

A healthy move to the cloud

NHSmail: World's largest email
migration to the cloud





Call for change

Healthcare collaboration in the cloud

As the UK's largest employer, the National Health Service (NHS) cares for [more than one million patients every 36 hours](#). So, when the COVID-19 crisis erupted, NHS support was more vital than ever before.

Under the strain of exploding national demand, the NHS's frontline healthcare workers urgently needed the very best digital messaging and email tools to work together even faster and more collaboratively—anywhere, any time.

Not only would having the latest cloud-based communication technologies at their fingertips help frontline staff communicate more effectively, it would reduce the burden of

administration and, most importantly, improve patient care and safety. From the back office to the doctor's office, a digitally optimized NHSmail platform could enable new healthcare practices and collaboration methods between social care and health organizations throughout England and Scotland.

However, arming more than a million NHS employees with the latest digital collaboration innovations amidst the pressures of the pandemic was no small feat. Quite the opposite: The massive undertaking required moving 2.1 million NHS mailboxes to [Microsoft's Exchange Online](#) platform in record time.

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Even before COVID-19 hit, the NHS had already planned on the sweeping migration and the pandemic gave it an increased sense of urgency. Establishing connected collaboration tools that allow for easier and more secure transfer of information in support of patient care on a far-reaching scale was long a top focus for the NHS. However, once the pandemic took hold, care teams increasingly worked remotely as the cloud migration unfolded on a vast scale.

The task was easier said than done. The NHS was faced with fully enhancing care team communication and collaboration throughout the organization. At the same time, COVID-19 forced the entire healthcare system to profoundly adapt fast. The crisis placed added strain on service delivery. This emphasized the importance of keeping dispersed clinical teams connected and underscored the value of the NHS's pioneering ["Cloud First" strategy](#). In such circumstances, seamless, secure, real-time communication and data sharing can make all the difference to the quality of care.

To unlock the full potential of modern communication platforms like Microsoft Teams, the NHS prepared to lay the foundation for a flexible, responsive and future-ready digital solution.

The legacy service embarked upon a transformational journey to reinvent how healthcare is delivered.

When tech meets ingenuity



Accenture, Avanade and Microsoft, plus NHS Digital

The mass-scale project was undertaken in partnership with NHS Digital, Avanade and Microsoft. The outcome? A robust cloud-based framework that meets the collaboration challenge while helping the NHS more quickly and efficiently address the UK population's increasingly complex healthcare needs.

In 2020, Accenture delivered multiple service enhancements and supported an organization-wide Microsoft Teams implementation.

In just seven days, the integration of the collaborative chat, call and video meeting tool was built, tested and rolled out to 1.2 million NHS employees.

Next came the move to the cloud. The joint teams worked closely together, migrating all NHSmail mailboxes to Microsoft's cloud-hosted organizational email messaging platform at speed and scale. Approximately 22,000 NHSmail accounts were converted to the cloud each evening, and 83,000 accounts every weekend.

When tech meets ingenuity

Knowing that the NHS's new cloud-based communication platform would allow them to collaborate more effectively as they delivered crucial patient care strengthened the team's resolve to produce a solution without delay.

Together, the teams executed the Microsoft Exchange Online migration with minimal disruption. They brought a host of specialized programme management skills and technology migration expertise to the table throughout the journey. The result: The completion of an exceptionally smooth and successful multi-phase programme with the least possible disruption to frontline clinicians and their support staff.

While the NHS and project partners Accenture, Avanade and Microsoft tackled multiple logistical challenges as they arose due to the pandemic, a new benchmark for a large IT migration was established. The comprehensive digital transformation marked a major milestone in the digital evolution of the NHS.

Accomplishing a technical roll out of this scale against the backdrop of COVID-19 is a tremendous achievement for the NHS.

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The migration of NHSmail to Exchange Online has enabled us to provide staff across the NHS with a mail system which is functionally richer, more secure and lower cost.”

[Sarah Wilkinson, former NHS Digital Chief Executive](#)

A valuable difference



2.1 million

mailboxes, improved care and streamlined digital collaboration

As healthcare and technology converge, fast, clear and effective human connection across far-reaching locations is vital to effective care. With its systems transformed, the NHS and its dedicated staff are able to focus even more on their patients and boost health outcomes. Equipping NHS teams with the digital communication tools they need isn't just about trimming costs or boosting efficiencies. It's about using the power of connective technologies and reinventing processes to empower frontline workers to do what they do even better.

That's why the platform supports unprecedented NHS collaboration. With the Teams, O365 and Online Exchange systems in harmonious operation across the organization, the NHS can now conduct secure patient consultations via audio and video calls on a national scale. And, they can do this while maintaining employee safety, enabling service continuity, creating additional capacity and improving provider and patient experiences.

A valuable difference

The numbers:

2pb

of data copied
to the cloud

OVER

700k

support site hits on
migration content

2.1m

mailboxes migrated

LESS THAN

1.2%

Users required support

Local NHS organizations now have access to the full [Virtual Visits](#) capability, using the Microsoft Teams Bookings app across individual institutions. Among these institutions are hospitals and GP practices. On top of having a centralized view of virtual appointments and patient capacity, practice managers and IT leaders can also enable Virtual Visits. In addition, they can review, make and reschedule appointments, identify which healthcare providers have availability, and onboard new staff.

With significant benefits realized, Exchange Online now enhances every NHS employee's ability to digitally collaborate in real time all across the organization. Today, the platform is instantly accessible via any device, anywhere. With its new "Cloud First" strategy full steam ahead, the NHS can seamlessly communicate and deliver care more effectively than ever before.

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We have also deployed a Microsoft Hybrid implementation of Office 365 to the NHSmail platform, which is allowing NHS organizations to provision services much faster, integrate with the existing NHSmail identity, and collaborate more easily. These additional services build on the deployment of Microsoft Teams, which we rolled out at the start of the pandemic, and which is currently used to send almost 1m messages across the NHS every day.”

Sarah Wilkinson, former NHS Digital Chief Executive

A close-up photograph of a female doctor with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue medical coat and a white face mask. She is leaning forward, using a silver stethoscope to examine a young girl. The girl has dark hair and is wearing a pink, long-sleeved top with ruffled shoulders. She is smiling and looking up at the doctor. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting, likely a hospital or clinic.

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We are incredibly proud to help the NHS and its essential front-line workers use the very best digital tools available to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Completing this migration at unparalleled speed and scale to equip NHS staff with a new cloud-based platform that enhances their productivity and the delivery of critical services to patients is a testament to how today's urgent challenges can be met with the powerful combination of technology and human ingenuity.”

Julie Sweet, Accenture Chief Executive