



Wrightington Wigan & Leigh NHS Trust

Viewpoint

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Wayne Kilford
Assistant IT Administrator



Keeping with the programme...

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust provides over fifty types of outpatient, inpatient and day-case care services to one of the most densely populated areas in the North West of England. A key department in its operations is a Pathology Department of 120 staff.

The adoption of Wyse thin clients in its pathology department has enabled the Trust to become more compliant with the NHS National Programme for IT (NPfIT) and allowed its staff to operate more efficiently. Consequently they are better able to serve the information needs of GPs and nursing staff across four hospitals, in turn contributing to the Trust’s aim to continuously improve services and facilities for patients, staff and visitors.

Taking Action

Assistant Pathology IT Administrator Wayne Kilford is one of a two-man support team responsible for running the pathology IT systems for the Trust. “The Pathology Department operates from three locations in Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh, serving the Trust wards, outpatient & inpatient clinics and the GP community” he says. “Its activities include blood tests, urine tests and tissue analyses. The staff are responsible for running these tests and collating all the information onto the laboratory information system.”

Since 1993 the Department’s IT infrastructure had been based upon a client-server network of over fifty Wyse 285 ‘dumb terminals’. These had a single purpose of enabling staff to input data into the pathology information system and access the patient administration system. “Whilst they had served us well, these terminals were reaching the end of their useful life. Owing to their size - about the same as a standard 15” monitor – they took up essential space on work benches that was needed by analysis equipment to process samples. They were also suffering regular break downs and becoming increasingly uneconomic to repair.” says Kilford.

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In addition, each location had only a limited number of PC’s from which staff could get access to email and Internet. “This caused tremendous frustration,” says Kilford “as working on a timeshare basis meant they continuously had to queue to use the PC. This set up didn’t match the Trust’s requirement that all staff be active on email and have ready access to its new Intranet. It also had

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a direct negative impact on the service they were providing to the medical staff at each hospital.”

Lack of central control of the terminals was also causing the support team problems. “We constantly had to either visit machines at each of the three sites on a regular basis to solve problems or spend lengthy periods of time on the telephone guiding inexperienced staff locally to repair faults” adds Kilford.

“Using Rapport has simplified management of the devices immensely... We can manage everything from our office”

To solve the problem, the team initially looked for a direct replacement for the ageing terminals. However, for a couple of months at the beginning of 2003, a Wyse 3360SE Winterm device was trialled to provide access to terminal services. “We were very impressed by the unit” says Kilford. “As a slim device it freed up valuable space on the work benches, which was improved further by the freedom to use a flat panel monitor.” The trial presented the positive implications of being able to connect to terminal services and give staff access to more resources. Six Wyse Winterm 3360SE thin clients were bought for straightforward dumb terminal emulation. “Implementation was simple” says Kilford. “We simply plugged them in and switched them on.”

During 2003 and early 2004 the Department purchased an additional dozen Wyse Winterm 3125SE devices, a replacement for the 3360SE and as a direct swap for broken terminals. Kilford comments: “We found that for the cost of buying a single PC we could put in three Wyse Winterm thin clients. The 3125SE models made perfect sense considering the severe restriction on our IT budget.”

Achieving Objectives

By mid 2004 the team was looking for even more Wyse thin clients. One of the departments wanted to replace eighteen of its old terminals in one hit as it was suffering severe space and reliability issues. Having lost its original supplier, Kilford turned to Wyse for guidance and was put in touch with Wyse Gold Partner Axxess Systems. “Axxess Systems looked at our requirements and advised us to implement the Winterm 3150SE because of its advanced functionality and flexibility. Their service and speed of delivery was exceptional” he says.

Thirty 3150SE thin clients were supplied, with the replacement of the eighteen dumb terminals taking just a day. “Again, the process was straightforward” says Kilford. “We simply plugged them in and switched them on, from which point they registered with the Wyse Rapport software and updated their configuration.”

The team uses the Wyse Rapport Management software to get the most out of the Department’s thin client network and peripherals through its asset management and sophisticated grouping and scheduling capabilities. He adds: “Using Rapport has simplified management of the devices immensely. We can manage everything from our office rather than having to visit individual machines. We can see which machines have not been on-line for a period of time and identify any possible reasons. This equates to a much faster response to users’ needs.”

Kilford says the Department is now almost completely Wyse Winterm driven: “Accessing the Windows 2003 Terminal Server, our thirty five active Wyse Winterm devices provide ready access to email, the Internet, our Intranet, laboratory information system, patient administration system and the Trust’s electronic patient records system.”

“The very nature of thin computing using thin clients makes it an ideal infrastructure for supporting the NPfIT Programme aims”

“The benefits of implementing thin clients are obvious but significant” says Kilford. “We’ve provided the pathology staff with the right tools to do their jobs effectively, freed up valuable space on the work benches, moved towards the Trust’s goal of providing email and Internet access to all users and greatly improved central management of the network. We’ve also improved security, since the Wyse thin clients have no disk drives and are unsusceptible to virus attack, unlike the PCs we were using for email and Internet access previously.”

In addition, utilising Wyse thin clients has enabled the Department to comply with the NHS National Programme for IT (NPfIT). “Had we continued to use and add to our dumb terminal infrastructure as originally planned, we would have failed to conform to the Programme” says Kilford. “The very nature of thin computing using thin clients makes it an ideal infrastructure for supporting the NPfIT Programme aims.”

Of future plans, Kilford comments: “We’re improving the network to fully utilise all of the Winterm devices that we’ve bought and replace the remaining few dumb terminals. We need to further reduce the ratio of staff to available devices to improve our service to the Trust’s hospitals and community GPs. With cost-effectiveness being a critical factor we’ll continue to implement Wyse Winterm thin clients throughout the Department.”

Conclusion

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