

# Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

## Imperial College Trust partner with Experian to drive positive change in outpatient communications

The Imperial College Trust capture accurate patient information with Experian software, helping to improve the accuracy of communications

### Improving outpatient communications

#### Background

Experian software to validate outpatient address, email and mobile details has been the driving force behind a pioneering move towards digital patient communications.

These new technology changes will prompt a potential £250,000 cost saving in year one alone.

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust partnered with Experian Data Quality to implement multi-channel data validation capabilities into the largest roll out of Patient Self-service Kiosks in the country. Using Experian software to validate outpatient address, email and mobile details has been the driving force behind a pioneering move from postal communications towards managing patient communications digitally.

#### The project has delivered:

- Cost savings - a projected £250,000 per year by moving from letters to email and SMS communications, plus a positive impact on Did Not Attends (DNA's)
- Enhanced outpatient experience - reducing queues and providing an easier check-in process
- Improved efficiency - freeing up staff and reducing pressures on busy waiting rooms

#### The situation

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust is embarking on a journey to digitalise its outpatient engagement strategy amid well-documented pressure on the NHS to deliver a high level of care and reduce costs associated with the demands of a growing population of patients. Spanning across five hospital sites, Imperial has over 9000 members of staff and offers a diverse array of NHS services.

John Kelly, Head of Systems Solutions at Imperial explains "Like other trusts, a key priority is to ensure that patients receive all the information they need in a timely manner to enable them to attend important appointments. Improving our data and collecting additional patient information gives us a real opportunity to make this better and implement a more streamlined experience whilst reducing costs at the same time."

Imperial currently sends physical appointment notifications and reminders by mail, a process that relies heavily on the postal

system and amounts to hundreds of thousands of pounds a year in mailing and admin costs. In fact, with 900,000 outpatient appointments per year, the Trust is faced with a postal cost of around £320,000 per year for just one letter per patient alone. Factor in the high turnover of addresses in London with the risk of lost mail and the challenge to drive process efficiencies becomes clear.

The outpatient check-in process at Imperial wasn't working efficiently. On arrival patients would queue at a reception desk to register, book appointments and update their personal details. During peak periods queues could build up and the manual nature of the system meant that updates to personal details had to be directly keyed in by clinic receptionists, adding to waiting times. It also meant that some information could not always be captured and there was a higher risk of inaccuracy. It was clear that taking a different approach to updating patient information could have a positive impact on its quality by making it as up to date and complete as possible.

**"This project has brought great benefits to the way that the outpatient experience is managed, creating a more efficient check-in experience and enabling us to make significant savings as a result. Experian's data quality tools have sat at the heart of this project, giving us full confidence in the quality of the patient data that will make digital communications possible."**

— John Kelly, Head of Systems Solutions, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

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## The solution

There was a distinct opportunity for Imperial to maximise patient experience and achieve savings through data validation. It embarked on a large-scale implementation of postal address, email address and mobile number validation software within its Jayex kiosks across 30 outpatient clinic areas.

Employing a self-service kiosk system that validates and formats patient information as it's entered can help speed up the check-in process and improve delivery of digital correspondence.

Experian's software allows patients to review and verify their personal details in real-time during check-in. It standardises address information authenticated against comprehensive reference files to ensure patient addresses are as up-to-date as possible.

Patients can also confirm their email address and mobile numbers, verified quickly by Experian's validation engines, prompting them if mistakes occur to improve overall accuracy rates.

According to John "Now that we're confident in the quality of our data we're in a great place to make significant savings by replacing letters for email communications. We'll also be able to make use of SMS to remind patients when they've received an email. This will save the NHS significant costs and also add to patient satisfaction as they are reminded of appointments through a channel that suits them."

## Data Quality as an enabler to driving change

The Trust recognised that good quality data ultimately sat at the heart of the project's success. Experian Data Quality is one of largest providers of contact data management solutions and services to the NHS. John explained "we chose to work with Experian because of the comprehensive suite of contact data validation it offers, the quality of data assets available and the ease with which it could be integrated directly into the kiosks. We now have absolute confidence that we're able to capture accurate patient information, even at the busiest times. I have no doubt that this in turn will have a positive impact on the hospital's delivery of care."

## Implementation – building the business case

Confident of the potential benefits, Imperial's Project Team built a business case based on the roll out of Proof-of-Concept kiosks in Charing Cross' main outpatient clinics over a 7 month period. It saw Kiosk use run at about 60% and more than 50% of Patients providing email addresses. This offered very sound evidence to confirm the efficiency of the project and patient appetite for digital communications.

## Results

Imperial's Outpatient departments are now enjoying the benefits of a data validated self-service check-in and meeting a growing expectation of the Trust to be a modern healthcare provider that takes improving patient care seriously. Having validated patient details provides efficiencies that better equip the Trust to deliver on this vision – more accurate communications ultimately mean a quicker turnaround of appointments to resolve critical healthcare needs. Reducing pressure on each clinic's reception desks also means staff time is freed up to offer further assistance such as providing important advice to patients. From a patient perspective shorter queues have delivered a better experience.

Using Experian's software has enabled the Trust to dramatically improve the accuracy of the information it collects, paving the way for a transition towards a digital engagement strategy over the next lap. Importantly it's instrumental in delivering savings of around £250,000 against the costs involved with postal communications such as mailing, stationery, printing and handling of paper letters and advice sheets.