

Greater Manchester and Sectra sign deal to kick-start one of the largest diagnostic imaging initiatives in the NHS

NHS trusts across Greater Manchester take an important step in a new region-wide imaging approach that will enable faster diagnoses and better outcomes for millions of patients, following a new contract with medical imaging IT and cybersecurity company Sectra.

Eight NHS hospital trusts in Greater Manchester are to benefit from medical imaging technology that will transform how doctors and other NHS healthcare professionals access and review images from patient scans that are crucial to identifying illnesses and delivering effective care.

For the first time, x-rays, CT scans, ultrasound, MRI scans and an extensive range of other diagnostic images will flow seamlessly and immediately to appropriate healthcare professionals across Greater Manchester, meaning better access to the right radiologists and appropriate specialists and faster diagnoses for patients.

The region-wide platform, known as a Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS), will be implemented in the cloud by Greater Manchester's medical imaging partner Sectra alongside a system known as a vendor neutral archive (VNA). The move will replace an ageing system in the region's hospitals and will improve how diagnostic images are used for millions of people.

Once live across the trusts, this will allow specialist NHS radiologists and diagnostic professionals to more easily access and report on patient images captured at any hospital in the region. Clinicians at the point of care will also be able to access images at the click of the button through their own organisation's electronic patient record systems, and through a regional integrated digital care record. And the system will provide the foundations to transform patient pathways, deliver a new seamless model of care in Greater Manchester, and to take advantage of emerging technologies – including artificial intelligence.

The clinically led programme is expected to support every person living in Greater Manchester requiring imaging and will cover the 3.2 million people in the geographical reach of the Greater Manchester Cancer programme, making it one of the largest imaging programmes of its kind in the NHS and anywhere in Europe.

Raj Jain, executive senior responsible owner for the programme that is managed by the Greater Manchester Provider Federation Board, and who is also chief executive of the Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA), said: "This programme for a collaborative approach to imaging in Greater Manchester has required a high degree of cooperation and trust. It will lead to significantly improved outcomes for our patients and significantly improved work life balance and satisfaction for our staff, as well as productivity and financial benefits that will help us sustain great care going forward.

"Our vision wasn't for a PACS system – this is a means to an end. The real vision is about how we want to take forward patient care. Our new approach will enable clinical communities and multi-disciplinary teams to come together around the patient in a way we presently can't do. The PACS platform is an essential component to taking forward a new model of care in Greater Manchester, allowing digital images to form part of the core patient record and to create a holistic persona for the patient that our clinicians can use much more effectively than we have ever done before."

Dr Rhidian Bramley, a clinical lead for the programme and consultant radiologist at The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, said: "This agreement represents the culmination of many years of work. A single, unified record will help to avoid delays that come with manually transferring images between individual hospitals. It will help us to reduce variation in waiting times and improve equity in access. For cancer this will help us to meet our objective to diagnose more patients at an earlier stage to help to save thousands more lives. And the platform itself will make a significant difference to

professionals, providing modern tools to report images whilst allowing us to embrace emerging artificial intelligence and to support important programmes of research.”

The contract was signed during October 2020. The new platform will be used to process up to four million examinations per year and will be deployed across the eight NHS trusts at different stages, with the first going live in 2020. Trusts involved include:

- Bolton NHS Foundation Trust
- The Christie NHS Foundation Trust
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
- The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group – which brings together hospitals in Salford, Oldham, Bury and Rochdale across Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- Stockport NHS Foundation Trust
- Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Wroughtington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Rizwan Malik, a clinical lead for the programme and interim divisional medical director at The Royal Bolton Hospital, said: “We will have a modern imaging system deployed region-wide that will enable us to liberate the geography of patient management, in keeping with how we practise medicine, where patients move from one site to another. In any multidisciplinary setting we can have a more informed meaningful discussion about a patient. And if they present out of hours, we don’t need to wait until the office opens in the morning to access their imaging.

“New capabilities mean we can think more openly about delivering care for patients at sites convenient for them. And it will allow us to quickly access second opinions from colleagues across Greater Manchester whilst having greater access to peer review, and being able to make far more of the human resource available to us within the NHS.”

The programme hopes to join together more than just radiology imaging. In the future it is expected to bring together imaging for disciplines including nuclear medicine, orthopaedics and medical photography. And the programme has also been future proofed so that imaging from specialisms including endoscopy, cardiology and pathology can eventually be added into the Sectra imaging solution.

Ray Timmins, the systems lead for the initiative, said: “This is not about a new system for radiology. The test will be making sure that an emergency department doctor can quickly access imaging to inform an important decision, or that a consultant can use imaging to determine in minutes if a patient has had a stroke. It’s about more than hospitals too – with community access also important. And whether its COVID-19 or other emergencies – this should put Greater Manchester in a stronger position to respond.”

Chris Sleight, the programme’s director, said: “With other programmes on pause during the COVID-19 pandemic, this procurement has advanced at pace and will be crucial in enabling hospitals to meet diagnostic demands. The new platform will take us to a place where we can really transform services, where clinicians can work across organisational boundaries, where we can reduce outsourcing, and where patients might get scanned in their locality but get reported by a professional on the other side of Manchester.

“State-of-the-art technology will give the Greater Manchester region a springboard to catch up and overtake what colleagues have done in other parts of the country. We have an aggressive implementation plan to get the benefits to everyone in the shortest possible timescale. This will allow us to reduce mortality and morbidity through faster diagnosis and reduce the need for patients to attend multiple hospitals and face repeat scanning. And in choosing Sectra we have a collaborative partner that shares our vision and that will help us to drive forward our ambitions.”

Jane Rendall, managing director UK and Ireland at Sectra, said: “Working with the NHS in Greater Manchester is one of the most exciting things we have ever done – not just because of the size and

complexity of the initiative – but because of the ambition. This is about changing pathways and the diagnostic process so that outcomes are likely to be more successful for patients. This is not just an opportunity to deliver a clinical system but to make a difference by working in partnership with Greater Manchester as a social and health body that is improving prevention, treatment and diagnostics for patients.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

About Sectra Imaging IT Solutions

With more than 30 years of innovation and approaching 2,000 installations worldwide, Sectra is a leading global provider of imaging IT solutions that support healthcare in achieving patient-centric care. Sectra offers an enterprise imaging solution comprising PACS for imaging-intense departments (radiology, pathology, cardiology, orthopedics), VNA, and share and collaborate solutions. Read more about Sectra and why Sectra PACS is “Best in KLAS” at <https://medical.sectra.com/>.