One of the first children's hospices to connect to SystmOne

East Anglia's Children's Hospices (EACH) is a registered charity that cares for and provides support to families, children and young people with life-threatening conditions across Cambridgeshire, North and West Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. EACH provides care and support wherever the family wishes – in their own homes, in the community, support in hospital or care at one of its hospice buildings in Ipswich, Milton and Quidenham.

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Ruth Kiani
Finance Director
EACH

The Challenge

For some six years, EACS - an award winning and trusted provider of IT solutions and managed services has provided EACH with a fully hosted IT environment, with all applications delivered as a service via the internet.

"Our partnership with EACS and the services they provide makes sound financial sense," explained EACH's Finance Director, Ruth Kiani. "As a charity we rely upon donations and subscriptions from the public and have to make the best possible use of our budgets. By partnering with EACS we do not have to invest in or maintain internal servers, retain specialist IT staff to manage our infrastructure, or provide help and support. Plus we have flexible access to our applications."

EACS hosts a server farm at a world class data centre in London - a facility designed to host up to 100% of all the applications systems used by client customers. Connectivity to the data centre, which can either be via a secure SSL internet connection or via private WAN links, is highly resilient, allowing users to access their systems from any internet connection without the need for complex pre-deployed client software.

As EACH's 120 care staff need to access and update highly sensitive patient records and produce equally confidential reports, the issues of resilience and security are of paramount importance. In order to enhance patient care, improve record keeping and reduce the amount of paperwork that care staff were undertaking, EACH decided to implement remote access to SystmOne - a clinical records computer system used by healthcare professionals in the UK and

currently being deployed as one of the accredited systems in the government's programme of revolutionising IT in the NHS. The need to be able to access this information from any location (most notably from within the patients' own homes) meant that EACH wanted to achieve this remote connectivity via the internet and the 3G mobile data network.

The Solution

In order to access SystmOne, EACH first had to integrate its infrastructure with N3, the national broadband network for the English National Health Service provided by BT. (A N3 Service provider N3SP)

"N3SP provides a fully integrated service delivered by an ISO/IEC 20000 accredited service organisation - a globally recognised framework for IT Service Management processes and performance," explained EACS's Managing Director, Mike Dearlove. "In order to connect to the NHS N3 network, organisations must fulfil a number of requirements and demonstrate a certain level of compliance that provides the NHS with a level of assurance that organisations accessing, processing or storing Patient Identifiable Data are very serious about their information security."

Organisations wishing to connect to the N3 network must have in place or be developing a robust information security management system (ISMS), and meet the seventeen N3 Commercial Third Party (CTP) requirements. A number of different control categories have been listed by N3 Connecting for Health for organisations to demonstrate their compliance, including: Information Governance Policy; Information Governance Responsibility; Classification, Handling and Exchange of Information; and Network and Operational

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Ruth Kiani, Finance Director, EACH

security. This is reviewed annually and compliance has to be applied for each year.

"In order for EACH to access the NHS N3 network, both we and EACS had to demonstrate compliance," commented Ruth Kiani. "Only then would we be able to implement SystmOne which would provide our nurses with direct access to patient records and allow them to update these in real time."

Working in close partnership, EACS and EACH undertook the necessary processes to achieve compliance with NHS requirements, including Information Governance Statement of Compliance (IGSoC) - the process by which organisations enter into agreement with NHS CFH for access to its services, including the NHS National Network (N3), in order to preserve the integrity of those services.

"By requiring organisations to meet the information governance standards incorporated into the terms and conditions of the IG Assurance Statement, NHS Connecting for Health can ensure that safeguards are in place to protect its services," continued Mike Dearlove. "Every individual organisation and entity that has direct access to any service provided by NHS Connecting for Health is required to complete the process and comply with the terms and conditions of the IG Assurance Statement."

The importance to EACH of providing their care staff with direct access to patient records cannot be overstated. The steps in the IGSoC process set out a range of security related requirements which had to be satisfied in order for EACH to be able to provide assurances in respect of safeguarding the N3 network and information assets that may be accessed. "Although we had remote access capabilities, we couldn't connect to NHS and manage patient records," explained Ruth Kiani. "We have specialist teams that respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and it is extremely important for them to have patient records at their fingertips. The ability for us to log on to NHS N3 and SystmOne at any time and from any location, including patients' homes, is hugely important."

The EACH connection to NHS N3 and SystmOne allows EACS to provide secure remote access to SystmOne over 3G, as well as helpdesk support to all EACH users and onsite resource to manage the PC estate. "Providing remote and secure access to SystmOne over 3G was a technically challenging project, particularly when maintaining security compliance across multiple networks" added Mike Dearlove. "Our success in achieving this means that EACH staff can access patient records in the patient's own home, reducing paperwork and helping care providers work more efficiently and flexibly."

"We believe that EACH is the first children's hospice service to connect to SystmOne," concluded Ruth Kiani. "The ability to securely and remotely access SystmOne in patients' homes is a complex and innovative use of technology which helps our care staff focus on their responsibilities by ensuring that they have all of the information they need, when and where they need it. EACS is our natural partner; together we have implemented an elegant, efficient and valuable solution that I hope will be emulated by other hospices and children's hospitals across the UK."

Benefits:

- An NHS Class system on a modest budget with innovative use of technology to ensure security, flexibility and a good user experience

- Phased implementation to spread the investment while realising the efficiency and productivity savings

- Fully hosted environment delivers applications as a service, eliminates the need for in-house servers and internal IT staff

- Data centre connectivity is highly resilient, allowing users to access their systems from any internet connection with no need for client software to be deployed in advance on their PCs

- Successful development and implementation of secure, remote access via 3G

- Integration with NHS N3 achieved following EACS compliance process, including IGSoC

- SystmOne provides care staff with direct access to patient records and allows them to update these in real time in patients homes

- Care staff focus on their responsibilities and have all of the information they need, when and where they need it

- Thin client devices further realise the cost savings of a centralised infrastructure

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