

New imaging system allows radiologists to issue formal radiological reports from their home environment

Staff have improved access to imaging from several trusts across the region as East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust goes live with Sectra's Picture Archiving and Communication System

Radiologists are now better placed to cope with rising demand and are being better connected with colleagues across the region, now that East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust has implemented a new Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS) that is helping to change how professionals work.

The system, which was implemented by imaging technology provider Sectra, is providing instant access to images from several hospitals in the region and has already started to save staff substantial amounts of time when they are reviewing crucial diagnostic images.

Crucially, for the first time, radiologists in East Lancashire are now able to work and report from home, helping to mitigate pressures and improve work life balance.

Dr Tom Newton, consultant radiologist and chief clinical information officer for the trust, said: "The PACS is robust even on low bandwidth connections. Home working has been part of our strategy for years and has now become possible. When on call, if you are at home you can log into the PACS and provide a comprehensive final opinion. This is an important feature in making the discipline more attractive, especially in the North West where we need to find ways to recruit and attract radiologists. It means that a radiologist potentially only needs to come to the hospital three days in a week and can work from home for two days. But in the current context of potential self-isolation and social distancing of staff, this is proving to be a crucial technology."

More broadly, the PACS is expected to help radiologists better cope with rising demand that has persisted in the discipline for years.

"I can report significantly more scans in a day than I did previously because our PACS is much faster," added Dr. Newton. "This will help us to keep up with the growing number of images we need to report each year – with CT scans alone increasing by 10% year on year. It also supports the trust's longer term ambition, connecting us into a wider network of trusts where we can share resources, access expertise, and work together as an integrated system."

The trust has already connected its PACS to neighbouring University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust and will soon connect to Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, allowing a seamless and secure flow of imaging as patients move across the region. All three trusts are part of the Healthier Lancashire and South Cumbria integrated care system.

Leighan Beesley, radiology IT systems and performance manager at East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "From a resource point of view this massively helps our service. We have substantially reduced the time spent manually transferring images to and from neighbouring hospitals. Now we have instant access to images from across the patch. From a clinical perspective this is hugely important. Speed of access to images is crucial. The new PACS allows colleagues who may be in different trusts to look at an image together in real time when they need a second opinion. It better facilitates multi-disciplinary team meetings

held across the integrated care system, and it gives frontline clinicians access to images in ways they haven't had before, whilst also allowing radiologists to work from home."

Other immediate benefits include the fact that clinicians on the ward can use a Uniview function to create 3D reconstructions themselves, meaning radiographers no longer need to spend their time creating the reconstructions for clinicians.

In the near future, the trust will also decommission its separate breast PACS, moving to a single system. The trust has also moved to PACS based reporting and eventually other 'ologies' will be able to move to the PACS. The PACS is also expected to fully integrate into the trust's electronic patient record when this is procured next year.

"Radiologists love it. Clinicians on the ward love it and people in IT think that Sectra is one of the best companies they have ever worked with." said Dr Newton.

Ian Stobbs, an informatics project manager at the trust, said: "Sectra delivered an excellent project from start to finish, with clear goals and communication, assisted by in-depth knowledge and experience, aiding a smooth delivery'.

Dr Helen Turner, a consultant in emergency medicine, added: "The Sectra Uniview system is really easy to use in ED. It is intuitive, responsive, user friendly and has all the functionality we need. The changeover was very well managed with as little impact as possible on the ongoing clinical care of patients in the department."

Jane Rendall, managing director at Sectra for the UK and Ireland, said: "Seeing staff benefit from the system immediately is really rewarding, and it's gratifying to see this help the trust to implement a way of working that can contribute to the huge challenge currently facing the NHS. It's also great to see the technology used to empower regional working – the only way forward in the NHS."

ENDS

Notes to editors

About East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

[East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust \(ELHT\)](https://www.elht.nhs.uk/) was established in 2003. We are a large, integrated health care organisation providing acute, secondary and community healthcare for the 530,000 residents of East Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen. Our population includes patients who live in several of the most socially deprived areas of England.

Safe, Personal and Effective care is carried out by over 8,000 staff located across five hospital sites, and numerous community locations. We provide specialist services, using state-of-the-art facilities in the areas of Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care, Hepatobiliary surgery, Head and Neck and Urological Cancer services. We are also a growing centre for Cardiology services and robotic surgery. For more information visit [elht.nhs.uk](https://www.elht.nhs.uk/) or follows us @ELHT_NHS on Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, and ELHT.NHS on Facebook.

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With more than 30 years of innovation and approaching 2,000 installations worldwide, Sectra is a leading global provider of imaging IT solutions that support healthcare in achieving patient-centric care. Sectra offers an enterprise imaging solution comprising PACS for imaging-intense departments (radiology, pathology, cardiology, orthopaedics), VNA, and share and collaborate solutions. Read more about Sectra and why Sectra PACS is "Best in KLAS" at <https://medical.sectra.com/>.