

Implementing PACS at Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

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Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust went live with its Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS) in September 2007.

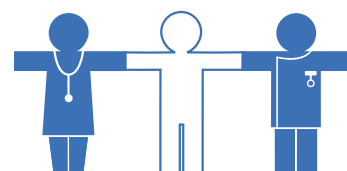
Film-less in two days

Whilst some trusts transfer to PACS gradually, Gateshead chose to go film-less from the start. Peter Walker-Birch, Radiographer and PACS Administrator for the Gateshead project explains: “We had seen other trusts experience problems with a gradual transfer to a film-less PACS system. We felt that it was important to go film-less quickly and, with the support of the PACS supplier and a very well organised project team here in Gateshead, we managed to achieve this in just two days!” Peter continues: “Gateshead NHS Foundation Trust has been very forward thinking and demonstrated a great willingness to make the project work from the start. When engaging with our clinicians, it was clear that they were very enthusiastic and supportive of the project. Looking at the previous

manual systems and the limitations of using traditional wet films, the great opportunities that PACS presented were obvious and the trust was very keen to make the most of the IT available. For Gateshead, the benefits of PACS speak for themselves.”

Challenges with technical deployment

As a Senior Radiographer with a background and expertise in software engineering, systems administration and database administration, Peter welcomed the new technology being introduced to the trust and soon volunteered to join the project team as the PACS Applications Administrator. Gateshead NHS Foundation Trust were very proactive in making sure that they had good relationships with all their suppliers to ensure that the PACS implementation went smoothly. Peter says, “Whilst the implementation was fairly straightforward, we did encounter a number of integration difficulties between PACS and the trust’s Radiology Information System



(RIS). We had to work very closely with the PACS supplier and our RIS supplier to ensure that these difficulties were quickly overcome."

Collaborative working

With hindsight, PACS Project Manager Emma Green says: "If there was one piece of advice I could give to other organisations embarking on implementing PACS, I would strongly recommend that the testing and configuration phase is started as soon as possible. PACS brings about massive business change, so in order for people to adapt and get the most out of the system it is essential that everything is tested and working as it should be in time for 'go live'."

Karen Green, Deputy Service Manager for Radiology, adds: "Having support from the PACS supplier, our RIS supplier, and the trust's IT teams all on-site at the same time was a must. This meant any technical issues could be identified and resolved quickly.



This collaboration made a substantial difference to the delivery of the system, helping us to keep the project on track. And whilst there are still a few teething problems remaining around PACS/RIS integration, the vast majority of these have been resolved and there is consensus across the trust that the PACS implementation has been a huge success."

Training over 100 staff in two months

Senior Radiographer Eunice Eldridge volunteered to deliver core training to the trust to help ensure a smooth transfer from the traditional wet film system to the PACS system. "In order to have staff ready, willing and able to use PACS it was essential that each department received adequate training to feel confident using the system from day one. Familiarity with the PACS system for all remaining staff was a critical consideration." So, the Gateshead project team also set up an e-learning programme on their hospital intranet site so that staff could access training software for the system in their own time. Since 'go-live', training support has been available on an ad-hoc basis to cater for new starters and existing staff that have taken on new roles.

So, how did it go?

As Eunice explains, "Despite initial teething problems, and the slight apprehension felt by clinicians 'going into the unknown', the

implementation of PACS at Gateshead proved a great success. Since go-live, colleagues have adapted very well. So well, in fact, that they've now forgotten how it was before."

Lessons learned

- Enthusiasm and commitment from the outset is essential. Get trust representatives and champions on board and behind the project to drive it forward from day one.
- Develop a good training strategy, and establish an enthusiastic training team.
- If possible, set up a dedicated space for training sessions and provide flexible access to web-based training tools.
- Co-ordinate training delivery with system registration.
- Ensure local technical architecture and environments are fit for purpose. Install upgrades and re-build machines as necessary.
- Have on site support available from suppliers and work closely with trust IT teams to help quickly identify and resolve any technical issues.

For more information about PACS, visit:

www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/pacs

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