

Case study: NHSScotland

Verifying and maintaining
patient contact details with
QAS software



NHSScotland

NHSScotland is a modern, integrated health service covering the whole of Scotland, from the isles to the inner cities, providing healthcare services for over six million people. It is Scotland's largest single employer and one of the largest healthcare employers in the world.

There are 14 NHS Boards in Scotland, such as Lanarkshire, Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Lothian and Shetland. Each is responsible for the recruitment of staff and services in its local area. There are also eight Special Health Boards, including NHS Health Scotland, NHS 24, NHS Education for Scotland, and the Scottish Ambulance Service.

“We wanted to have a common currency to exchange data about patients in a meaningful manner that would improve levels of care. QAS has delivered that.”

Gordon Sommerville
Head of National Contract
Management Team
NHS National Services Scotland

Situation

Historically, NHSScotland has relied on a myriad of different systems to manage patient contact details across hospitals, clinics, GP surgeries and other healthcare outlets. Each of these systems handled contact data in a slightly different manner, making it difficult to exchange patient information across the NHS.

In 2001, the NHS was formulating its IT strategy for the next 10 years, and a key part of this was the concept of 'customer-centric data'. NHS National Services Scotland, on behalf of NHSScotland talked to a number of companies, in search of a way of capturing and managing contact data in a consistent and standardised format throughout the organisation. The contract went out to a Europe-wide tender, and after all the bids had been assessed, the contract was awarded to QAS.

Solution

QAS was appointed to provide an enterprise-wide contact data management solution, encompassing GP and dental surgeries, pharmacies, primary and community care facilities. One major constraint was the fact that many of NHSScotland's legacy systems ran on the Virtual Machine Environment (VME) operating system developed by ICL in the 1970s. Any solution QAS proposed had to be able to reside and operate in the VME environment.

QAS proposed three primary solutions: QAS Pro to verify patient addresses at the point of data capture; QAS Batch to cleanse existing patient databases; and NameTracer Pro, an Electoral Roll-based system, to prevent fraud.

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Gerry Mellan concludes: "By using QAS Batch, we have removed the confusion that is caused by inaccurate data and staff have greater confidence that they have the correct details of the patient in front of them."

Results

QAS Pro is now used within NHSScotland call centres, by NHS 24 and NHS Scotland laboratories. Within pharmacies, NameTracer Pro is being used to support the patient registration process for the Minor Ailment Service.

Feedback from users suggests that the software is easy to deploy and operate. Gordon Sommerville, Head of National IT Contract Management Team for NHS National Services Scotland, says the QAS software has significantly improved the standardisation and consistency of patient contact data across NHSScotland. The software has also generated an excellent return on investment, paying for itself in the first two years.

NHS 24 and several hospitals are using QAS Batch to clean existing patient contact databases. NHS Argyll & Clyde (an area now covered by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and NHS Highland), deployed the solution at the beginning of 2006 and has seen a dramatic improvement in the quality of patient contact data. The contact details of all patients in this particular region are stored on a Master Patient Index (MPI). QAS Batch ensures that the data is accurate and up to date before it is committed to the MPI.

This has had a positive impact on a number of different areas, one of these being laboratory tests. Clinicians taking samples from patients need to complete a laboratory request form that includes the patient's contact details. Previously this was handwritten and there were errors and gaps in information. Now using accurate data from the MPI, the clinician can print a set of labels and be confident that the contact details correspond with the patient they are dealing with.

Gerry Mellan, IM&T Consultant, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, comments: "We communicate with such a large volume of patients, and on a regular basis, so it is vital that we get their contact details right. By using QAS Batch, we have removed the confusion that is caused by inaccurate data and staff have greater confidence that they have the correct details of the patient in front of them."

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde is now piloting a scheme to support the work of the clinicians' secretaries. The secretaries' duties include the preparation of clinical letters and other correspondence to the patient, the patient's GP and other consultants involved in the treatment. The new development means that the secretary can pull down patient contact data from the MPI and drop this directly into the correspondence. This ensures that the communication always reaches the intended recipient and refers to the correct patient.

Although the system does not deal with clinical patient data, it is fully compliant with data protection and Caldicott principles.

Future Plans

NHSScotland is now aiming to showcase the use of QAS Pro, QAS Batch and NameTracer Pro as best practice, to encourage even wider take-up of the software across the service.