationery.

Quinn says, "When it comes to solutions like the one Ricoh offered and the impact on healthcare, the question is how important is it to get useful, relevant information delivered automatically and almost instantaneously - it's a no brainer really. NHS Fife has a duty of care to patients and part of that is linked care between primary and community providers, so it is absolutely vital that clinicians get good information and get it quickly."

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh Multifunction Products
- @Remote
- Equitrac
- PlanetPress Suite

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