

Majority of NHS Trusts Expect More UK Government Funding to Finance Paperless Initiative



Despite being positive about plans, NHS employees perceive 2018 as unrealistic and 2021 as more likely goal for paperless NHS

A recently released study on the progress of the NHS paperless initiative, commissioned by Perceptive Software from market researchers Vanson Bourne, has shown 82% of heads of trusts are expecting more government funding towards the achievement of that goal, and 60% are expecting the entire costs to be covered by the government.

200 NHS workers including heads of trusts, IT decision-makers and healthcare professionals were surveyed between the months of August and October of this year.

The findings highlight disparity between NHS trust heads and other key staff for the paperless NHS initiative timetable. More than half of heads of trusts (54%) perceive believe being completely paperless by 2018 to be a realistic goal, whereas less than a fifth of IT decision makers and healthcare professionals agree.

A considerable proportion of people interviewed expect the NHS to be "paper light" by 2018, i.e. the main place where patient records are stored, and those who don't perceive 2018 as being realistic for going paperless, suggest the year 2021 to be a more genuine deadline. The majority (58%) of those who have not already digitised 100% of patient data believe the process will take a further two to five years to complete.

This caution among NHS IT decision-makers and healthcare professionals with regards to the timetable is in contrast to Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's goal of NHS going paperless by 2018.

Opinions vary within NHS institutions with regards to the stage that the UK's NHS paperless initiative is currently at, as NHS head of trusts believe an average of over half (58%) of patients having digitalised records. Clinical staff think this figure is higher at almost two thirds (65%), whereas NHS IT staff, who should have the best insight into the matter, think it is just 41 percent.

Healthcare Director EMEA at Perceptive Software Mark O'Herlihy commented it was positive to see awareness about and support for the initiative being so widespread. He added that previous NHS IT initiatives have often caused divided opinions among employees with regards to their benefits, hence current developments were strong indicators for this projects' impending success. Acknowledging the need for improved communication between heads of trusts and IT decision makers and the consideration of budget restraints, O'Herlihy went on to say that rolling out this goal across the country was no mean feat and whether it was achieved in 2018 or 2021, everyone of the heads of NHS trusts believed digitising medical records will improve patient faith in the NHS.

Benefits of going paperless are seen by almost all NHS workers, with half of all healthcare workers believe going paperless will have a positive impact on their department and two thirds think improvements in patient care will be achieved.

7 out of 10 NHS workers perceive the enhanced ability to share records as the greatest benefit; whereas the reduction in storage space, quicker access to data and reduction in the number of lost records are quoted as benefits by the majority of frontline staff.

Source: [Perceptive Software](#)

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