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NHS Property Services, delivering integration using Microsoft Azure

With investment in frontline patient care as the primary objective for NHS Property Services, a change in mind-set was necessary, and executing a robust digital transformation strategy was vital to improve services and accelerate business growth.

To execute at pace and ensure solutions were designed to be future-proof, NHS Property Services adopted a cloud based integration approach using the Microsoft Azure platform, coupled with the expertise of Solidsoft Reply to design, develop, implement and manage the solution.

A fresh opportunity

NHS Property Services was formed in 2013 following the merger of property services departments from 161 NHS Primary Care Trusts across England. Today, the NHS Property Services portfolio consists of 3,500 buildings worth over £3 billion. The primary objective is to reduce cost, create a fit for purpose property estate and generate vital revenue for reinvestment in frontline patient care.

Like any complex business merger, progress hadn't always been easy. In particular, NHS Property Services had to face the considerable challenge of managing and integrating technology systems from hundreds of different organisations.

"We had a large number of disparate, unconnected applications and no 'master' of data for areas like finance, invoicing, property management, capital works, facilities management or credit control. It was difficult to perform processes consistently and share master data across the solution landscape."

Kevin Canning, Solutions Architect for Technology Services, NHS Property Services

Many of the systems were provided by Commissioning Support Units within different areas across the NHS estate, which meant that NHS Property Services had no control over how systems were managed or interfaced with each other.

NHS Property Services decided to change strategic direction. Break away from legacy vendor relationships and run independently from all NHS systems.

Company

NHS Property Services is a private company that provides property and facilities management services to 10% of the NHS estate. Formed in 2013, NHS Property Services is tasked with both modernising and generating income from NHS property to improve frontline patient care.

Benefits

- ✔ A greater level of operational efficiency
- ✔ Improved systems for generating new revenue streams
- ✔ Automating invoice processes to reduce loss of revenue
- ✔ Future proof architecture that supports ongoing digital transformation

Solution

An advanced integration framework for SaaS applications, comprised of:

- ✔ Azure Service Bus
- ✔ API Management
- ✔ Azure Functions
- ✔ Azure Event Hubs
- ✔ Azure Active Directory
- ✔ Azure Logic Apps
- ✔ Azure Storage
- ✔ Azure Redis Cache
- ✔ Azure App Service
- ✔ Azure Scheduler

NHS
Property Services

Capitalising on cloud

NHS Property Services chose a best of breed and integrated approach to its new systems transformation strategy, utilising Microsoft Azure for the integration platform.

"Our vision was to replace legacy systems with best of breed SaaS based applications," says Kevin. "We knew this would provide the most comprehensive functionality across lines of business. We also wanted integration to help us replace manual processes and achieve consistency and efficiency in the way we operate."

However, Kevin and his team knew that it wasn't going to be enough to simply roll out a standalone set of line of business applications. They needed to ensure that the applications would work seamlessly together.

> "We wanted to create central control and avoid a convoluted and ineffecient point to point integration. We wanted to understand where our data was coming from, where it was going to, have it transformed in one place, and use it to operate more efficiently."
>
> **Kevin Canning, Solutions Architect for Technology Services, NHS Property Services**

Transformation delivered

Solidsoft Reply enabled NHS Property Services to realise the vision through the implementation of an application integration framework built on Microsoft Azure.

Solidsoft Reply, in partnership with NHS Property Services has delivered a flexible, high-performance architecture allowing the new SaaS applications to share data freely and seamlessly via one centralised integration layer, using the Azure Service Bus.

As a result, applications like credit control, purchasing and facilities management can all work together seamlessly. As an example, in the month of January 2018, the integration layer handled **103,370 data** transactions between these systems via **17 distinct data exchanges**.

"The beauty of what we have achieved with Solidsoft Reply is that we can decouple and recouple applications as we choose," says Kevin. "That's going to be very beneficial as we move forward. We can now add and remove applications without serious knock on effects and maintain flexibility to suit the changing demands of the organisation."

Working in true partnership

According to Kevin, the key to success has been the partnership between NHS Property Services and Solidsoft Reply.

"We were undergoing a major transformation, so our choice and approach had to be right," he says. "We needed a partner, not just a solution provider, and that's exactly what Solidsoft Reply has proven to be."

> "Solidsoft Reply explained to us how the journey would map out, and throughout the engagement have provided advice and guidance above and beyond what we have requested of them. They have thought about what we are trying to achieve both now and in the long term and have suggested where we can improve our approach wherever appropriate. That's what being a true partner is about."
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> **Kevin Canning, Solutions Architect for Technology Services, NHS Property Services**

Moving forward together

Ongoing customer satisfaction is imperative for a partnership to thrive and it was key to ensure that NHS Property Services had the appropriate level of support for current and future services.

Solidsoft Reply continues to manage all integration incidents on behalf of NHS Property services through to resolution.

Kevin concludes, "My advice to any organisation in a similar situation to ours is that you can't assume integration is something you can complete and put to one side. You need to keep refining and continually improving. Working with Solidsoft Reply and the ongoing service and advice they provide gives us complete confidence we can do that."