

# South Tyneside Health Care NHS Trust Improving Performance and Waiting List Management with Cognos BI Solutions

Managing Business through Information



**SOUTH TYNESIDE HEALTH CARE TRUST WAS ESTABLISHED AS AN NHS TRUST IN 1993 TO PROVIDE ACUTE HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO APPROXIMATELY 180,000 PEOPLE IN SOUTH TYNESIDE AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS WITHIN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND.**

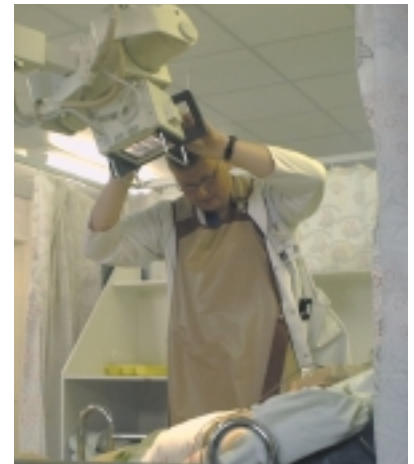
Offering a comprehensive range of acute and community services to an extremely high standard, South Tyneside is one of only a small number of Trusts to be awarded a 3 star rating in the Government's NHS performance ratings, by achieving key targets set in the annual assessment. In addition the Trust has more Charter Marks, for service excellence, than any other NHS Trust in England - a massive tribute to its dedicated staff.

Some of the many challenges the Trust has faced over the past few years have come from meeting the technological objectives of the national information management and technology strategies set out in the Government's 'Information for Health' initiative of 1998. Electronic Patient Records (EPR) and Electronic Health Records (EHR) are vital elements in the White paper 'A New NHS' and the Information for Health strategy document produced in the UK by the NHS Executive. Virtually every healthcare professional throughout the patient care process spends most of their time either using, updating or creating large volumes of clinical and non-clinical patient related information. This initially forms an EPR but all such data must quickly flow into an EHR to ensure accurate information is generally available in a timely way.

Aware of the targets which were set to enable the NHS to deliver and distribute information regarding patients electronically, plus implement performance management using the data, South Tyneside's IS department began the search for a comprehensive management information solution to access and deliver existing information in a user friendly way.

The Information Services Department market tested all business intelligence products and selected Cognos PowerPlay for analysis and Impromptu for managed reporting. One of the key features IS looked for were strong Web capabilities, and Cognos was able to provide impressive features within PowerPlay Web and Impromptu Web Reports. These Web features, together with true compatibility with the Trust's existing Oracle database applications made Cognos the perfect choice to not only access the huge range of information locked within the system, but to be able to drill down and analyse specific data.

"Cognos adds real value to the way we work", explains Martin Alexander, Head of Information Services, South Tyneside Health Care NHS Trust. "EPR is a major part of how we deliver efficient services and we consider business intelligence an integral part of our clinical systems strategy".



## A NATURAL PROGRESSION

IS implemented the solutions across Waiting List Management; Accident & Emergency; Radiology and Pharmacy with immediate results. Management are now able to monitor waiting lists with up to the minute information and analyse staffing levels to monitor performance and manage resources effectively. "Immediate access to clinical information has transformed the way managers in the trust make decisions, it's a vital part of delivering modern healthcare" says Martin Alexander.

Cognos PowerPlay draws information from relational databases to model and build PowerCubes "Cubes", which are data sets with over 50 million consolidated rows of data and up to 500,000 categories. Working with the requirements of the management team, IS develop "Cubes" which are then accessed by managers, either via their desktop or the Web, to view and analyse specific data relevant to their department.

With 50 PowerPlay and 25 Impromptu licences, Cognos has proved to be a powerful, yet easy to use solution for South Tyneside. Typically, after a one hour training session with a member of the IS team, a NHS Trust manager is able to access and utilise a vast range of information to enable better decision making.

As Mr. Alexander confirms, "It is so simple to use yet very powerful – developing an electronic health record requires good quality data, visualisation of data is key to good quality management".

### **WAITING LIST MANAGEMENT**

A key area within the National Health Service is the management of hospital waiting lists. South Tyneside's target is to have no patient waiting for more than 13 weeks for treatment and Cognos plays a vital role to enable this. Every single day, information is analysed to identify a patient approaching the 13 week target, problem referrals caused by cancellation or patient problems are identified and dealt with immediately. Previously, manual reports were produced twice a week, in a heavily labour intensive process, reducing the key decision time for managers. Cognos reports are produced daily and automatically distributed to any one of hundreds of managers desk top computers throughout the Trust. Online drill through allows immediate access to current data from hospital systems. South Tyneside have no out patients waiting longer than 26 weeks for an appointment, good information helps them maintain this impressive performance.

### **IMPROVING EFFICIENCY**

Implementing the Cognos BI solutions have proven to be a very cost effective initiative for the budget conscious NHS Trust. Not only does it save man hours, it has a real effect on patient care and the quality of the service overall.

"It has improved our efficiency by managing our workload", explains Mr. Alexander. "We now have up to date information which means we can identify the issues as they are happening".

There are huge logistics involved every time a patient meets with a consultant, and in addition to monitoring the waiting times, Cognos is used to pull together clinic details, consultant information and appointment schedules. South Tyneside can also monitor DNA's (Did Not Attends) which can then be pin pointed to improve the drain on NHS resources.

"Using Cognos, we can monitor issues and identify any unexpected spikes across the data" stressed Mr. Alexander.

For example, the Government has set ambitious targets for reducing patient waiting times in A&E. South Tyneside can monitor waiting times for admission in the A&E computer system and automatically produce performance alert reports, identifying unacceptable long waits in A&E. Managers and clinicians can then take appropriate action to improve service delivery times, directly improving patient care. Information is available to all managers, at all levels, to monitor data quality and performance.

### **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

The Trust's future activities are shaped by national priorities within the NHS Plan, together with ensuring that services are modernised and invested in appropriately, and that new innovative ways of working are explored. Cognos Business Intelligence plays an integral part in this plan and will continue to improve efficiency and thereby the quality of service offered to patients.

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