HBL ICT Shared Services

Annual Report for 2024

Managing Director's Welcome Message

Welcome to our 9th annual report as an ICT Shared Services Partnership.

2024 has been a milestone year for us as we have entered our 10th anniversary, having been formed in October 2014. During this time, we take great pride in becoming a highly effective and respected ICT service provider, delivering a cost-effective service that delivers without compromising on quality.

As a trusted ICT Service provider, we understand that we need to develop and innovate our services so that we can meet the demands of our customers.

During 2024, we have continued to make significant investments in our cyber defences, made significant progress in the deployment of the Microsoft Windows11 operating system to all end user devices across the enterprise, and the investment of RPA within Primary Care to improve digital services, freeing up the scarce clinical resource time.

In August, we introduced GPIT services for West Essex Health and Care partnership (HCP) into the Partnership, ensuring consistency in GPIT service delivery across the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System (HWE ICS).

Our interface and interaction with our customers are of the utmost importance to us, and as with previous years we have made significant improvements to our communication channels,

including the ongoing development of our virtual agent and chat facilities to make our technicians more accessible to support our customers.

During the year we have made significant progress in the redesign of our core infrastructure, which includes relocating our on-premise data centre to a new commercial site in Enfield and replacing our core technology stacks via an opex leasing model in partnership with Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) as a strategic supplier. This strategic digital shift delivers a more sustainable technology model with greater flexibility and reducing the cost of ownership, making technology more accessible, adaptable, and affordable to the partnership.

As with previous years, in 2024 we continue to regularly receive praise and recognition across all the functional areas within HBL, which is further endorsed by our six-monthly customer survey results. This demonstrates the value that is placed upon us as a well led, quality driven, integrated ICT service provider. This achievement should not be underestimated and is due to the excellent contribution, commitment and resolve that all our staff have demonstrated, as we have worked together as a cohesive supportive team to deliver digital services, our mantra is:

"To achieve great things, first we have to believe in it"

Our staff are at the forefront of everything we do in HBL ICT, and we are heartened to continue to develop in their future within the NHS. With this in mind this year we have continued to invest in several key initiates. These include management development workshops, a comprehensive staff training programme and the ongoing development of 'inclusion champions' within HBL ICT, which provides a confidential support channel for all our staff.

Welcome Message (contd.)

Looking ahead, in 2025 we will focus on delivering a 5-year business and digital strategy 'Digital Once', focussing on the strategic outcomes commenced in the past two years, removing duplication in the system, delivering scalable solutions, and resolving technology issues swiftly.

An additional component of our strategy is to progress with generative AI technologies as this will further drive efficiencies across our enterprise.

In delivering our strategy we will ensure that HBL ICT maintains its importance and relevance to our member organisations and enabling their planned digital strategies and digital transformation agendas.

As with the past 2 years, we know that 2025 will present further financial challenges for the Partnership, which all NHS organisations are facing, but we are confident that due to our prudent fiscal management we will successfully navigate through these challenges with minimal impact on the partnership.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank our staff, partners and stakeholders who have contributed to making 2024 yet another very successful year. Our commitment is to focus on delivering our strategic objectives to the member organisations, ensure that we deliver digital solutions and services to the Partnership, and maintain financial equity.

Yours sincerely

Phil Turnock

Managing Director of HBL ICT Shared Services
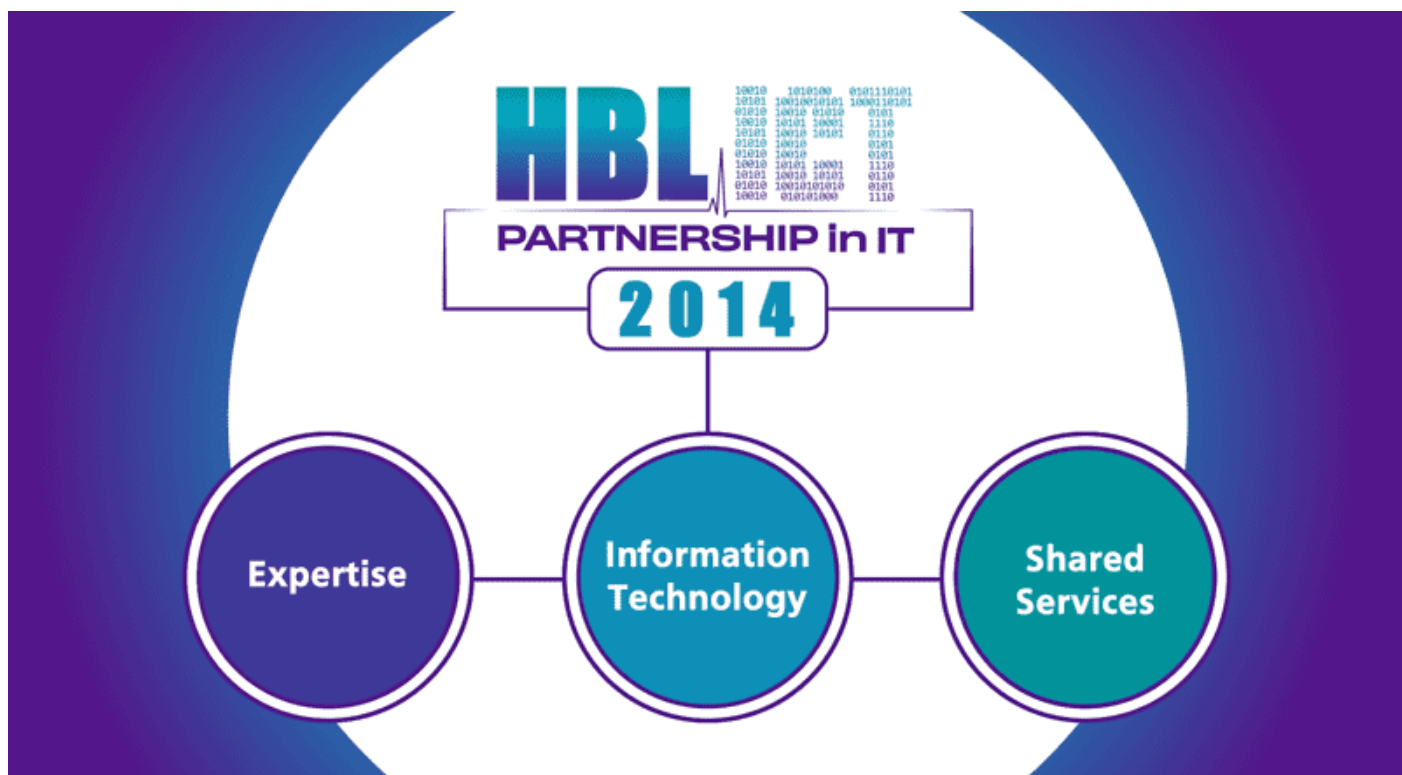
Table of Contents

Our Vision….

To become the ICT provider of choice, by delivering without boundaries; cost effective, cohesive and innovative solutions that improves patient outcomes.

Our Strategic Principles: "IT Just Works"

1   Patient outcomes at the centre of strategic decisions.

2   Promote a consumer like experience.

3   Promote equality throughout the partnership.

4   Create an environment that encourages innovation.

5   Be socially aware and mindful of the impact of technology can have on our environment.

6   Provide an environment that ensures information is easily accessible to meet the demands of healthcare provision.

Our Value Proposition

Within HBL ICT it is important that our ICT strategy, service and technology capability is driven by the value it provides to our member organisations. The HBL value proposition reflects this.

Responsive digital experience, through multiple contact channels that are easily accessible

To ensure that all our service users are able to access the support they need, when they need it.

To ensure that we resolve any faults as quickly as possible, including first contact resolution where applicable.

The right technology, at the right time, to access the right data, to meet the end user's business/clinical needs

To provide our service users with the best possible technology so that they can perform effectively in their role in the organisation – 'IT Just Works'.

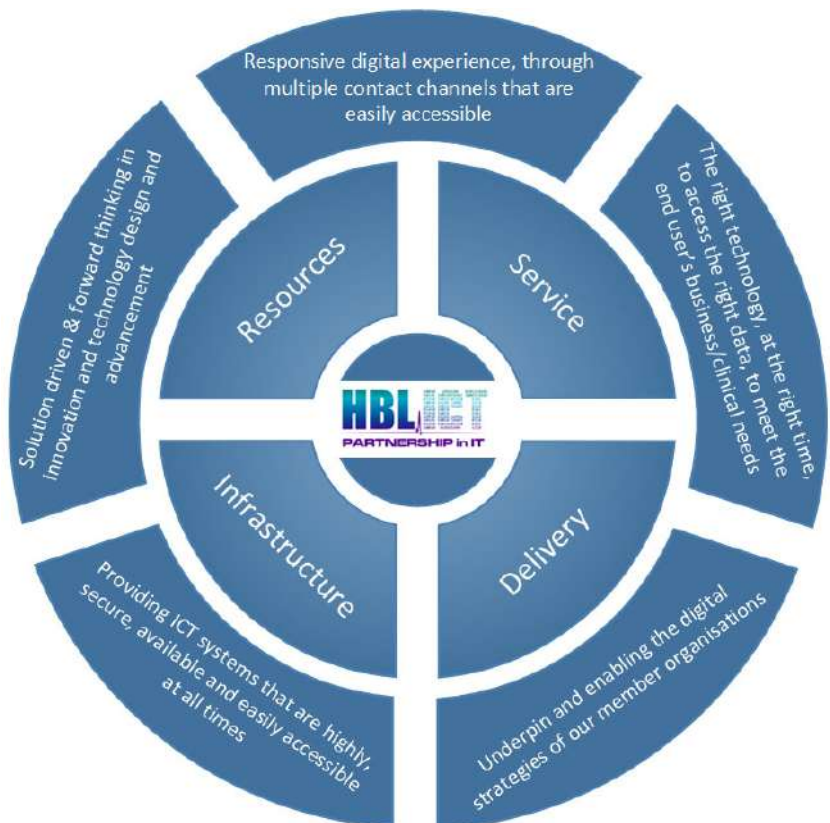## Underpin and enabling the digital strategies of our member organisations

To ensure that our business and digital strategy supports and complements the digital aspirations and strategies of our member organisations, ensuring equity across the partnership.

Providing ICT systems that are highly secure, available and easily accessible at all times

To provide and maintain an infrastructure that is fit for purpose, ensuring that all systems are accessible via the HBL Hybrid Cloud.

Solution driven & forward thinking in innovation and technology design and advancement
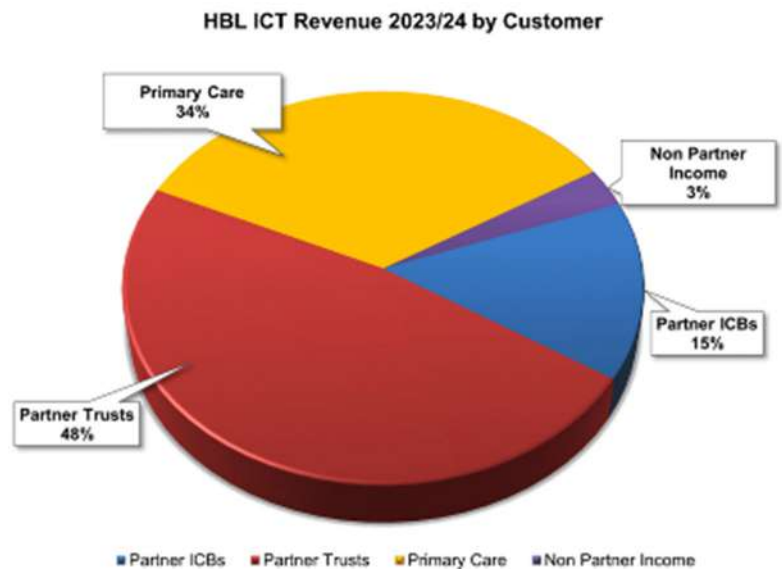
Horizon scanning to identify new technologies to keep the partnership evergreen and up to date with IT industry developments.

Commitment to developing and delivering innovative solutions and services, embracing value-add technologies and systems.
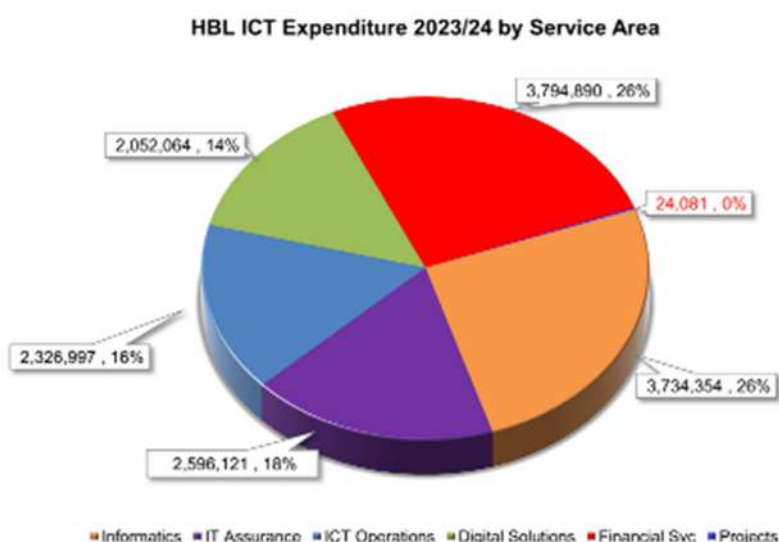
Finances at a glance… 2024/2025

HBL ICT obtained its allocation in 2024/25 based on an agreed Quantifiable Measures methodology detailing its overall operating cost split by each service delivered on an activity-based costing method. Recognised as a key milestone, the service cost model shifted from the traditional rollover budget base to a more transparent and integral service cost basis that included an inflation and cost improvement objective, which HBL ICT is on target for meeting its control total at the conclusion of the fiscal year.

The operational revenue from partners was revised in this fiscal year to include the National Pay Award, which was modified by revising the inflation uplift and altering the Cost Improvement Plan objective. The overall growth in the 2024 partner revenue baseline included a net 3% uplift compared to the previous year, including the cost of new services. Compared to prior years, this revenue allocation from partner organisations remained stable and reflective of the increase in the overall business activity, allowing our partners to fulfil their strategic digital plans.

HBL ICT Revenue 2023/24 by Customer

- Partner ICBs
- Partner Trusts
- Primary Care
- Non Partner Income

Projects in HBL ICT operate on a nil variance basis despite their critical and significant nature, such as the Data Centre refresh, and a lag from previous projects, which required substantial investment and challenges, such as incidental costs. Another key challenge was realised from the contract renewal costs and the effect of the market force factor, mainly the price hike of technology instruments. In some cases, such as the software licencing costs, the actual hike realised was around 30%. This was managed by renegotiating contracts in other areas, and the overall impact was minimised without recourse to additional funding, giving partners the confidence that HBL ICT has sufficiently managed its allocation proactively.

HBL ICT Expenditure 2023/24 by Service Area

- Informatics
- IT Assurance
- ICT Operations
- Digital Solutions
- Financial Svc
- Projects

HBL ICT is exceptionally proud to report that at the end of this fiscal year, it is on target for achieving its control continuously over a decade.

Whilst HBL ICT is on target to meet its control total in 2024/25, the actual outcome will be published after the annual report. Therefore, the outcome from the previous financial year is published.

ICT Operations

Relationship Experience Team

Throughout 2024, we have maintained a strong and healthy Customer Portfolio, including ICBs, Provider Trusts, Acute Trusts, Urgent Care Services, Private Healthcare organisations, PODs, and Hospices. Since last year, we have seen three non-partners retire, though are pleased to have onboarded four more.

We brought GPIT communications into the BRM Function to ensure that clear HBL branded communication with the same recognisable schemes will be provided to the ICBs as we have for our corporate Partner messaging.

Over the summer we completed an overhaul of our communications processes, which included the addition of pre-prepared templated communications to cover most frequent, advisories, changes, unexpected outages, and good news messages. Our HBL Self-Help Handbook over the year had 22 visits per day, and around 682 visits a month on average, and our Cyber Security Awareness page on the ServiceNow Customer Portal has been updated with a section containing details and a link to the NCSC staff training to assist our Partner's staff in being more 'cyber security aware'.

We supported the delivery of several key strategic projects for our Partners including:

- Working with HCT we have been successful with the go-live of the new Seca ECG solution, providing portable and multi-channel options, to accurately capture and interpret cardiac electrical activity.

- The new Computer Systems Access Power Application, working alongside HBL's RPA, is providing a one-stop shop for managers to request and update access to various computer systems, including Nebula, NHS Mail, PARIS, PCMIS, and EPMA for HPFT.

- We worked with HCT and WIFI Sparks to introduce a new complimentary Guest WIFI solution across the Trust. The first phase of this rollout to the agreed priority sites was successfully completed and has now moved into BAU.

- We assisted to enable HPFT with their new bed management system. Enabling a live view of patients, their condition, and resulting priority for care. Allowing the trust to move patients, accordingly, ensuring a high standard of care whilst also enabling the treatment and care of as many people as possible at any one time.

- For Herts Urgent Care (HUC) working out of Cheshunt Minor Injuries Unit (MIU), we facilitated the deployment of Adastra as their new Electronic Patient Record (EPR) system.

Overall, it has been a rewarding 10th anniversary year for the team, supporting our Partners and Customers, to deliver their aspirations and goals, in providing better patient care and improved outcomes.

ICT Operations (contd.)

Service Delivery Teams

The Access Management Team has continued to support our partners, assisting with both Registration Authority (RA) services and Corporate Network support. To bolster our capabilities, we have maintained a cross-training focus to enhance team knowledge and resilience across these key areas.

The team have actioned tens of thousands of incidents and tasks, with Robotic Process Automation (RPA) successfully resolving a large portion of these requests across RA and Corporate Network support. We have also been developing new CSAA (Computer Systems Account Amendment) forms to streamline the Nebula account service processes.
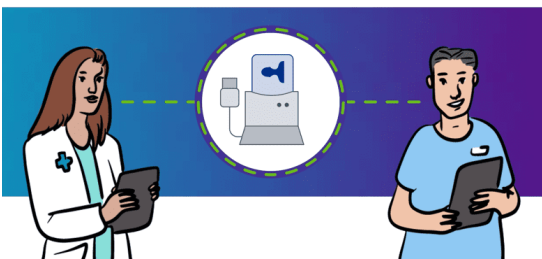
Once again, the Registration Authority (RA) team have supported a variety of customers and offer site clinics and appointment-based support options. We also have a 'drop in' sessions for customers at our base in Charter House in Welwyn Garden City, and new clinics are now available at Kingfisher Surgery, in Newport Pagnell. The team have also been introducing the new 09 Series Smartcards, as well as onboarding West Essex GP Practices & Pharmacies.

The Technical Deployment Management (TDM) Team continue to deliver workable, realistic and on time solutions that meet our customer's needs. They have played a major role in two Hertfordshire Community Trust (HCT) workstreams this year facilitating the rollout of IT equipment, onsite training, and early-life support to two new services in the Diabetic Eye Screening and the Bedfordshire Immunisation teams. For both workstreams workshops were held to get new staff up and running on their new IT equipment, including new smartphones. New IT equipment was also provided to the offices and clinic rooms for the services.

TDM's most challenging deployment was the creation of an Urgent Assessment Centre service at the Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trusts (HPFT) Glaxo ward in Lister Hospital. This involved a refurb of all the ground floor at the Lister Mental Health Unit (MHU) and moving services around to make the Glaxo ward more patient focused. The team were instrumental in setting up a temporary base for the inpatient ward so impact to service provision was as reduced as possible. TDM have been involved in a total of forty-six different work streams for partners this year including site refurbs, external or internal moves, and equipment refreshes.

The focus for Service Request this year has been to work within the cost saving constraints that our partners are addressing while also maintaining as best as possible the PC replacement programmes. The Windows 11 effort continues as well as onboarding new services and looking after new equipment for new starters. The team has also been instrumental in supporting HCT to continue to provide immunisation clinics for covid etc. for the community.

As part of our commitment to continual service improvement, the process for customers to request their equipment was simplified, so that deployment is more streamlined and convenient.

ICT Operations (contd.)

Remote Experience Teams

The focus for 2024 has been to continue the journey of improving customer satisfaction whilst providing an effective service for customers across the HBL partnership ensuring a timely and effective response to any issues that have been raised. During the year we surveyed our partners and had an overall satisfaction rating of 8.19 out of ten, this has increased from 7.7 when we ran the first survey.

The Remote Technician Team continued to provide support for customers across the partnership supporting a wide variety of issues relating to laptops, desktops, printers, and smartphones. resolving 16,897 incidents. The team managed 10, 640 virtual appointments empowering customers to access support at a suitable time within their schedule, conducted site visits and clinics up to 4 times per week at the request of partner organisations and continued to offer daily touch labour appointments at Charter house for more complex issues.

The Application Support Team resolved 13,180 incidents relating to NHS mail, Office 365 and SystmOne and actioned 3,012 tasks throughout the calendar year and supported the MFA for NHS mail project assisting customers setting up an authentication method and converting user shared mailboxes to true shared mailboxes to mitigate future service impacts.

The Remote Technician and Application Support Teams handled 17,106 phone calls throughout the calendar year whilst continuing to improve the average speed of answer which now stands at less than 1 minute and 20 seconds. The teams also managed 5,687 live agent chats.

The Continual Service Improvement (CSI) function ensured the ServiceNow platform remained evergreen throughout the year and revamped the HPFT customer portal pages, reviewed, and updated the virtual agent workflows to provide an improved service for our customers which significantly contributed to our customer support offering resulting in the virtual agent managing 52,791 conversations and reducing the number of live agent chats via the agent.

Additional improvements made to the ServiceNow platform included, rolling out ServiceNow Next experience to all users, and introducing internal announcement banners within the platform that can target specific groups for effective communication during major incidents.

A full review of ServiceNow templates was performed by the team, ensuring duplicate templates were removed or merged whilst implementing a new naming convention to benefit both HBL and partner support teams utilising the platform.

The CSI team additionally supported day to day transactional licensing for the partnership and were fundamental in assisting customers with accessibility needs moving to Dragon Professional 16 when the previous version went end of life, the team also supported the Adobe standard and professional end of life programme of work.

Digital Solutions

The Digital Solutions team continues to deliver and support across a range of services to the HBL partnership and 2024 has been no different.

A key deliverable for the team has been the migration of our datacentres from our legacy smart stack to a hybrid cloud model supported by Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE). A key component of this has been to commission a new data centre, hosted by ARK datacentres in Enfield as we look to decommission from our legacy on-premises services in Welwyn Garden City.
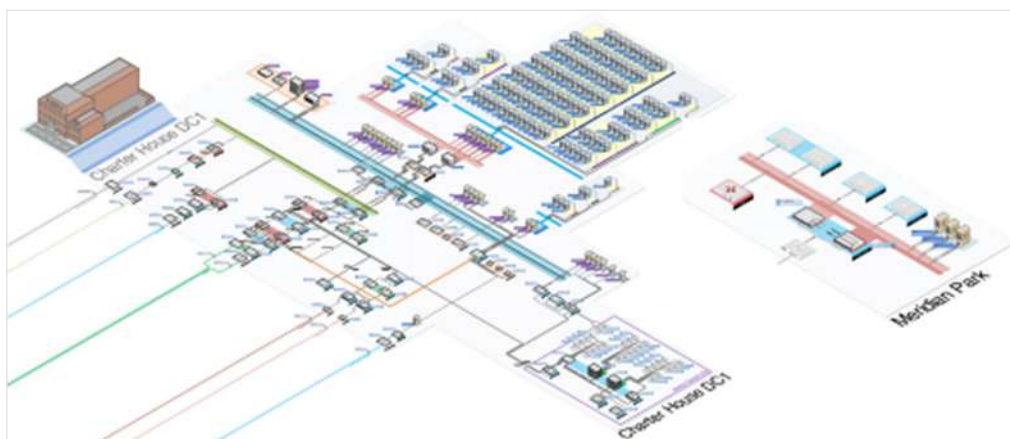
At the time of writing, we have completed the migrations from Cody Park into Enfield and are now planning the next phase of our migrations in January/ February 2025 out of Charter House.

The benefits of this new hybrid model will allow HBL and the partnership to have the 'best of both worlds,' with a scalable hybrid cloud architecture to meet the needs of our healthcare partners now and in the future.

We continue to develop our Digital Assistant technology across our partners, looking at how we can automate tasks to free up valuable time to our colleagues across the partnership. In addition, we have recently started to onboard our 'pilot' user groups into the NHS Co-Pilot ecosystem as we look to embrace the emergence of AI across Health and Social Care.
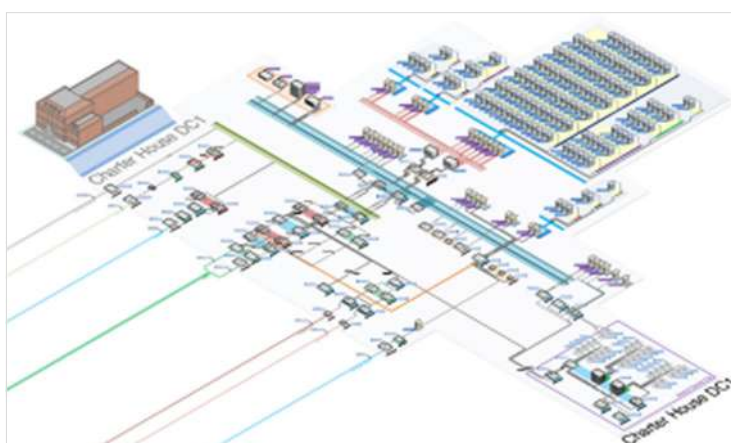
Cyber security continues to dominate the daily operations of the Digital Solutions team as we are continually managing the emergent threats that cyber security brings.

To that extent, we are proud to have published our first cyber security strategy which covers HBL and the partnership. Our strategy focuses on key strategic objectives to further strengthen our position across cyber security domains such as user awareness and culture, threat detection and prevention, defence in depth, and response and recovery.

Digital Solutions (contd.)

These domains align with the new mandate from NHS England to adhere to the National Cyber Security Centres (NCSC) Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF), which is replacing the Data Security & Protection Toolkit (DSPT).

Another key achievement for the team during 2024 was the completion of the SDWAN project, successfully migrating over 90 locations from a legacy private network to an SDWAN architecture, providing our partners with a far more robust and scalable solution to support patient care.

As part of the governments 'Greener NHS' programme, HBL commissioned a consultancy to help us to support the partnership in meeting their green targets. The HBL Green Plan sets out how HBL will achieve its mandate to meet its NHS carbon footprint by 2032 and further a strategy for helping us to achieve our NHS carbon footprint plus target of reducing our emissions by 80% 2039 and becoming net-zero by 2045. Our plan is to be used in conjunction with our partners own green plans.

We are continually looking at ways of enhancing our services to the partnership and 2025 will be no different.

Key deliverables include:

- Automated builds to allow new devices to be shipped directly to customers
- Pilot of Windows 365
- Process improvements around the detection and remediation of service impacting events
- Migration to Windows 11
- Migration to Microsoft Intune
- Digital Telephony Migration
- Emboldening the use of AI across our services
- Migration to OneDrive for Business
- Adoption of SharePoint Online
- Development of digital retention and archiving for customer data
- Pilot of star link

IT Assurance

The IT Assurance team has continued to support the organisation and the wider system through the delivery of solutions into production, facilitating internal and external audit activity, and ensuring ITIL management of critical services.

The HBL ICT Shared Service provides organisations the ability to leverage solutions and bring economies-of-scale where there is most benefit. The Programme Management office (PMO) has continued to collaborate with our partners to support their digital priorities, to enhance cyber security measures, and provide new infrastructure and network technology.

During 2024, the PMO led the IT onboarding of two new services for a partner organisation. These were complex projects involving multiple organisations, data transfers, new sites, and staff. One project, involving the Diabetic Eye Screening Service run by Hertfordshire Community Trust (HCT), required engagement with multiple NHS Trusts to migrate the clinical systems from their environment and ensure that they were accessible by two Acute Trusts within the Hertfordshire & West Essex (HWE) Integrated Care System. This was a substantial piece of work that had to be completed within an accelerated timeline.

One of the key activities for 2024 was to migrate one of the existing HBL ICT Data Centres from Charter House to a commercial site manged by the government-backed venture, Crown Hosting. This has been a significant undertaking, requiring the refresh all of data centre equipment, the introduction of a "consumption model" for storage and compute, and the physical migration of the network to a new site.

The consumption-based model mirrors the offering of the public-cloud where capacity can be easily flexed to the demand. This will allow HBL ICT to easily scale data centre capacity in-line with the needs of the partner organisations. The project is in its final phase and is due to be completed in March 2025.

An important focus in 2024 has been the deployment of cyber security technology to the partnership. This has included the deployment of Windows 11 and Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to external systems used by 9,000 users.

Cyber Security

The Windows 11 deployment has been a considerable undertaking and required a complex range of communication methods to engage with the user estate and encourage the installation of the latest operating system. The new communication techniques will be assessed and used as part of future large-scale deployment projects. The deployment of MFA for external systems is policy-driven by NHS England and has led to new solutions being introduced to avoid burdens on the user experience. The project has worked to seamlessly introduce MFA to applications, using the NHS mail authentication features, avoiding any disruption to users.

IT Assurance (contd.)

The IT Assurance team have facilitated a substantial volume of internal and external audit work in 2024. With increased cyber and data security threats, comes increased regulatory requirements. The four partner organisations developed rigorous audit schedules for Cyber security and Information security to take place throughout 2024 and this has required substantial effort to support.

The most significant activity involved an Information Security audit from the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) for one of the partner organisations. The audit was wide-scale and required a major planning and evidence gathering activity over several months. The audit was successful and resulted in a 'High Assurance' rating for the organisation.

The IT Assurance team have facilitated all audit activity ensuring consistency of engagement, reporting and control. The processes for evidence gathering, walkthroughs and action tracking have been enhanced and further efficiencies will be developed in 2025. As a result of audit, important new processes have been introduced to increase the security and robustness of the organisation. These include additional firewall management processes and annual supplier compliance checks.

The processes for ITIL Change and Problem Management functions continue to be owned and delivered through IT Assurance. These processes have successfully enabled the technical and operational functions of HBL ICT to focus on their critical activities, with xx ITIL changes delivered, and xx Problem records addressed in year.

The IT Assurance team have also worked alongside the ICT Operations and Digital Solutions directorates to design, test and launch a new set of dashboards to improve the reporting and visibility of key activities within the organisation. These include Problem, Change, Technical Design Authority and Audits/Assurance. These dashboards enhance the governance procedures of HBL ICT and bring workload efficiencies to staff across the organisation.

Further large-scale projects are planned for 2025 and include the deployment of a digital telephony platform across the partnership, migration to a new Mobile Device Management platform, the migration of Home/Personal drives to the NHS Shared tenant and the onboarding of new services by the NHS Trusts that we support.

We look forward to playing our part in delivering these key changes.

Informatics

Following on from last year's transition of the overarching management of GPIT within West Essex to HBL ICT from the ICB, this year saw the successful migration of IT support from AGEM to the same IT support provider for the remainder of the HWE ICB and BLMK ICB practices. This has enabled a consistent support model to be implemented across all practices and the provision of timely and accurate reporting.

This year, we have successfully achieved the nationally mandated enablement of MFA on all applicable active NHSmail user accounts, a key element of our ongoing commitment to cybersecurity. Additionally, the deployment of Windows 11 to 75% of the estate to date, will ensure continued cyber security compliance and provide the latest operating system features to General Practice.

Training

We continue to see practices using online training resources, thereby enabling them to undertake training at a time and a pace suitable for their learning style, minimising interruptions to the training or their day-to-day role. Our trainers provide further and more detailed sessions on other areas of clinical system functionality.

Implementation & Utilisation

This year the Implementation & Utilisation team have continued to support both Hertfordshire & West Essex (HWE) and Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Care Systems. There remained a focus by the National Primary Care team on the ongoing recovery of Primary Care services and in particular, patient access to those services under the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan (PCARP). This work is supporting the transition to the Modern General Practice model of Total Triage.

More locally, the team has been ensuring that SMS usage by practices is appropriate for HWE ICB. This has entailed targeted Advisory Visits to help practices optimise content and correctly target their messages where SMS is the most appropriate route to communicate with patients, as well as linking in with increasing use of the NHS APP.

The team supported the Business Change team with a piece of work to integrate DXS and eRS and continue to support the following programmes in both BLMK and HWE:

- **The NHS APP,** encouraging patients use of the NHS APP and the provision by practices of the services for patients to access using the NHS APP. Supporting with the implementation for push-notifications via the NHS APP to mitigate and reduce the SMS cost burden. The team, with the GP Systems Solution Architect, has run two NHS APP days, in Luton and Bedford Borough, to support and encourage increased usage amongst ethnic minority communities. Another is planned for early next year in Mid Bedfordshire.

- **Electronic Prescription Service (EPS),** enabling PCNs with EPS and supporting practices with EPS queries.

Informatics (contd.)

Implementation & Utilisation (contd.)

- **National Care Record Service (NCRS - previously SCR),** supporting practices with NCRS queries and problems caused by incorrect registrations and GP2GP issues.

- **Patient Proxy Access** restricted to access for medications, enabling Care homes to order repeat medications electronically from the patient's practice.

- **Online Consultations,** supporting HWE practices with the use of and where requested switch of system between the two procured systems of choice of the ICB, AccuRX and eConsult.

- **Electronic Referral Service (eRS),** supporting practices and the ICBs in the use of eRS. Answering queries, dealing with, and resolving issues, and enabling new services.

- **GP2GP,** supporting practices to improve their rates of integration of records and avoid the production and transmission of paper records.

- **Shared Care Record,** supporting the ICS programme within the primary care estate.

- **Patient Record Access,** supporting practices with the requirement to provide patients with access to their electronic records.

Business Change

Operationally, the team continue to deliver Business Change requests and Ardens Change Requests to General Practice and the ICBs. The Clinical System and Reporting consultancy, providing advice, and guidance to the wider Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) has continued to grow. They continue to undertake significant work on the still developing PCN and Extended Access arena, this has been expanded to also include EMIS Hub units as well as SystmOne Hub units across the wider Hertfordshire and West Essex (HWE) geography.

A Digital Assistant was deployed to two Milton Keynes practices to further support the administration staff with the mandatory referral of deceased patients records to the Medical Examiner Service. The Digital Assistant is the first example of HBL's innovative use of Robotic Process Automation technology (RPA) and works directly between the two SystmOne units.

In BLMK the team have deployed a SystmOne Community unit along with a Digital Assistant to support the reviews of deceased patients by the Medical Examiners. This is working well, with both the GPs and the Medical Examiners. Development of a Digital Assistant for HWE which works in a mixed system economy is ongoing.

The team continue to manage the significant workload around change requests for the Ardens product suite and the work they are doing with Acute Trusts Suspected Cancer (previously 2ww) referral forms.

Ardens Change Requests have been added to the Informatics ServiceNow portal and we have transitioned the support to this channel. The ICB has instigated a new process for approval of Ardens changes which has been incorporated in the ServiceNow workflow. DXS forms for South West Herts practices is being undertaken towards integrating this into the same workflow and eventually into ServiceNow.

Informatics (contd.)

Business Change (contd.)

The team, along with the Implementation and Utilisation team, has been working with DXS to pilot and test new integration software between DXS to ERS, streamlining and simplifying the referral process. They have also completed the digitisation of Lloyd George paper records for 25 practices across HWE ICB, from uploading the notes to the digital patient GP records, through to the final destruction of the historic notes.

The successful vCKD ICS project which was being moved from pilot to BAU has unfortunately been halted due to a lack of available funding, and the team are currently engaged with the decommissioning of this service. Business Change supported Milton Keynes Council with the transfer to a new provider, and subsequent decommissioning of their Autism service.

The team has been supporting Willen Hospice in optimising the use of the clinical system for current services available and implementing a new Carers Support service to work alongside the current palliative work. A significant redesign of Hospice services was also conducted for Garden House Hospice by the team.

Several Acute Trusts have been assisted in developing their Electronic Order Comms and Transfer of Care messaging, which involved resolving issues that practices experienced and aiding in the provision of configuration and clinical coding information. The team has supported the testing of coded record sharing across primary and secondary care into the HIE shared care record.

A SystmOne deployment was undertaken for Bedfordshire Hospitals Trust at the Luton & Dunstable Hospital for their Orthotics and Prosthetics services. The team has also managed nine successful practice and SystmOne unit mergers in BLMK and HWE and continues to support several Hospices and other smaller Health and Social Care customers in the ICS areas.

GP IT Systems

Informatics continue to work with the Commercial and Procurement Hub, regional colleagues, and suppliers to manage procurement activity for the General Practice Clinical systems, across both ICB footprints, from the various Buying Catalogues and frameworks. GP Clinical System procurements and contract variations are also managed, when practices migrate, upgrade, or add new clinical or supporting systems, as more strands are added to the relevant frameworks.

PCARP Cloud-Based Telephony, We delivered the national initiative, under the PCARP banner, to replace analogue telephony systems within general practice. This is fundamentally to enable them to improve their patient access, which has been seen as a major problem since the pandemic ended.

We have worked with the ICBs, the Commercial and Procurement Hub and National Team to manage the procurement, delivery, and implementation of replacement cloud-based systems for 53 practices across both the HWE and BLMK estate. The team is proud to have successfully delivered the programme, with our two ICBs being the first to have all the practices in the live with their solutions.

Financial Services

2023/24 was the second full year in which HBL ICT delivered its operational obligations under the hosted arrangement provided by the Herts and West Essex ICB. This includes all of its audit obligations and financial reporting for the previous year, which gained approval from the hosting organisation's auditors. Despite additional challenges during 2023/24, Financial Services safeguarded HBL's stable financial status and ensured that we completed the year on track with a balanced budget aligned with the partnership agreements for the tenth consecutive year.

The swift agreement of the partners to the revenue allocation for the year reflected the significant investment HBL has made in refining its Activity Based Costing model and methodology. The ongoing refinement of the processes, procedures and methodology used to calculate and present the Quantifiable Measures allowed the partners to have the appropriate confidence level in the figures presented and revenue requirement for the following year. This was made possible by a fully functional and dynamic Data Analytics function, which has worked to ensure that all information regarding the Quantifiable Measures can be tracked, verified, and audited.

Numerous additional economic challenges arose during the year due to the inflationary costs arising from nationally awarded pay rises and a significant increase in non-pay-related costs. However, the team's diligent planning, tracking, and monitoring of all income and expenditures, alongside rigorous negotiations for all new and renewed contracts, ensured that these external elements did not adversely impact the business of either HBL or its work with the Partnership. HBL is proud to announce that the challenges highlighted above and their respective impact on the finances were met without recourse to additional partner funding, except where the centre had agreed to award additional funds.

Strategic & Transactional Procurement

The Strategic Procurement function worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure that both BAU and project-based large-scale procurements continued to be carried out compliantly and expeditiously, and its operational target of nil waiver was achieved throughout this journey. Additionally, significant time and resources were devoted to ensuring the financial risk posed by the unprecedented rise in non-pay costs was minimised and mitigated as far as possible. This ensured that the net effect of cost drift remained within the pre-planned budgets.

During this year, several initiatives related to the technology upgrade were deemed pivotal to preserve the integrity and security of its digital infrastructure. However, such initiatives could only be implemented by allocating substantial financial resources. Due to the stringent financial policies implemented by our partners, it was impossible to reach an agreement on allocating funds when the necessary upgrades were recommended. As such, HBL conducted the required preparatory work without charging its partners an additional fee, accomplished by using the efficiencies created during the renegotiation of non-pay costs and the consistent re-evaluation of strategic priorities, and achieved whilst ensuring that the digital roadmap and strategic commitments were not compromised.

Financial Services (contd.)

Financial Services was pivotal in delivering several noteworthy procurement projects during the period, some examples of which are detailed below.

Data Centre Refresh: With the approval of its partnership, HBL ICT embarked on procuring an updated data centre, including connectivity, based on a nontraditional leasing method rather than the more usual outright purchase. The project is due to be completed within predicted timescales. This process also included negotiating the contract to move one data centre to a new site hosted by Crown Commercial.

Partner Mobile Phone Contracts: Our ongoing evaluation of procurement frameworks and rigorous contract management allowed us to identify that the partners could obtain substantial savings upon the expiry of their mobile telephone contracts. Prior to the contract expiry HBL ICT collaborated with the partners and the revised Crown Commercial Services RM6261 Mobile Voice and Data Services framework to secure significant savings (the partnership had recognised c.£200k in the first nine (9) months of the contract). The team is currently working to secure further savings on the mobile data estate, ensuring that the partners can achieve maximum efficiencies.

The positive relationships this function has built with the entire supplier base have meant that we were able to ensure that Best Value for Money remained an embedded principle within the business. Negotiation and renegotiation of contracts were carried out with a strong focus on supplier relationships and ensuring our suppliers understood the increasing cost pressures we (and our partners) are under. This, combined with the ongoing evaluation of multiple procurement routes and frameworks to ensure Best Value for Money, enabled us to achieve our financial goals and thus allowed HBL ICT to obtain as significant a market advantage as possible.

Despite all the challenges, the Transactional Procurement function had no operational escalations during the period and maintained a high level of service across the board. The partners actively appreciated this level of service and commitment, and we have every expectation that the team will continue to deliver this exceptional level of customer service going forward.

Broader procurement and financial/statistical processes continued to be developed and implemented to help ensure that financial activities conducted on behalf of the partnership will be compliantly conducted using the best available expertise at all levels and without fear of undue influence by suppliers or stakeholders, thus satisfying the requirements of the Standing Financial Instructions.

In addition to the examples of the active procurements carried out during the period shown above, HBL ICT Financial Services has also supported the ongoing delivery of the Windows 11 and SDWAN rollouts and Intune testing and rollout.

Furthermore, the team worked extensively to mitigate the effects of inflationary increases including a c.30% price increase on software procurements and renewals, dual running costs where the SDWAN project had hit unavoidable delays and increases in support contract costs in line with inflation.

A year in numbers...

During the year we have been busy managing services for our partners, the following gives an overview of the detail of the services provided over the course of the year:

The ICT Operations teams have handled over **33,939** telephone contacts this year, and our Remote Technicians have managed **10,640** booked appointments.

This year we have held over **7,414** Customer Service 'Live Chats'.

The Virtual Agent, handled over **52,791** customer chats.

51,439 incidents and **8,210** tasks were actioned across both RA and the corporate network.

The Deployment team have actioned over **3,672** requests covering laptop and phone deployments and over **1,931** disposals of hardware.

Our Procurement team procured over **3,010 lines and 1,414,082 items.**

We supported over **20,500** network connected devices.

We stored over **310 Terabytes** of data for our Partners.

We successfully blocked over **13,687** viruses/malware infections attacking our network.

We ran **33 projects** over the year.

We managed **30** responses to our partners to support them in responding to Freedom of Information requests.

We had **464** changes raised for action via the Change Advisory Board.

93 Business Change work packages were opened, with **143** completed (including **50** work packages from the previous year).

133 training requests were opened, of which **155** were actioned (including 22 from the previous year).

1,346 Implementation and Utilisation requests were opened and actioned for customers, with an additional **53** requests actioned from the previous year.

Our unique selling point

We in HBL ICT Shared Services are working hard to define an ICT Service Portfolio that meets the demands of our Partners across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Luton, working with strategic suppliers within the industry, which collectively makes our unique recipe for ICT Services.

We have the understanding and knowledge of IT systems in context of the Health & Social Care industry, operating within an NHS organisation. We believe that we understand your business and will bring information to the hands of those that need it at the point at which they need it.

This reflects the change that all of our health customers are facing, the change in technology from fixed devices to mobile, the ability to take in large amounts of data, make sense of it and utilise it to good effect on safe excellent healthcare for patients. Additionally, the ability to use that data to pro-actively manage the services provided is the key to the future. We anticipate that it will only be successful by standing alongside our customers facing these challenges; together will we be successful in our chosen market.

We understand cost pressures and have demonstrated our own ability to deal with them and the drive to improve productivity whilst maintaining and indeed, improving service offers to our partners. We believe that puts us in the position of having the ability to support our clients effectively.