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Could automation help your NHS trust tackle surges in demand?



How automation integrates with the long-term NHS strategy

Over the past two years, the NHS has experienced unprecedented demand due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, almost every department in the NHS has encountered additional strain, impacting essential activities—from planning operations, providing emergency care, administering vaccination programmes, and managing patient data.

Healthcare professionals and support staff have worked tirelessly to keep pace with the rapid surge in demand on NHS services—working overtime, taking on additional duties and, in some instances, returning from retirement. While these approaches will play a huge role in helping the organisation tackle the short- and medium-term challenges of the pandemic, they are unlikely to offer long-term sustainability.

Cutting-edge technologies such as AI-powered automation hold the potential to dramatically improve efficiency across the NHS. Recognising this, the UK government has earmarked additional funds for the NHS to embrace automation, in an effort to overcome backlogs and to help reduce waiting times for vital healthcare services.

Automation delivers practical benefits in healthcare

In healthcare settings, automation can be applied to a variety of use cases, including processing electronic health records and charts, as well as supporting human resources and administrative tasks.

By automating time-consuming, manual work, NHS trusts may enable staff to dedicate more time to patients, which can help to improve efficiency and enhance the patient experience.

Identified as a leader in automation in the Gartner 2021 Magic Quadrant for Data Science and Machine Learning Platforms, IBM offers the experience, technology and expertise that helps healthcare providers gain the maximum possible benefits from today's proven automation capabilities.¹

A successful solution requires more than just technology. Having the right partner makes access to skills and expertise easier and, in return, provides fast and dedicated solution delivery. Responsiv, an IBM Gold Business Partner, works with IBM to deliver highly effective automation, integration, connectivity, and cloud-hosted solutions.

1. Source: <https://www.ibm.com/blogs/journey-to-ai/2021/03/ibm-is-named-a-leader-2021-magic-quadrant-for-data-science-and-machine-learning-platforms/>

What can NHS trusts achieve with automation?

With the IBM Automation® Platform, healthcare providers can use IBM's suite of software and services to digitise and enhance workflows, enabled by advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning solutions.

From training management to processing patient records, by redesigning key workflows NHS trusts can potentially achieve greater clinical efficiency, improve the speed and delivery of treatments, and enhance the patient experience. With front-line staff able to devote more time to patient care, NHS trusts will gain capacity to process backlogs and increase their ability to meet sudden increases in demand.

Built with healthcare compliance requirements in mind, the IBM Automation Platform enables secure storage and management of patient records, with embedded data governance and control. By designing new processes with the IBM Automation Platform, healthcare providers can deliver best practice and with full auditability, while remaining focused on improved patient outcomes.

Real-world example: an NHS trust reduces referral patient waiting times

A large NHS trust, treating thousands of patients every day, was struggling to keep track of referrals through its Tertiary Care Unit. For many years, the trust's hospitals relied on paper-based referral processes. This approach inevitably suffered from manual errors, and at the same time the paper trail offered limited ability to extract, track, and analyse data.

Working with Responsiv, an IBM Gold Business Partner, the trust implemented IBM Business Process Manager to automate incoming referrals.

Using digital processes removes paperwork delays and reduces error rates, helping to manage referral cases promptly and accurately. In addition, data is immediately available for analysis, to help the trust develop and improve patient referral pathways.

Since embracing automation, this NHS trust has successfully reduced waiting times for referred patients by two weeks, improved the service efficiency of its referral processes, and reduced departmental costs.



IBM Automation Platform

IBM is a leader in automation and is committed to helping healthcare providers drive innovation and enhance patient care.

ibm.com/uk-en/automation/platform

Smarter Healthcare with IBM

Learn more about making healthcare smarter with human-centred design, high-value partnerships, cutting-edge digital technologies, and deep industry expertise.

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Responsiv, IBM Gold Business Partner

With deep expertise in automation, Responsiv helps healthcare organisations establish secure, efficient, and reliable workflows.

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