

CIVICA

Case study

Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust rolls out electronic prescribing with Civica



 From 30mins to 1-hour daily time savings

 71% of staff said it improved safety

 Digital transformation best practice

Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust was established in 2020 through the merger of two former Trusts covering the areas of Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell and Wolverhampton. Prior to the merger, all four locations were still operating paper-based systems for their prescribing services, each with slightly different internal processes.

The establishment of the new Trust, however, meant that it was time to harmonise and standardise these processes ready for digital transformation, in particular with ambitions to introduce an electronic prescribing system (ePMA).

By 2024, **Civica Prescribing** had been selected as the digital solution to take the Trust forward in enhancing safety and efficiency for prescriptions and medicines administration. Following an extensive pilot and carefully executed transformation programme, the system was rolled out in all hospital settings by the end of 2025 and has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from users.

Transformation on a budget

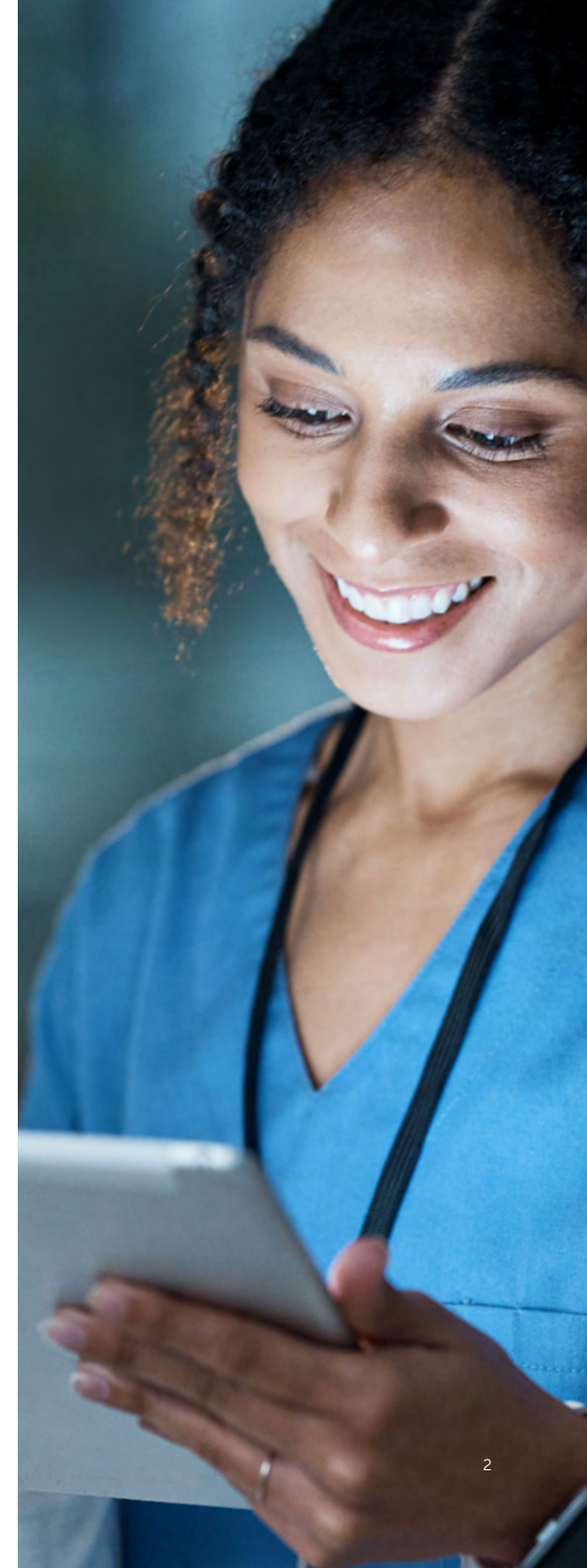
Laura McGowan, Chief Clinical Information Officer at the Trust, who led the project, said: "As with many health trusts, we were starting from a position of limited resources, a legacy of multiple paper-based systems, and varying levels of digital confidence and literacy among our staff and patients. We also had a very new digital team. At the same time, we were determined to meet a timeline that would ensure electronic prescribing was in place and delivering benefits ahead of winter pressures.

"The partnership with Civica along this journey, from both a solutions provider and project management perspective, has been fantastic."

Optimising prescribing processes

Following a period of planning, testing and training on the new ePMA system, the implementation team began a five-week pilot. "We deliberately wanted a lengthy pilot to give us the best chance of uncovering every possible challenge", continued Laura. "To really stress-test the new system we selected an all-male acute adult ward that was known across the Trust as one of our most challenging settings. We spent two weeks floor-walking through the process before we stepped back with on-call support as it was needed."

While the pilot threw up a number of process challenges that had been anticipated in the scoping, plus a few that were unforeseen, from a technology perspective it completed without any negative impact on end-users. This provided validation that the solution was safe and well above a minimum viable product. It also gave direction for some refinements to set the further rollout up for success.



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No ambiguity with ePMA

"Witnessing requirements was an interesting finding from the pilot", said Laura. "The Trust policy is to have a second witness when prescribing things like controlled drugs, insulins, infusions etc. But when the record is digital, there aren't legibility issues, such as "is that a 4 or a 9?", so this means you don't necessarily need a second pair of eyes on it.

"Through the pilot we were also able to validate that our out-of-hours support at weekends was set up effectively, because staff felt confident in safely prescribing patients through the digitised system."

After establishing the correct baselines with some process adjustments, a phased rollout across all inpatient settings began in August, ward by ward and then site by site, and was completed by the end of December.

"In a ward where nurses struggle to get five minutes for a cup of tea, this has been transformational for staff, enabling them to perform their duties more effectively."

People-centred digital transformation

"We worked very closely with users throughout the rollout period and invested our time in training, communication and support for adoption around daily operations. We knew that it was essential to bring everybody with us, but that was made easier as staff were quickly able to see the benefits."

For example, CQC inspections fell during the same period as the rollout. However, staff realised that Civica Prescribing provides huge support around important aspects of inspections, like effective audit trails and record keeping.

Laura offered some advice for delivering transformation to a tight timeline: "If you're working in a silo and doing transformation 'to people', then you can't adapt the plan. Without building the relationships so that people understand and buy-in to the change, they are not going to be flexible to work with you through the inevitable challenges that arise. It was this collaborative people approach that really kept us going."

ePMA to improve service for both patients and staff

Feedback on the new system was overwhelmingly positive. One nurse said: "thank you for bringing us ePMA", while another commented "it's removed any ambiguity and there have been zero administration errors."

Official feedback found that 75% of staff could record time savings of between 30 minutes and one hour per day.

71% also said that it improved or significantly improved safety. Civica Prescribing reduces risk and avoids medication errors by linking medicines management to clinical governance. Built-in safety protocols also help healthcare professionals to follow recommended care standards with ease.

Outpatient and community ePMA rollout

The Trust continues to improve its electronic prescription services with its patient optimisation programme. This includes adding more functionality to Civica Prescribing, such as allergies integration and a module to incorporate Mental Health Act information. There is also a separate transformation team set up to look at running the system for discharge patients.

Moving beyond the hospital setting, in line with the NHS 10-Year Plan to drive more health services into community settings, the Trust is developing its business case for outpatients, community and EPS rollout. By the end of the year, they hope to activate a community team to take these plans forward.

Laura finished: "The Civica system is very intuitive. I think one of the best measures of its success is that we get very few support calls. Our teams are finding the system extremely easy to use."

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