

Black Country Pathology Services delivers lab network ‘in adversity’

Programme continues hub and spoke project and CliniSys IT deployment despite Covid-19

WinPath Enterprise is being deployed as a single laboratory information system to support standardisation across the network

Black Country Pathology Services has pushed ahead with a major initiative to create a laboratory network to serve four trusts and delivered a successful go-live for its CliniSys laboratory information system despite the coronavirus emergency.

BCPS was formed in response to a report by Lord Carter of Coles, which recommended that NHS laboratory services should be re-organised into a regional ‘hub and spoke’ model to improve quality and efficiency. It is developing a pathology network for four trusts: The Dudley Group, Sandwell and Birmingham, Walsall Healthcare, and The Royal Wolverhampton.

Staff were TUPE transferred into the new organisation in October 2018, and since then the network has been running major programmes of work to procure new equipment, modernise logistics, and build a new pathology extension at New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton.

In November 2018, it also took the decision to deploy CliniSys WinPath Enterprise as a single LIMS to support communication and to standardise ways of working between the central lab in Wolverhampton and ‘hot labs’ that will handle local tests for hospitals in the network.

Group operational manager Graham Danks said the arrival of the novel coronavirus in early March threatened to “turn everything upside down”. But the programme rapidly adopted a remote working model, and successfully delivered a number of project milestones “in adversity”, including a go-live for WinPath Enterprise in its microbiology service.

“Covid-19 had a huge impact on our workforce. Work linked to elective care stopped. A seven-day service came into play for Covid-testing. And work on the LIMS was put on hold,” Graham Danks explained. “We were in the middle of user acceptance testing for the second phase of the roll-out, and due to go-live in June.

“So, we decided to explore the art of the possible, so we could keep moving forward. Microbiology became the priority. We talked to CliniSys and the message was that we were ‘all in this together’, and they were ready to help us complete UAT2 so we could go-live. And that is what we did.”

Black Country Pathology Services is aiming to contribute £5 million savings to the £200 million savings identified by the Carter Report. It is also looking to deliver a high quality, modern service from its showcase facilities at New Cross Hospital, which will handle microbiology, histopathology and blood sciences, and essential service laboratories in Dudley, Walsall, and Sandwell.

The pathology service chose WinPath Enterprise following a formal tender process; the first to be conducted after NHS England’ published a ‘state of the nation’ report on the creation of pathology networks, which showed it is on track to complete the programme by the target date of 2021.

It opted to take WinPath Enterprise as a hosted solution and had deployed a wide area network to give its laboratories the fast links they needed to access the LIMS. It had also gone live in cellular pathology in order to support the roll-out of a new screening process for cervical cancer in the Black Country.

In response to another recommendation from the National Screening Committee, NHS England is setting up a national system to make testing for Human Papilloma Virus the primary method of screening for the disease.

BCPS bid successfully to carry out the lab work for the service in its area, which made the deployment of WinPath Enterprise to cellular pathology a priority. The BCPS also chose CliniSys ICE order communications and results reporting as a dedicated HPV order communications solution, serving 1,000 GPs and 14 colposcopy clinics across the region.

As it resumes 'business as usual', BCPS will complete the roll-out and deploy CliniSys ICE to create an 'end to end' software system that is fully integrated with the electronic patient records used by hospital clinicians and GP practices.

Senior ICT programme manager Nick Fudger said: "From the outset, we have recognised that a single LIMS is essential to support communication, standardisation and harmonisation across the network. Our close working relationship with CliniSys enabled us to progress our plans during Covid-19, while focusing on microbiology and what was most important to them.

"As we return to something like business as usual, our priority will be to go-live fully with the LIMS, to go-live with ICE, and to complete the EPR integration. That will enable us to make full use of our investment in IT as we develop the network and plan for growth and expansion."

Adam Clark, delivery director at CliniSys said: "We were delighted to be able to support Graham, Nick and their teams during the Covid-19 emergency. A LIMS deployment is always a significant event, but it was particularly pleasing to be able to deliver a WinPath Enterprise go-live in such adverse circumstances, and in support of a service under pressure.

"We look forward to continuing to work with the BCPS team as they continue to deliver a programme that will deliver real benefits to their network, the clinicians working in it, and the patients they serve."

ENDS

About CliniSys:

For over 30 years CliniSys Group has been at the forefront of diagnostics workflow, order communications and information management solutions supporting radiology, cardiology and all pathology disciplines including anatomical or cellular, molecular and genetics. These encompass the complete workflow from order, clinical decision support, collection, processing, analysis, results and reporting, through integration into the clinical workflow. CliniSys Group has built an unrivalled reputation for the deployment of complex diagnostics networks and academic centres – and is the only vendor repeatedly delivering across all disciplines end to end – at scale.

CliniSys Group solutions have been deployed in 10 languages in thousands of laboratories across 23 countries and are used by hundreds of thousands of healthcare professionals. Headquartered in the UK, CliniSys Group employs through CliniSys (UK) and MIPS (Europe), close to 500 dedicated diagnostics IT professionals.

CliniSys provides market leading solutions across the UK and Ireland.

- Its laboratory information management system, WinPath, is deployed in nearly 50% of all NHS trusts and now supports 34 pathology networks across the UK.
- Tests for more than 40 million patients are processed on its order communications system, ICE every year, whilst more than one third of NHS acute trusts use ICE for test ordering by hospital wards, and over 70% of the same trusts use ICE for GP order comms.

MIPS provides market leading solutions across Europe.

- Its laboratory information management systems, GLIMS, DaVinci, GestLab, and MIPS vianova Labor support thousands of laboratories, including many of the largest laboratory networks across Europe.
- Its order communications systems CyberLab, and iGestlab, are now also increasingly used by patients to access their own and their family's test results.