

Cheshire County Council and local NHS partners deliver person-centric care to older citizens.

Overview

■ Challenge

The complex and demanding health and social care challenges brought on by an aging population required UK local government to harmonize the way providers and agencies managed care.

■ Why Become an On Demand Business?

Integrating service delivery through common collaborative processes enabled more proactive, efficient and seamless care.

■ Solution

A new shared service delivery platform put in place by IBM enabled Cheshire County Council to meld its providers and agencies into a single virtual organization that delivers better-managed, coordinated care.

» On Demand Business defined

An enterprise whose business processes – integrated end-to-end across the company and with key partners, suppliers and customers – can respond with speed to any customer demand, market opportunity or external threat.



Cheshire County Council, in the UK, was one of the first local authorities to address the government's requirement of a uniform, standardized way to assess the healthcare and social services needs of its senior citizens, known as the Single Assessment Process (SAP). While government mandate was the driver, the council capitalized on what it saw as a strategic opportunity to change the way it delivered services.

■ Key Benefits

- *Improved quality and continuity of care by gaining a single, seamless view of a citizen's case history*
- *Improved ability to manage the course of health and social care for senior citizens proactively*

One of the biggest challenges facing western society is figuring out the best way to meet the needs of an aging population. On any given day in any given newspaper, you're likely to see a story on some dimension of it, be it social, economic or medical – that's how pervasive it is.

“We're not only helping Cheshire to be at the leading edge in the way it provides services to its older citizens. With IBM's help and insight, we've also developed a whole new model of how local government can provide services to citizens in an innovative and joined-up way.”

– Alan Allman, Senior IT Manager and SAP Program Manager, Cheshire County Council

On Demand Business Benefits

- Improved quality and continuity of care by gaining a single, seamless view of a citizen's case history
- Improved ability to proactively manage the course of health and social care for senior citizens
- Lessened burden for senior citizens to fill gaps in provider or agency records
- Improved utilization of health and social care resources
- Reduced administrative costs through improved coordination between health-care providers and social agencies

Perhaps the most visible and top-of-mind dimension, though, is the impact of aging on healthcare and social service requirements. While the average senior citizen is healthier than, say, 20 years ago, longer lives also tend to lead to a longer list of chronic as well as one-time issues—all of which need to be managed synchronously and harmoniously by a range of providers. The best way to illustrate the real-world meaning of “harmonious” care is to show what can happen when it isn't. Imagine, for example, an ailing person whose sequence of care took him from a general practitioner (GP), then to a specialist, and then on to a hospital for tests and ultimately surgery and recovery. It is in the next link in this hypothetical chain of care—discharge, post-operative therapy and follow-up—that the control of care tends to shift from healthcare to social service providers.

Endangering continuity

The above example shows that in the landscape of health and social care, recipients move horizontally along care pathways. Now imagine if each of these links operated independently of one another such that each had to construct its own profile of the person's course of care from the ground up. The massive administrative inefficiency and the burden on the individual implied by such a system are just the start of the problem. The even bigger issue is the debilitating effect it has on the continuity of care within the system. With no comprehensive picture of a patient's care history, caregivers at best lack the information they need to optimize the course of care going forward. This includes the ability to respond proactively to an increased need for certain social services arising from their healthcare. At worst, elderly patients can “fall through the cracks” and not receive the follow-up care they need. Put simply, a vertically arrayed network of providers is generally ill-equipped to deliver the kind of seamless “horizontal” experience that elderly patients need.

“We needed a provider that could offer us access to broad and deep resources and expertise. IBM's edge was that it had this while at the same time giving us the focus, flexibility and attention you would normally only get from a smaller provider.”

— Alan Allman

The UK, with one of the most sophisticated health and social care delivery systems in the world, has moved aggressively to address this issue. In 2001, the UK government issued the National Service Framework (NSF), a broad mandate calling for local government to standardize and streamline what were then disparate processes around collecting, managing and communicating case information for older citizens—a goal known collectively as Single Assessment Process (SAP). While the NSF provided the requirements and timeline for service compliance, it was up to local government like Cheshire County Council to figure out the best way to get there. Senior IT manager and program manager Alan Allman saw SAP as not just a requirement but also an opportunity to put into place a comprehensive, flexible and innovative foundation for the council's

future information sharing needs around health and social care. Allman and his colleagues realized that success would require a fundamental change at the process level, in the way providers and agencies interacted and shared information. The vision they articulated was that of a single virtual organization within which information would flow freely, reliably and simply.

The council approached its tendering process with high demands and an open mind. In presenting its ideas, IBM both reinforced and extended Allman's vision. IBM's baseline proposal was to combine its own flexible, open technology infrastructure with the packaged SAP software offering of its Business Partner, Esprit Ltd. This technology solution would serve as a foundation for the council's own business process transformation efforts. What set IBM's plan apart, however, was the way it proposed to deliver the service. To go along with Allman's vision of a "virtualized" business model to facilitate collaborative care management, IBM proposed a shared-service model in which the SAP applications are run centrally by IBM and accessed securely by all members of the care community. By cordoning off technology management from the rest of its activities, the council and its affiliated agencies and providers could focus exclusively on business process transformation initiatives in the near term—and on executing their core missions over the long term. IBM got the job.

Tightening the safety net

The solution that came out of the engagement consolidated roughly 20 unconnected assessment processes—each built around the needs of their organizations—down to one, with the needs of the client placed squarely at the centre. To facilitate collaboration and efficiency, the solution employs a highly automated workflow that keeps all members of the care community up-to-date on clients' history and status as well as any actions required from agencies or providers. Confirmation and alerting tools ensure that all agencies and providers fulfill their role and no clients fall through the cracks. In addition to its advanced core functionality, the solution was also designed to provide maximum flexibility to end users by enabling remote mobile access through a range of unobtrusive portable devices.

Deployed by IBM Global Technology Services e-business Hosting Services, the solution runs in IBM's Warwick data centre on IBM System x servers, which were chosen for their low cost and high level of manageability. Project management was performed by IBM Global Technology Services Application Management Services. To maximize the flexibility of the architecture, the solution was designed with three tiers: a Web layer, an application layer and a

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere® Application Server
- IBM Tivoli® Access Manager
- Esprit ShareCare for e-Enabled Single Assessment Process

Servers

- IBM System x™

Services

- IBM Global Technology Services e-business Hosting™ Services
- IBM Global Technology Services Application Management Services

Business Partner

- Esprit Ltd.

Time frame

- Deployment: 8 months
- End-user training: Ongoing

Why it matters

The UK ranks near the top in the quality of its healthcare and social services. But like most developed societies, an aging population was placing greater demands that only a reinvented system—one built on collaboration and common processes—could address going forward. However, putting such a system in place required the UK's local government to get around a formidable set of barriers—organizational, technical and cultural. Cheshire County Council's answer was to put in place a shared service delivery platform that enabled the council to transform its provider base into a single, coherent "virtual" provider of services to its elderly citizens. This, in turn, enabled the council to effect process changes that spanned multiple enterprises.

database layer. As more agencies and providers are added to the system, the need for scalability is most important at the application layer, where IBM WebSphere Application Server is the core software platform. The solution delivers this by enabling the council to scale either horizontally by adding xSeries nodes or vertically through a higher end server such as an IBM System p™ server. End users accessing the system are authenticated by IBM Tivoli Access Manager. The product delivering e-SAP functionality—Esprit's ShareCare—has the capability to support many vendor-supplied or homegrown assessment tools (in Cheshire's case, MDS-HC from InterRAI).

By adopting a shared services model, Cheshire County Council was able to overcome one of the basic challenges to establishing a common assessment system—the need for consensus, unity and collective action. Allman explains: “Cheshire is one of the first [government bodies] to get all the stakeholders to agree to jointly fund the e-SAP initiative. The key was IBM's ability to deploy a system that both reflected and facilitated the way we interacted as a community with a common purpose. That's what made IBM's offering truly unique.”

Innovation for better quality care

For Cheshire County Council, the most important measure of success is the quality, continuity and efficiency of care its older citizens receive from health-care providers and social agencies. Allman expects improvements on all fronts as citizens' needs—not individual agencies or providers—become central to the way care is managed in the council. In addition to driving better quality care, the solution is also expected to improve the utilization of precious health and social care resources by harmonizing the way services are delivered. It's not just about stretching resources—it's about having the tools to make the right decision about levels of care with real human consequences. In short, it's about using innovation to promote the welfare of society.

Allman points to the inherent efficiency of IBM's shared service SAP model as one of the key factors in its appeal to other UK government entities, citing over 40 that have inquired about the solution and another consortium of five counties that recently adopted the solution. These entities see not only the opportunity to benefit from Cheshire's experience, but also to leverage its investment—since they avoid having to deploy their own solution. “We're not only helping Cheshire to be at the leading edge in the way it provides services to older citizens,” says Allman. “With IBM's help and insight, we've also developed a whole new model of how local government can provide services to citizens in an innovative and joined-up way.”

For more information

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