
Northern Ireland to Get Digital Integrated Care Record



After four years of planning, Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system (HSCNI) achieved a milestone in its digital transformation announcing a landmark contract for the patient record system to be rolled out by 2024.

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The deal is part of the £300-million Encompass programme that will introduce a digital integrated care record to Northern Ireland. The 10-year contract worth £275 million has been awarded to Epic Systems, a U.S. patient record system vendor. For Epic this is the second major contract in the UK in the past weeks, as on 26 May the company [secured](#) a £181-million 10-year contract with Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) for the provision of Electronic Patient Record (EPR) solution.

The agreement with HSCNI will see Epic implementing a single Digital Care Record for every citizen across acute and community services (but not primary care). Encompass will replace the outdated set of digital and paper systems currently in use, such as the Patient Administration Systems (PAS). This will enhance data availability, for example, enabling referral to treatment times to be tracked for the first time in Northern Ireland. The integral Patient Portal is expected to inform citizens and help them manage their own care.

Unlike in the rest of the UK, in Northern Ireland health and social care provision are already combined. There are five trusts (plus an ambulance trust) that cover a 1.9-million population. The South Eastern Trust is planned to be the first one to roll out the system in 2022, with all trusts expected to be using Encompass by the end of 2024. A separate contract is to be awarded for the ICT infrastructure development.

"Digital transformation will have a vital role in the rebuilding of health and social care in the wake of the first Covid-19 wave," [said](#) Health Minister Robin Swann acknowledging the challenges and the uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If successful, the implementation of the system could see Northern Ireland becoming a leader in the UK in the adoption of digital records for health and social care. Other HSCNI plans may also benefit, such as reforming mental health and cancer treatment, cutting waiting times, or modernising hospital services,

"We are calling time on the current situation of multiple, ageing digital systems and a large reliance on the paper record. This investment will improve outcomes for our patients and service users by making it easier for our HSC professionals to deliver sustainable, high quality care, improved efficiencies and greater collaboration across all care settings," Swann stated.

Source: [Department of Health](#)

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