

Two health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland go live with Clinisys WinPath within days of each other in partnership with the Business Services Organisation

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust are the first to deploy the laboratory information system to support a major pathology transformation programme in Northern Ireland

The new system will deliver efficiency and quality benefits and support the encompass programme to deliver a single, digital care record for every citizen

Two health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland have gone live with Clinisys WinPath, at the start of a series of deployments from the Core Laboratory Information Management System or Core LIMS project.

This project, which is being led by the Business Services Organisation, will see every pathology service in Northern Ireland adopt the laboratory information system to support the modernisation of services.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust went live first with microbiology, blood sciences and biochemistry (including new born screening, haematology and immunology) at the start of November, and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust went live in the same disciplines three days later.

These large-scale implementations also had to be carefully aligned with other IT system go-lives within Northern Ireland's encompass programme, which has been set up to create a single, digital care record for every patient in the region.

Karen Bailey, chief executive of the BSO, said: "I wish to congratulate the Programme delivery team, our BSO supplier services and all our partners, especially those in the Trusts for the delivery of the two Go-Live's in such a short space of time.

"Digital Health solutions such as the Core LIMS implementation will benefit patients across Northern Ireland for decades to come, and it is a proud moment for the Health and Social Care Service here."

Karin Jackson, senior responsible officer for the Core LIMS project agreed. "Implementing the Core LIMS WinPath solution is a significant achievement for our health services here. It will complement our regional pathology services and enhance care provision for all patients across Northern Ireland.

"This was a very unique implementation and I wish to acknowledge the support from Jennifer Welsh, the SRO for the NIPIMS Programme which Core LIMS is a part of, and to our contracted partners Clinisys for their part in getting the first two Trusts live."

Historically, BHSCT was using an older Clinisys LIMS and SEHSCT was using a "green screen" IT system developed by the BSO around 40-years ago.

Both organisations have upgraded to the latest version of Clinisys WinPath, which is a modern, Windows-based system with features that will improve the efficiency and quality of testing services as staff become comfortable with new ways of working.

Dr Clodagh Loughrey, chair of division for Laboratory and Pharmacy Services at BHSCT, said: “The great majority of patient interactions now involve laboratory testing, and the implementation of this new LIMS is the basis for streamlining pathology services throughout the region, making patient care more efficient.

“This has required an enormous amount of work from all of our laboratory teams, and we are so grateful for the many extra miles that have been travelled recently. The patients we serve, and our clinical users will ultimately benefit from a joined-up approach to laboratory information throughout the region.”

Jena Crawford, co-director for laboratory and pharmacy services at BHSCT, said: “The Clinisys WinPath system will support our clinical services in patient care. We are immensely proud of our laboratory staff and the partnership approach that they have taken to the build and roll out of the system.”

Moira Kearney, interim director, cancer and specialist services, including laboratory services, at BHSCT said, “I want to put on record my sincere thanks to our staff right across the Trust who went above and beyond to deliver this go-live in collaboration with the Business Services Organisation and Clinisys.

“This change will enable us to enhance clinical care for patients here in Belfast and right across Northern Ireland as we provide regional services, and we are already seeing benefits.”

Brian Armstrong, director of unscheduled care and medical specialties concurred. “I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that this change has enabled us to enhance clinical care for patients here in BHSCT and right across Northern Ireland, and we are already seeing benefits with our clinical colleagues in the Emergency Departments.”

The LIMS go-lives are also tied into two further programmes of work to digitise and transform health and social care services in Northern Ireland. The first is the encompass programme.

The Northern Ireland Digital Identity Service for healthcare, which underpins a single, digital identity for every patient, a new electronic patient record, and a new imaging system, were also implemented at SEHCT at the time of the LIMS go-live.

Clinisys WinPath has been integrated with these systems and with 28 ‘downstream’ systems that need to display test results alongside other patient information.

Melissa Cochrane, head of programmes at the BSO, which contracted Clinisys as the single LIMS provider in 2021, paid tribute to the hard work put in by everybody involved so far.

“Getting to this stage has involved years of work, and you cannot count the hours that the project team, Clinisys and HSC colleagues have put into it,” she said.

“Our teams and the wider organisation are pleased with the success of the implementations made possible by the dedication of all involved stakeholders. We have now established a great foundation for rolling out the system to further specialisms and the rest of the HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland.”

The second connected programme is Health and Social Care Northern Ireland's pathology transformation programme, which is working on a regional model for pathology services that will encourage standardised ways of working and provide better career paths to address workforce challenges.

Now the first go-lives have been delivered, work will be accelerated to deploy Clinisys WinPath into more specialisms, starting with cellular pathology next spring.

The LIMS will also be rolled out across the Northern, Southern and Western health and social care trusts, and the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service, while Northern Ireland's Genomics Medicine Centre will become the first UK organisation to deploy Clinisys GLIMS Genomics.

Tony Oliver, programme director at Clinisys, concluded: "There was a huge amount of scrutiny on this project in the weeks leading up to the go-live, but on the day it went incredibly smoothly, and that was down to the huge amount of work that had been put in by laboratory and IT staff in the build and testing phases.

"We are already planning for the next go-lives early in 2024. When this project is complete, there will be a single patient record across Northern Ireland and a single LIMS.

"It is a hugely ambitious vision, but it will deliver enormous benefits to laboratories, clinicians and patients to have a modernised pathology service and a single source of the truth. Clinisys is looking forward to supporting HSCNI, the BSO, the trusts and the clinicians involved to deliver that vision."

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