



# HOW CAN OUTPATIENT TRANSFORMATION BE DELIVERED?

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## Why does healthcare need transforming?

A growing and ageing population has led to an ever [increasing demand for NHS services](#), which the NHS does not have sufficient staff, capacity or funding to manage long term.

A consequence of this is patients having to wait longer to receive the care they need, which is often not close to home. This situation was considered urgent before Covid-19 and the pandemic has taken it to critical levels.

Underscoring this in stark terms were [figures published in August](#) which indicated that the number of people waiting longer than 18 weeks for routine treatment in England is at the highest level since records began. The number of those waiting over 52 weeks is also severe with 30,000 patients.

## What are the NHS' plans to transform outpatient care?

In response to these mounting pressures, the NHS published its [Long Term Plan](#), developing on the Five Year Forward View, which pledged radical change for people needing planned care.

The [Elective Care Transformation Programme](#), borne out of the Long Term Plan, envisages changes to ensure that patients needing planned care see the right person, in the right place, first and every time, and get the best possible outcomes, delivered in the most efficient way. A key target from the plan is to reduce outpatient attendance at hospitals by 30%, though this is likely to rise to 50% due to the pandemic.

Overall the objectives of the plan are to:

- better manage rising demand for elective care services
- improve patient experience and access to care
- provide more integrated, person-centred care

A fundamental part of delivering this transformation is technology, with the plan presenting a vision of digitally enabled care across the health service in the next ten years.

## What has been the progress on digital enabled transformation?

Given the size and complexity of NHS outpatient services, there is significant potential to [redesign and improve](#) the way this is delivered; from supporting patients to manage their conditions, to streamlining the booking process and

delivering digital pathways in their entirety.

Six core areas identified by a [Mckinsey report](#) where AI has a direct impact on the patient are self-care/prevention/wellness, triage and diagnosis, diagnostics, clinical decision support, care delivery and chronic care management.

Whilst the size and nature of the NHS provides opportunities, it also presents challenges. As an organisation that has traditionally been [slow to adopt changes](#), it has not been well suited to the transformation required. The onset of the pandemic has altered the situation, however, with technologies being implemented in a timeframe rarely seen before.

Could this be the catalyst for implementing the necessary changes and achieving the aims of elective care transformation?

### What is needed for digital transformation?

Given some of the struggles many past initiatives have faced in initiating change, the [National Audit Office](#) and [Mckinsey](#) discuss different areas that are necessary for the effective implementation of technology in a large healthcare organisation like the NHS.

There are several factors each examine, though three they both have as high priorities are:

1. **Engagement with clinical staff:** when healthcare professionals are not involved or viewed as necessary in the early development of the of AI solutions, there are issues with the performance of the algorithms, robustness and completeness of the underlying data, as well as with the quality and ease of use of the solutions. Linked to this is how easy the end user finds the solution to use and how seamlessly it fits into their workflow. If the user believes the AI solution adds value, they will make greater efforts to ensure the quality of the data they contribute, which ultimately improves the solution.
2. **Manage change:** identifying solutions that focus on supporting practitioners and reducing the time they spend on administrative tasks are seen as important in implementing change, particularly in a large organisation, rather than those solutions that act as virtual assistants which directly interact with patients.
3. **Interoperability of IT systems and data:** seamlessly sharing data so everyone understands it in the same way is critical, and it is necessary to generate the data, collect the data and set up governance around data management if solutions are to be to successfully implemented.

As such, while the pandemic has demonstrated the speed at which transformation can take place, any solution that aims to deliver this change needs to have the right approach to implementation and one that is suited to a large and complex organisation with different stakeholders and existing systems.

Vantage Health has an AI solution where our [service based approach](#) is key to engaging with all stakeholders in order to understand their needs and delivering a solution that is both effective and easy to use.

To learn more about our approach and [Rego Care Navigator](#), please get in touch.