South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

The South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust is one of six healthcare trusts within Northern Ireland. The trust is an integrated organization, incorporating acute hospital services, community health, and social services. It serves a population of approximately 345,000 people with a budget of almost £500 million.

Industry
Healthcare

Partner
Asystec is an IT service provider, with offices in Ireland and North America. It has had a dedicated VMware team since 2014.

VMware footprint
- VMware Horizon®
- VMware Workspace ONE®

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SEHSCT Enables Remote Working and Supports Integrated Healthcare

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust needed to accelerate its remote working capabilities in response to the challenges of COVID-19. The use of VMware Horizon® and VMware Workspace ONE® allows the trust to provide medical teams with simple, secure access to the applications and patient data they need. The result: a cleaner, safer hospital environment for acute care and more empowered community health workers.
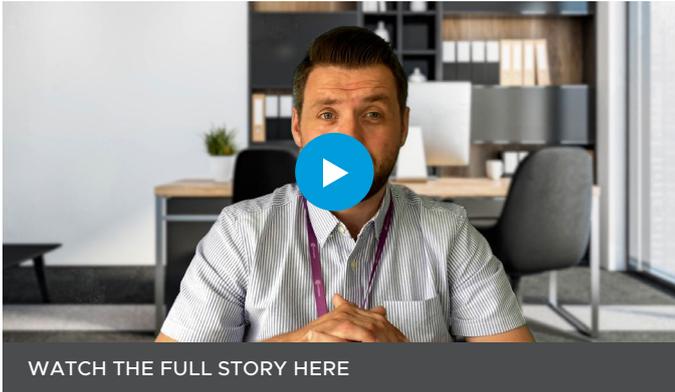
Integrated, preventative healthcare

The South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) is one of six healthcare trusts within Northern Ireland. It was formed from an amalgamation of the Ulster Community & Hospitals Trust and the Down & Lisburn Trust. It serves a population of approximately 345,000 people with a budget of almost £500 million. Hospitals may be the flagships of any healthcare trust – packed with expertise, the biggest buildings, and a high turnover of patients, but they do not represent the modern healthcare mindset.

Increasingly, healthcare prioritizes an integrated, community-based approach. Prevention and home-care are key. Where possible, SEHSCT wants to keep people out of its hospitals.

"Community healthcare has long relied on a digital workspace," says Martin McPeake, Senior ICT Operations Manager, South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust. "Community healthwokers are often mobile. They need access to their data and applications via a mobile device."

"Rolling out new technology is a continuous journey. VMware Horizon establishes a platform on which we can scale."

Martin McPeake, Senior ICT Operations Manager, SEHSCT

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The digital workspace became even more business critical with the arrival of COVID-19. SEHSCT had approximately 8,000 VDI-enabled users with only a few hundred employees regularly working remotely. It needed to ramp up remote working for several thousand.

The trust's COVID-19 response meant ongoing IT projects were paused so teams could focus on accelerating the remote working plans. Almost overnight, SEHSCT needed to remove non-essential staff from its hospitals, and enable greater numbers of patients to be treated in the community. It needed to scale up its remote working capabilities in a way that was manageable for McPeake and team, yet ensured a simple user experience.

For McPeake this meant a system that was "not clunky, and without too many passwords":

"We want clinicians, wherever they are, to have more time to dedicate to patient care. The same applies to our admin teams. Technology cannot detract from productivity."

"With VMware Horizon, I can sit at a patient's bedside, and in real-time I can show them the results of a test and discuss what those implications or findings are. It's been a game changer."

Patrick Donnelly, Clinical Director, Resident and Innovation, and Consultant Cardiologist, SEHSCT

Enabling remote working

The trust was in the fortunate position of being an established user of VMware Horizon and VMware Workspace ONE. It initially chose Horizon as an alternative to the 'PC on cart'. Traditionally, PC terminals were moved around on a cart with different users constantly logging in and logging out. It was very inefficient, cumbersome, and expensive having to purchase the small carts.

It had implemented Horizon VDI, which it refers to as a 'follow-me desktop', and integrated an Imprivata ID card system to make logging in and out more efficient and secure. In addition, Workspace ONE was used to manage disparate devices, including laptops, tablets, and phones.

"Rolling out new technology is a continuous journey. VMware Horizon establishes a platform on which we can manage this journey, simply and at scale," says McPeake.

When COVID-19 hit, the trust was able to mobilize IT and administrative staff to get the exact same service working from home as they would in the office without any disruption. A device managed with Workspace ONE provides the conduit to allow individuals to be able to access the 'follow-me desktop' and log on remotely a secure BYOD approach.

Workspace ONE, as a SaaS service, is provided by VMware. VMware partner, Asystec, implemented Horizon on a VMware vSAN™ hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) architecture.

"I see Asystec, in its pandemic response especially, as an extended part of our team," says McPeake. "We have a small team and it would not have been possible to achieve what we have done without the help of Asystec, VMware, and the simplicity of the Horizon platform."

The project is the latest step in a deeper engagement with VMware. SEHSCT also uses VMware vSphere®, VMware vRealize® Log Insight™, VMware vRealize® Operations™, and VMware vSAN HCI. VMware continues to provide training to SEHSCT as part of the trust's ongoing digital journey.

Responding to an unprecedented challenge

This meant SEHSCT was ready to move quickly when COVID-19 struck. It immediately enabled admin and IT staff to work from home, thinning out the numbers working at the main locations – and reducing the potential spread of infection.

Medical teams then had simple, secure access to the applications and patient data they needed. Clinical staff in an area of the hospital without COVID-19 patients could remotely control devices in COVID wards, dramatically reducing the risk of infection while speeding up clinical staff's ability to react to test results. SEHSCT was able to spin up new, temporary facilities, equipped with the right mobile devices. At the same time, community healthworkers had the workplace tools needed to manage local health issues.

The result: a cleaner, safer hospital environment for acute care, and more empowered community health workers. Today, Horizon manages more than 4,000 daily connections.

"VMware Horizon has been instrumental in changing how I'm able to communicate with the extended cardiology team and my patients," says Patrick Donnelly, Clinical Director, Resident and Innovation, and Consultant Cardiologist at SEHSCT. "I can be anywhere, in other hospitals or at home, and have immediate access to the information I require to make a sound clinical decision."

In what has been a stressful, fast-moving situation, SEHSCT has successfully established effective remote working. Users are able to use their own devices to access certain apps. Access is secure and auditable. "Users don't need a work laptop, they don't need a VPN. They can work off any device with internet connectivity," says McPeake.

Donnelly says the agility shown by the trust will have long-term consequences on how healthcare is delivered:

"With Horizon, I can sit at a patient's bedside, and in real-time I can show them the results of a test and discuss what those implications or findings are. It's been a game changer."

"As far as is possible we want to future-proof our remote working. Everything that we need to work effectively will be found in VMware Workspace ONE."

Martin McPeake, Senior ICT Operations Manager, SEHSCT

Looking ahead

Remote working was always the direction of travel. McPeake says a hybrid approach to work is likely in the long term, and that some aspects of patient healthcare will always favor face-to-face engagement. What SEHSCT has done, he says, is prove it can move quickly and retain the trust of end users:

"As far as is possible we want to future-proof our remote working. Instead of looking at the 'follow-me desktop', the next challenge is a 'follow-me application', where a user opens an app on any device, at any time, and works from the most up to date record. Everything that we need to work effectively will be found in Workspace ONE."