

RingCentral

Connect, Communicate and Collaborate:

Countering the Crisis in
Secondary Health and Care



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Introduction

For more than three quarters of a century, the health and care of the nation has been tended by the people and organisations that make up our unique National Health Service.



Celebrations for its 75th birthday in 2023 were, however, somewhat muted. For the NHS faces a challenge of unprecedented proportions, and its very survival is contingent on the right decisions being taken today.

Facing a perfect storm of growing backlogs, continuing difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff, and with the persistent inflationary pressures adversely affecting the entire economy, the NHS is being tested as never before. Secondary care providers throughout the service know only too well what they are up against. Finding new and innovative ways to lift the burden is critical.

In all four nations of the UK, governments have long shared digital ambitions, recognising that innovation can provide solutions to problems that sometimes seem intractable. Progress has been made, with forward-looking leaders keen to embrace innovation. Much was learned during the pandemic. Today, as Covid-19 recedes into the memory, the approach needs to switch from tactical response to strategic planning. With the very latest technological advances, the change that is so urgently needed can be driven through.

Communications underpin solutions that enable agility, allowing data to flow smoothly and powering true joined-up provision of service. This white paper expands on the results of a recent public-sector survey conducted by GovNews in collaboration with RingCentral. It reveals what communications look like throughout the sector and highlights the tools that can help build an NHS that is ready and able to perform for the next 75 years and beyond.





“I want to encourage us to think about how we can mobilise to find a shared vision for the future of the health service ¹”

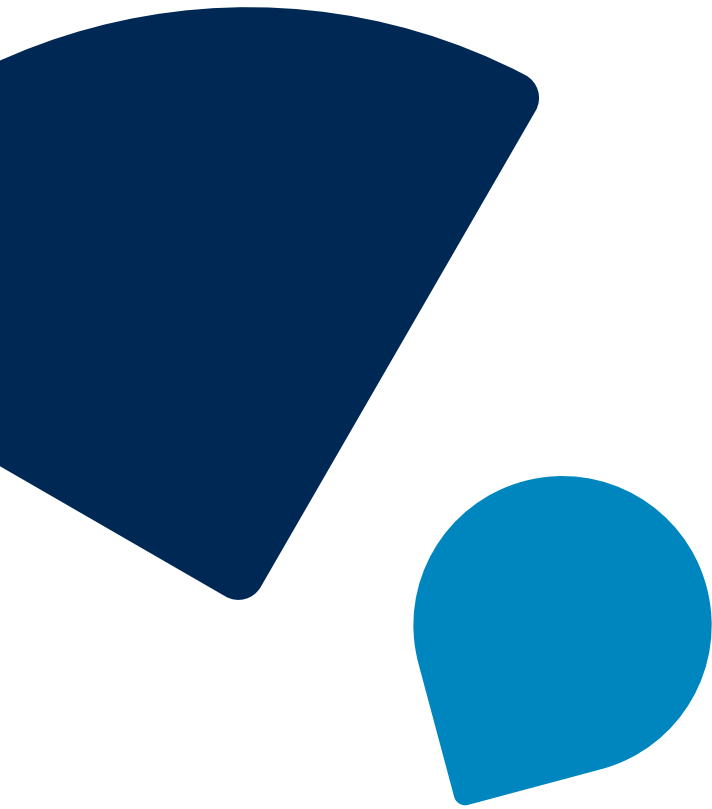
- Matthew Taylor CBE FAcSS, Chief Executive NHS Confederation

Solving the problem of falling morale

During the pandemic, the country saw the very best of the NHS as staff battled through adversity, working tirelessly to keep the public safe. Recovering from the effects of Covid-19, however, is proving to be a mammoth task. Despite the best efforts of a committed and capable workforce, waiting lists remain stubbornly high. Data from NHS England shows that more 7.5 million people were waiting to begin hospital treatment in its anniversary year, with as many as 383,000 spending more than 12 months awaiting care². The 18-week treatment target has not been met since 2016. A similarly difficult situation is reported by Public Health Scotland, with its own five-year Covid recovery plan underway. Things are no better in Northern Ireland, where targets have been missed, or Wales, with the government there saying waiting times are, “Disappointing.”



In a survey conducted by a national newspaper³, public confidence in the NHS was shown to have fallen dramatically, and the Patients’ Association charity confirm similar findings. The BMJ⁴ found just 10% of people across the UK thought effective policies were in place.



Inevitably, falling workforce morale has been a consequence. This was addressed by NHS Employers Chief Executive, Danny Mortimer, following publication of the 2022 NHS Staff Survey⁵, who said, “It is of course concerning to see that 17% of staff considering leaving for another job will do so as soon as they find one and that, despite the continuing efforts of health leaders to recruit and retain employees, the numbers of those willing to recommend the NHS as an employer has also dropped.”

It is abundantly clear that change is essential. The NHS understands that by enabling effective teamwork, individuals are more satisfied in their jobs and more likely to remain in the role⁶. This is consistent with findings from the survey, in which more than four fifths of respondents strongly agreed it was important that communications channels were made available as much as possible for team members. By making full use of the latest solutions, closer collaboration between colleagues is facilitated, boosting creativity and ultimately lifting morale.



“We have the technological and scientific means to transform health and care to safeguard the founding principles of Beveridge and Bevan. Without fully embracing the tech revolution, there is no future for the NHS.”

- Tony Blair Institute for Global Change⁷

How better communications solve the problem of dwindling hope

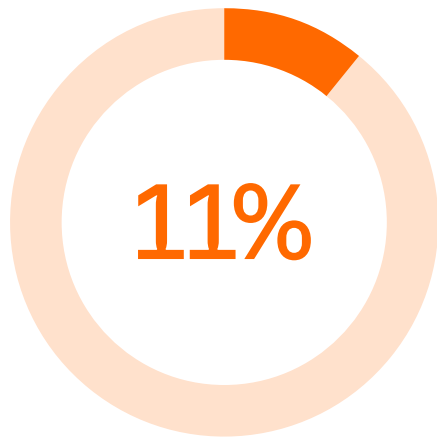


Despite this apparent tide of negativity, there are still grounds for optimism. The same NHS Staff Survey showed that staff were increasingly positive towards teamworking and felt they were well supported by management, particularly in areas concerning learning and development. Although under immense pressure, NHS workers are still achieving incredible outcomes. The pandemic response ushered in new, smarter ways of working, with digitalisation playing an important role.

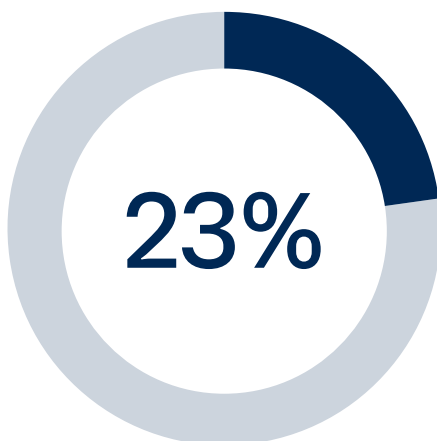
The concept is not new. Governments of all political colour have long held ambitions to provide fully joined-up health and care provision, delivered through the use of innovative technologies. Rapid progress was made during the pandemic period, with forward-thinking teams rapidly deploying the very latest solutions to power change and allow new ideas to be tried and tested.

Recognising these achievements, the Government has unveiled strategies designed to further promote NHS digitalisation. For example, the policy paper *Data Saves Lives*⁸ outlined the plan to make data bring benefits throughout health and care, delivering better outcomes for patients, care users and staff. While there is no single answer to the urgent situation the NHS is facing, by exploiting the latest technological advances, the burden can at least be eased for its hard-pressed workforce.

Communication is the key. This is understood by far-sighted teams that have recognised the need for improved connectivity. Data from the survey indicate that as many as...



of public sector organisations are still using post internally and this figure rises to...



across the health and care arena

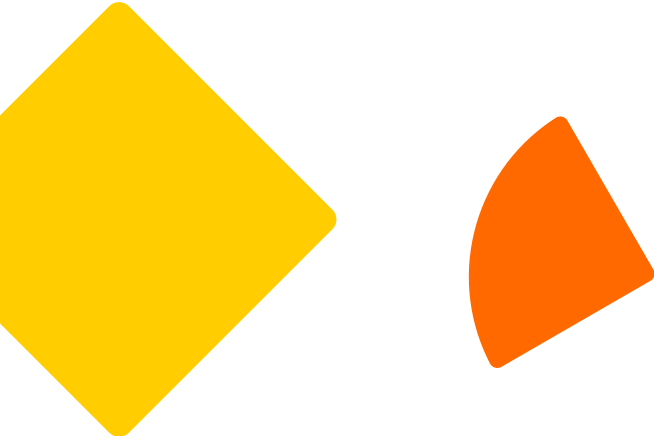


Almost a quarter of NHS organisations are reliant on internal mail for inter-team working and, incredibly, 20% are regularly using fax. By streamlining their communications, data can flow smoothly between colleagues throughout their departments and beyond. Back-office functions are transformed, ultimately ensuring enhanced outcomes across the board. It is the technology that provides the foundations upon which to build, supporting new applications and systems as they are developed, boosting productivity and delivering the efficiency gains that are increasingly being demanded.

The outbreak of Covid-19 necessitated an immediate and tactical response. Many lessons were learned. In order to meet the challenges facing the NHS of today and tomorrow, a more strategic approach will be needed. Throughout the public sector, more than half of organisations have streamlined operations by migrating their telephony services to the cloud. In the NHS, this figure is lower, at just...



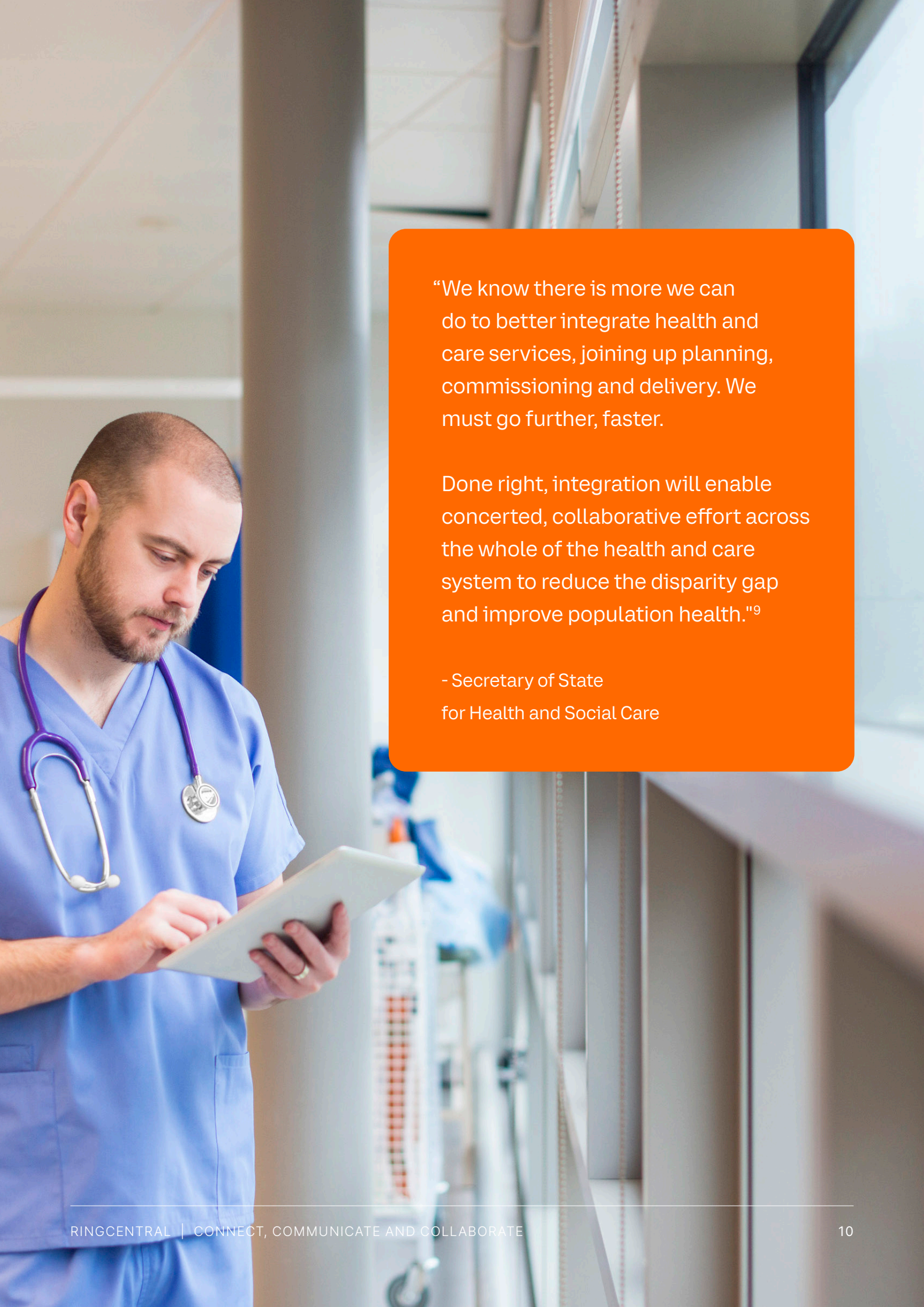
34%



This has a knock-on effect on performance and experience, with one example being an inability to unlock the benefits of analytics.

The results from the RingCentral/GovNews [survey](#) give a clear indication that the sector is ready to take the next important steps on the digital journey.

Change is as desirable as it is essential. For the secondary health and care sector, ensuring the right communications solutions are in place has never been more crucial.

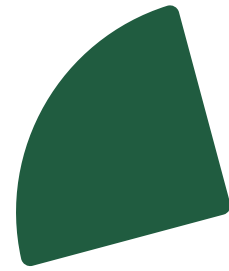



“We know there is more we can do to better integrate health and care services, joining up planning, commissioning and delivery. We must go further, faster.

Done right, integration will enable concerted, collaborative effort across the whole of the health and care system to reduce the disparity gap and improve population health.”⁹

- Secretary of State
for Health and Social Care

Citizens are ready to embrace the latest advances



“Ultimately, to help the NHS survive and thrive for years to come we must continue to change our model of healthcare so that we move from patients being passive recipients of care to one in which they are active participants in their own health and wellbeing. Empowering individuals to be able to make greater use of technology will help deliver the long term shifts we need to make.”

- Matthew Taylor CBE
FAcSS, Chief Executive NHS
Confederation¹²

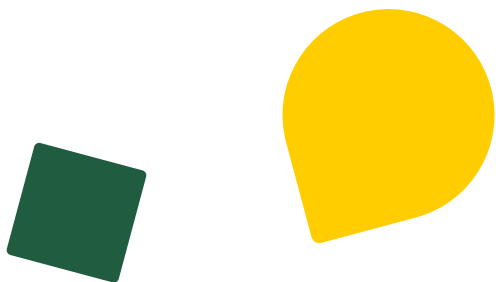
The Government and devolved administrations are in agreement over the need to provide integrated care services, and all see digitalisation as the route to its delivery. There is strong evidence that they are joined in this ambition by a public which is ready to embrace innovation. With more than 30 million¹⁰ individual users, the success of the NHS App indicates that citizens are comfortable with data-driven health and care provision. An Ipsos poll on behalf of NHS Confed¹¹ found the majority of people would be happy to use technology if it meant a hospital visit could be avoided and highlighted a growing appetite for using technology to self-manage health.

With the public onside and a united political will for change, the feeling of being “almost there” with digitalisation is palpable. Organisations and citizen users are ready to make full use of the latest advances in technology. Now is the time for leaders and teams to grasp the opportunities that exist. Secondary care organisations across the NHS have shown how good they are, with the right strategies in place, they can go on to achieve excellence.



Changing the mindset to digital first

In order to improve communication, care providers need to integrate services and systems. To ensure success, a shift in culture and mindset needs to happen.



The survey uncovered a tendency for this sector to cling to traditional communication methods such as mail and fax. It is crucial that this mindset to stick with the familiar changes, and that the latest solutions are introduced to improve productivity, reduce wastage, eliminate duplication and place patient needs at the centre of every decision. By making the right strategic decisions, the future can be delivered today.



“Digital transformation is not just about new technology. Equally important is the role of the workforce, from leaders to clinicians and frontline staff.”

- House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee¹³



Cloud-based unified communications solutions can deliver immediate results, bridging the gap between administrators, clinicians and their patients. The latest systems are designed to work around the existing IT estate, providing interoperability to overcome the problems of unwieldy and unreliable legacy technology. Reactive and agile, modern platforms can be quickly scaled up or down to meet changes in demand.

Reporting and analytics give teams the information they need to make timely and informed decisions. Workflows are streamlined bringing productivity gains and helping to drive down costs. Reliable, secure communications empower patient choice and deliver flexibility to modernise the workspace.

The secondary health and care journey is inherently complex, by boosting connectivity among its constantly shifting multiplicity of stakeholders and agencies, processes are simplified, outcomes improved and fully integrated health and care at last becomes a reality.

“The NHS has changed massively over the last 75 years, all while remaining true to its founding principles. COVID showed that we can deliver change very rapidly when it matters and that trust in local systems to make decisions allows them the freedom to better adopt innovation.

It is the culture of innovation which gives us a strong foundation for the next 75 years.”

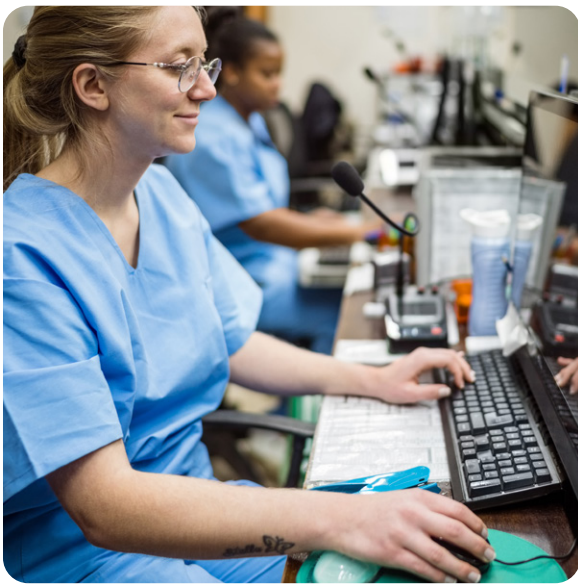
- Secretary of State for Health and Social Care¹⁴



Conclusion



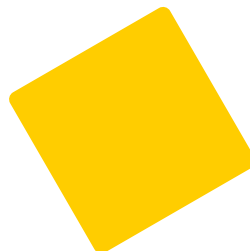
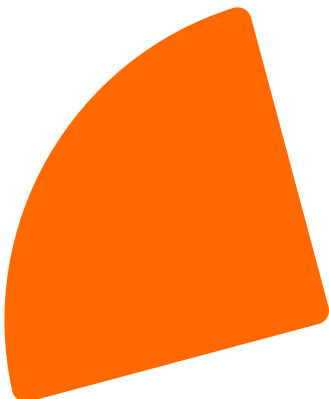
The magnitude of the challenge ahead is in no doubt. If it is to survive in its present form, the need for change in the NHS is an unavoidable fact.



Perhaps the most important lesson the pandemic taught was that change is possible. By embracing it, secondary care services were able to rapidly transform their operations. They were successful in their response to Covid-19. There is no reason to suggest they cannot be equally successful again.

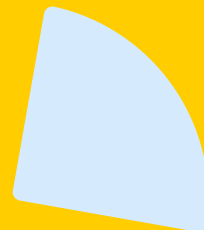
It is time to rebuild. The appetite for change is equal to the ambition and ability among a workforce that has already achieved so much. The workforce deserves the modernisation it needs.

Increasing connectivity enables modernisation. By streamlining communications, huge strides can be made towards the goal of fully integrated service provision. It is an achievable dream. Innovative technologies are advancing at a rate that is often hard to conceive. By thinking strategically, organisations can implement them to power forwards, not only rebuilding the NHS but reimagining the art of the possible and truly achieving excellence for the next 75 years and beyond.



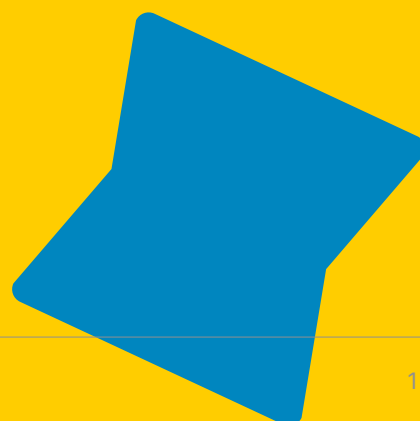
About RingCentral

RingCentral, is a leading provider of unified communications (message, video, phone), customer engagement, and contact centre solutions for businesses worldwide.



More flexible and cost-effective than legacy on-premises PBX and video conferencing systems that it replaces, RingCentral empowers modern mobile and distributed workforces to communicate, collaborate and connect via any mode, any device, and any location.

In the UK Public Sector and education space, RingCentral is leading the market with a cloud native business communications platform that works with existing technologies such as Microsoft Teams to deliver on smarter and hybrid working strategies.



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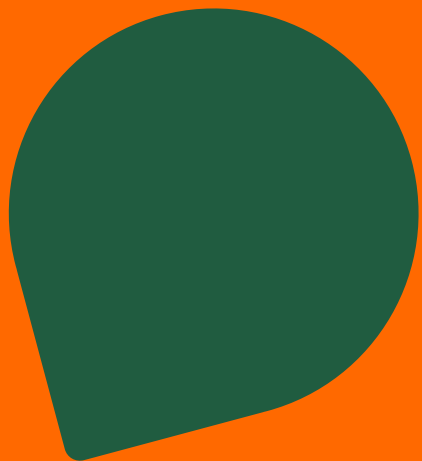
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Hello this is Dr. Tompkins...



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