NHS
Queen Victoria Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

QVH

2025-2030 Enabling Strategies
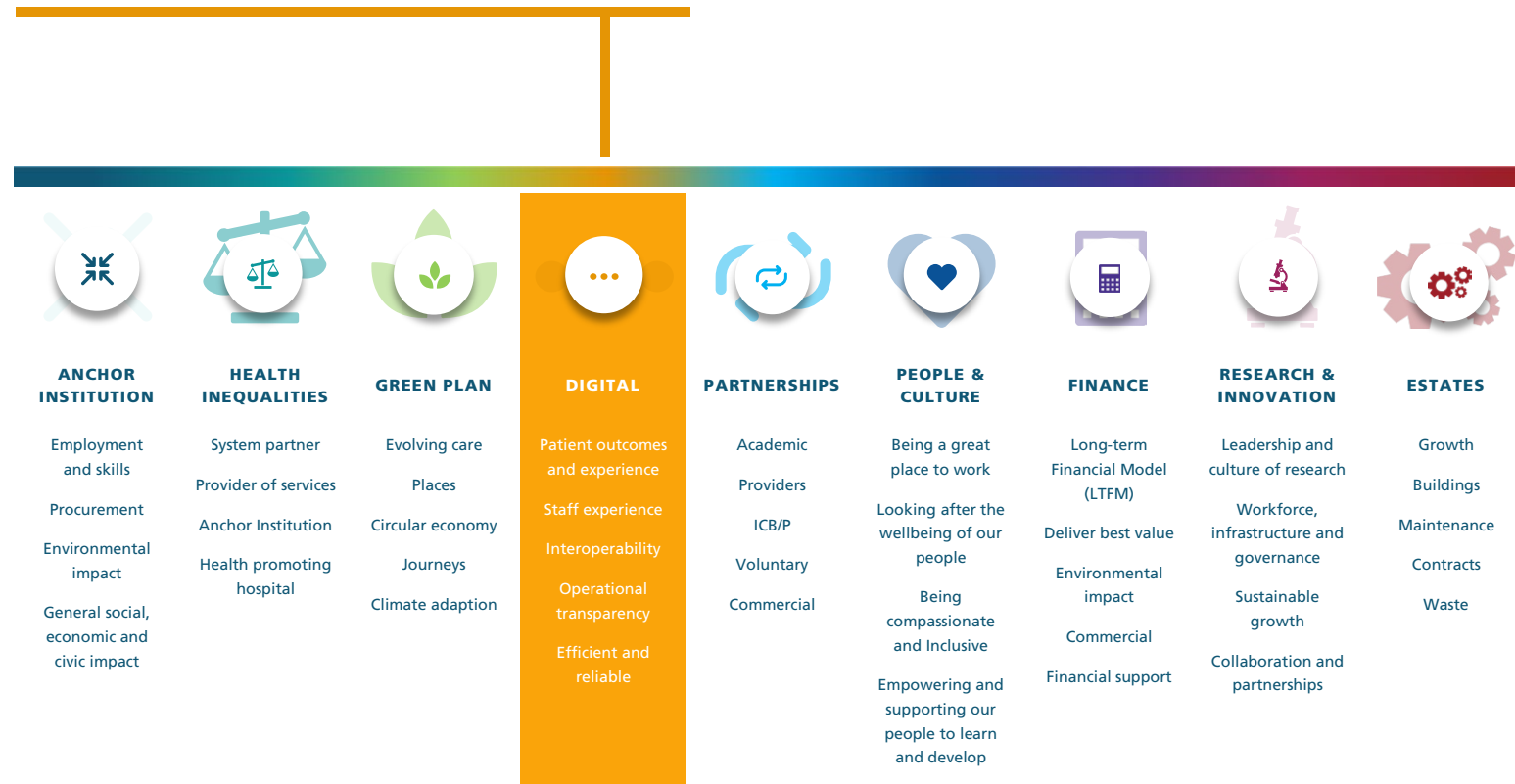
PILLAR 4

Digital
Strategy

2025-2030

Strategic Context

This document illustrates our strategy supporting Pillar 4:

Digital

ANCHOR INSTITUTION	HEALTH INEQUALITIES	GREEN PLAN	DIGITAL	PARTNERSHIPS	PEOPLE & CULTURE	FINANCE	RESEARCH & INNOVATION	ESTATES
Employment and skills	System partner	Evolving care	Patient outcomes and experience	Academic	Being a great place to work	Long-term Financial Model (LTFM)	Leadership and culture of research	Growth
Procurement	Provider of services	Places	Staff experience	Providers	Looking after the wellbeing of our people	Deliver best value	Workforce, infrastructure and governance	Buildings
Environmental impact	Anchor Institution	Circular economy	Interoperability	ICB/P	Being compassionate and Inclusive	Environmental impact	Sustainable growth	Maintenance
General social, economic and civic impact	Health promoting hospital	Journeys	Operational transparency	Voluntary	Empowering and supporting our people to learn and develop	Commercial	Collaboration and partnerships	Contracts
		Climate adaption	Efficient and reliable	Commercial		Financial support		Waste

QVH

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INTRODUCTION

Technology has transformed many aspects of modern life over recent decades, including healthcare delivery. Patients are also consumers of other sectors like retail and banking, and their expectations of how the NHS should use digital to facilitate and aid access to care are rising.

People are increasingly able to access support online for advice and access information, virtual consultations and remote monitoring. Technology is also supporting safer treatment through digitalised health information. Through digital there is great potential to empower our patients to manage their care, improve how we deliver our services and work with partners to optimise pathways. It will also help us meet the increasing expectations and demands on our frontline and supporting services.

Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH) is a specialist NHS Foundation Trust delivering surgical and non-surgical treatment for people across the south east and beyond. QVH is also proud of its commitment to services for the local population. QVH's approach to the adoption of technology was previously guided by a five-year Information Management and Technology (IM&T) strategy which enabled the Trust to make major infrastructural improvements including the introduction of important software improvements. As we look forward to our new strategy, we will build on this work to take further steps towards the digitisation of the healthcare we provide.

Our focus will be:

1. Supporting excellent patient outcomes and experiences

2. Improved staff experience

3. Interoperability with partners

4. Operational transparency

5. High reliability.

This strategy includes a combination of major complex transformational projects, most notably the commissioning and introduction of an Electronic Patient Record (EPR), as well as commitment to continuous improvement and enhancing our digital infrastructure.

IN THE WORDS OF PATIENTS, CARERS AND STAFF

To support the development of this strategy, QVH has undertaken a wide range of consultation activities and would like to thank all those who have has taken the time to contribute. The successful implementation of technological solutions requires a partnership approach, guided by the needs of our patients and our staff.

Some reflections include…

"Ordering of tests through ICE Order Comms for pathology and radiology has improved."

"WiFi has much improved across the trust which helps us to utilise digital."

"Being seen virtually has transformed my care and long travel requirements."

"In the future being part of an integrated digital solution across Sussex and beyond will help support patient pathways."

"I would want to see more efficient digital systems and up to date technology to improve patient pathways, care and record keeping."

"To keep up with technology, including electronic patient records, or digitalised patient letters instead of dictated-printed-mailed."

"A digital solution for hard to reach patients who may need support to access the virtual provision."

VISION AND VALUES

Our vision has been co-produced with patients and staff and aligns to the Trust ambition to be a provider of specialist and regional services and to deliver an innovative offer for the local population.

We want all of our staff to feel valued and supported in their personal wellbeing and their professional ambition, to be proud of the work they do for our patients and each other, and to embody the Trust vision. Our vision is underpinned by our values, which have been refreshed alongside the development of our five year strategy.

Living our values requires us to:

- Regularly and purposefully review what our values and strategy mean for QVH, as individuals, as teams and as an organisation.
- Recognise the prejudice in all of us, even when we cannot see it for ourselves.

Our vision is:

To be a centre of excellence that **rebuilds lives** and **supports communities** for a healthier future

To achieve that, our values are:

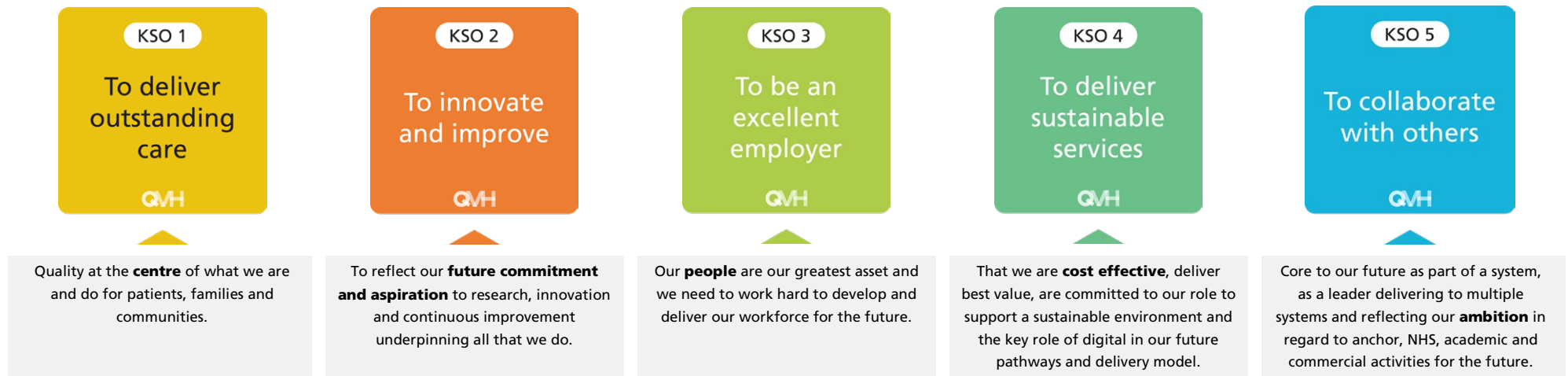| *We are* **caring and inclusive** *over* **all else**	*We are* **supportive and challenging** *over* **staying comfortable**	*We* **listen to improve** *over* **always knowing best**	*We* **succeed together** *over* **achieving alone**
We treat everyone with respect, kindness and compassion. We are inclusive and celebrate diversity.	We take time to support and look out for one another. This includes sometimes challenging and holding one another to account, even if it feels uncomfortable.	We seek out and listen to feedback from patients, colleagues and partners with openness, and act with honesty and transparency to continuously improve the quality of our care.	We value working together in teams, within QVH and with local partners, to provide outstanding care and support each other to deliver shared goals.

Our new key strategic objectives guide our priorities and focus. They frame everything from significant service level decisions through to individual objectives with a view to delivering improved outcomes for our patients and populations and improving our staff experience.

Our objectives are:

KSO 1	KSO 2	KSO 3	KSO 4	KSO 5
To deliver outstanding care	**To innovate and improve**	**To be an excellent employer**	**To deliver sustainable services**	**To collaborate with others**
Quality at the **centre** of what we are and do for patients, families and communities.	To reflect our **future commitment and aspiration** to research, innovation and continuous improvement underpinning all that we do.	Our **people** are our greatest asset and we need to work hard to develop and deliver our workforce for the future.	That we are **cost effective**, deliver best value, are committed to our role to support a sustainable environment and the key role of digital in our future pathways and delivery model.	Core to our future as part of a system, as a leader delivering to multiple systems and reflecting our **ambition** in regard to anchor, NHS, academic and commercial activities for the future.

CONTEXT (NATIONAL AND SYSTEM CONTEXT AND DRIVERS)

Over the past few years, the NHS has made significant strides in advancing digital technology, driven by the need to enhance patient care, improve operational efficiency, and respond to evolving healthcare demands. However, this progress has not been without challenge.

National

A key hurdle has been the variability in digital maturity across NHS trusts, resulting in unequal access to digital tools and inconsistent quality of care. Financial constraints have also posed a significant barrier, with many trusts struggling to secure the necessary funding to invest in advanced digital solutions and the infrastructure needed to support them. Additionally, the integration of legacy IT systems with new technologies remains a complex issue, often leading to interoperability difficulties that hinder the seamless sharing of data across different parts of the health and social care system.

The national context for a digital strategy for an NHS trust is framed by several key policy documents and initiatives. The NHS Long Term Plan emphasises the need for digitally-enabled care, setting ambitious targets for integrating technology into patient pathways, including expanded digital access to services and improved data use to drive clinical decision-making. The plan provides a clear mandate for the use of new digital technology in acute and community services.

It identifies digitisation as a means of improving health and care, and transforming outcomes for patients and citizens in the coming years. The plan places a strong emphasis on digital innovation and calls for digitally enabled care to 'go mainstream' across the NHS. To support this, the plan sets out how it will accelerate the roll out of EPR systems ensuring that they are implemented to nationally agreed standards. This will enable integration with the local Shared Care Record to provide patient-centric and clinician-centric digital user journeys across all health settings.

The "What Good Looks Like" framework provides a comprehensive guide for trusts to achieve excellence in digital maturity, outlining seven success measures, including strong leadership, well-designed care pathways, and robust data infrastructure. Further shaping the digital strategy is the "Plan for Digital Health and Social Care" (2022), which outlines a vision for digitised, joined-up care systems that leverage technology to enhance care delivery and patient outcomes across health and social care settings.

Additionally, the "Delivery Plan for Urgent and Emergency Care Services" (2022) emphasises the importance of digital innovations in streamlining urgent care pathways, reducing wait times, and improving patient flow, through better data integration and real-time management tools. It highlights the importance of real-time decision-making and the introduction of a digital staff passport to help address workforce related issues. Alongside these documents, challenges such as workforce digital literacy, resistance to change, and concerns around data privacy and cybersecurity must also be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of digital strategies that not only respond to current challenges but also future-proof healthcare delivery through sustained digital transformation.

Local and regional

QVH works closely with other organisations and is part of the local Health and Care Integrated Care System (ICS). As a result of its membership of the ICS, QVH is committed to working with partners across the system to achieve shared objectives. The ICS (2022) "Improving Lives Together" strategy identifies "Improving the use of digital technology and information" as one of four areas that will make the largest positive difference to people's lives.

There are five related objectives:

1. **Connecting services:** We want to connect information better across our different services to help them work in a more joined-up way.

2. **Improving technology and sharing data:** We want to support organisations to improve the way they use technology and how they share data to improve the support, care and treatment they provide.

3. **Supporting staff:** We want to help staff access the information they need, wherever they are and whenever they need it.

4. **Giving local people information:** We want to support local people better to access and manage their own health and care information, care preferences and choices, and the way they wish to interact with those providing services and arranging appointments.

5. **Supporting people to use technology:** We want to do more to help people and their carers confidently use digital technology that will best suit them and their needs. This will help those who do not have regular access to technology or are unsure how to utilise it.

Key activities in the Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) that are likely to have implications for QVH's digital strategy include:

- Developing a system-wide digital and data charter setting out clear design principles and national benchmarking.

- Agreeing a system-wide data, information, and insight strategy.

- Extending access and enriching services offered through the My Health and Care Record patient app, integrated with the NHS app.

- Implementation of core Electronic Patient Records (EPRs) in all providers.

- Consistently good digital maturity levels achieved across EPR and cyber security areas of digital maturity in all Trusts.

- Quantifiable progress in reducing impacts of digital exclusion and improving design of digital services.

- Digital inclusion strategy for the reduction in the impact of digital exclusion and digital poverty.

This digital strategy is a key enabler to ensure QVH can continue to effectively meet the evolving healthcare needs of our patients, enhance the quality of care, and operate more efficiently in an increasingly digital world.

This requires a clear roadmap for integrating digital technologies into healthcare delivery enabling accurate and timely data, improved patient outcomes, streamlined processes, and reduced operational costs. The need for change is also driven by rising patient expectations for more accessible and convenient care opportunities.

In Sussex, the pressures of an aging population, increasing demand for services, and ongoing workforce challenges all necessitate more efficient ways of delivering care. Digital tools can help address these issues by optimising patient flow, reducing administrative burdens, and can alleviating pressures on urgent and emergency care services.

The COVID-19 pandemic made clear the critical role of digital technologies in maintaining healthcare delivery during crises, highlighting the need for resilient and adaptable systems that can support both routine and emergency care.

Without a robust digital strategy the Trust may face challenges in meeting national standards and targets. Despite the progress made in digital technology at the Trust in recent years, in the short-term QVH must still take further action in order to achieve NHS England's target level of digital maturity by March 2025.

The process of improving our digital maturity is an ongoing one, and with the implementation of this strategy we expect to make steady progress towards achieving our targets in this area by prioritising the correct actions.

An essential part of this digital strategy will set out achieving interoperability between systems, which is vital for improved data sharing and collaboration across the healthcare system, ultimately leading to safer and more efficient care. This will be underpinned by the implementation of our new EPR system.

Consultation with staff revealed enthusiasm for enhanced information-sharing with partners. This would reduce challenges around care co-ordination, creating potential clinical risks for patient care, as well as using digital technology to enhance patient communication, giving patients full visibility of the information that matters to them about their care.

Digital strategy consultation also highlighted the need for greater engagement with clinical staff in digital and systems projects, with staff noting that disjointed systems can make tasks overly complicated and time-consuming. There were also challenges noted around ageing medical devices, with poorer performance limiting efficiency.

Data reporting and data quality were also identified as a challenge, limiting the ability of clinicians and managers to use data to drive action with confidence.

Opportunity was identified to improve the digital training offer at the Trust to increase digital confidence, knowledge and skills for QVH staff in relation to key systems.

An effective digital strategy is essential for NHS trusts to enhance patient care, improve operational efficiency, and meet the evolving needs of the healthcare landscape.

Evidence and best practice supports five key elements of a robust digital strategy; a patient-centric approach; improved staff experience; interoperability; operational transparency; and building a highly reliable organisation.

A patient-centric approach prioritises patient engagement and outcomes through digital tools such as EPRs, patient portals, and telemedicine, which empower patients to manage their health actively (Nuffield Trust, 2021).

Improved staff experience is also critical; the NHS Workforce Strategy (2019) highlights the importance of continuous training and upskilling to ensure that healthcare professionals are equipped to leverage new technologies, fostering a culture of digital literacy and innovation (King's Fund, 2021).

Interoperability further supports effective communication and data sharing across the healthcare system, as emphasised in the NHS Long Term Plan (2019), facilitating seamless care coordination between primary, secondary, and social care providers.

Operational transparency can also be enhanced through the strategic use of digital technologies which provide visibility into processes, decision-making, and performance metrics.

The King's Fund (2020) supports the use of digital dashboards and analytics tools to monitor real-time performance across various operational areas, enabling data-driven decision-making and fostering a collaborative approach to challenges.

Electronic records also play a pivotal role in operational transparency by ensuring clinicians have up-to-date information at the point of care, reducing errors, and enhancing continuity of care.

Cybersecurity is a cornerstone of a highly reliable organisation, as robust measures are essential to safeguard against data breaches and cyber threats. NHS Digital's "Data Security and Protection Toolkit" outlines mandatory standards, including regular risk assessments, staff training, and incident response plans, to protect patient data and maintain public trust through transparent data governance and compliance with legal frameworks such as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Health Foundation, 2022). These components collectively build a secure, transparent, and responsive healthcare environment that meets the highest standards of care and operational excellence. QVH consistently meets these standards and is reviewed annually by an external auditor.

To implement a digital strategy effectively, strong leadership and governance are essential, as they align digital initiatives with the Trust's strategic objectives and ensure accountability (NHS England, 2021). Appointing dedicated leaders at executive level also drives the digital agenda and fosters a culture of digital innovation (King's Fund, 2020). Performance management and continuous improvement should be embedded within the strategy through the use of key performance indicators (KPIs) and regular monitoring to evaluate progress and outcomes, as recommended by the "What Good Looks Like" framework (NHS England, 2021). Feedback loops, pilot testing, and iterative development enable trusts to refine digital initiatives based on real-world performance and user feedback (NHS Digital, 2021). Engaging stakeholders, including patients, staff, and external partners, is also crucial for successful implementation. Co-production approaches that involve stakeholders in the design and rollout of digital solutions ensure that these initiatives are practical, widely accepted, and aligned with the needs of all parties involved (Health Foundation, 2022).

Modern life is being transformed by innovations in technology and information and our digital strategy sets out how we will harness these opportunities to improve and transform healthcare. We also know that innovation in automation, remote working, and robotic process automation in our corporate services like human resources and finance will ensure our clinical services and workforce are supported with efficient services in the future.

Our ambition is that our services will effectively use current and future developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to improve efficiency and accuracy and importantly free up clinical time. Growth in this initiative will be key to delivering several key benefits and savings in future years.

Underpinning patient care are administrative systems which are essential to the joining up and co-ordination care. Our ambition is for a digital-first care environment, where letters and appointments will be electronically transmitted and booked online and we will open up virtual care environments.

- Patients able to book their own appointments, access targeted information to suit their needs and manage their health in partnership with their clinicians via remote monitoring and wearables.

- Clinicians using technology to enable consistent clinical decision-making, being able to access reliable, real-time data and using digital tools to extend their interactions with patients beyond the walls of hospitals into virtual care settings.

- Corporate teams automating their manual data entry and streamlining the administration of clinical services to make it more efficient.

- Digital teams supporting a stable technology infrastructure and making sure there is sufficient capacity and capability to support our advances in clinical practice.

- QVH being able to leverage our digital capabilities in the field of research, use our own data intelligence to form the evidence base for new care models, and medical advances such as automation and predictive healthcare.

In implementing this strategy, we will take digital inequality into account, and ensure our advances in technology do not exclude anyone from accessing care. This means ensuring our staff have the digital skills to work in modern healthcare as well as ensuring our patients benefit from digitally enabled care whether or not they chose to access it virtually.

QVH's digital objectives are closely aligned to the overall objectives of the Trust. Our strategic priorities align to five objectives:

- Patient outcomes and experience

- Staff experience

- Interoperability

- Operational transparency

- Efficient and reliable.

The introduction of an EPR is central to success across all five of these themes and sits at the heart of this strategy. We expect an EPR to drive improvements in many key areas including a fully integrated electronic health record with improved reporting and modern messaging processes, safe and quick administration of drugs, and improved theatre management functionality.

Our ambition:

" To create systems and processes that minimise the need for patients to repeatedly share their medical histories, enhancing the efficiency of care delivery and make it easier for patients to access high-quality care, promptly."

Patient data is securely managed, with necessary patient consent, and is utilised for legitimate purposes by appropriate professionals for both primary and secondary uses. Patients will also have greater control and access to their health records, empowering them in their healthcare journey.

The Trust is committed to promoting digital inclusion by identifying actions that support patients and collaborating with partners to advance the regional Shared Delivery Plan. Sussex ICB assesses regional variations and inequalities in digital access and develops plans to address these disparities, supported by the establishment of a People's Panel for Digital and Data and the integration of a Digital Inclusion Framework. QVH will work with the People's Panel and use data-driven insights to target activities aimed at reducing health inequalities.

To achieve this ambition, the central focus of this strategy is the Trust implementation of an EPR system and activities to identify and address digital exclusion among patients. Patient-focused initiatives will be carried out in partnership with the Integrated Care System (ICS), including supporting the regional implementation of the My Health and Care Record - powered by Patient Knows Best (PKB). Phase 2 of the TRIPS telemedicine system development, which is critical for our trauma referral process, is also underway. Additionally, our patient check-in system is being replaced to provide more functionality which is aligned with the new EPR and the needs of our patients.

Our ambition:

" To establish a digital-first model for recording data, where staff view digital tools and systems as key enablers of better care and as having a positive impact on their working lives."

Alongside this we aim to create an environment where staff feel engaged with plans for digital transformation, confident in using digital tools in their roles, and assured that they can access timely support to resolve any technology-related issues. We envisage a network of digital champions who actively promote the role of digital solutions. Furthermore, the Trust will aim to continuously learn from best practices, patient feedback, and staff insights. Digital transformation will be owned and championed at the Trust Board level, with delivery delegated to appropriate sub-committees.

To achieve this, we will develop a digital communications and engagement strategy to support the digital skills and literacy requirements for our staff. This will include principles for staff engagement in digital transformation, identification of digital champions and delivery of training needs analysis to ensure staff receive the necessary resources and support.

As part of the EPR implementation we will deploy training resources and provide ongoing digital engagement and a permanent digital training function will be established. Leadership for digital transformation will be required at the Trust Board level to ensure sustained progress.

Our ambition:

" To provide QVH staff with a seamless experience when using the Trust's digital systems, regardless of where they are working, including at spoke sites."

We aim to ensure frictionless access to systems and data at the point of need, so that all users can trust they are accessing an accurate and up-to-date single source of truth. Additionally, we will strive to create end-to-end visibility of the patient journey by integrating with other local and national systems wherever possible to meet and exceed the level of digital maturity expected by NHS England and the local Integrated Care System (ICS).

To accomplish this, we will implement our Electronic Patient Record (EPR) system and conduct process mapping understand our current workflows and compare with our future requirements and optimise. We will reduce paper usage in areas not covered by the EPR and develop a comprehensive data migration strategy.

We will collaborate with partners to enhance admission and discharge processes, and we will work together to deliver digital plans developed by integrated radiology and pathology networks.

We will improve data quality, such as closing open episodes through a thorough validation process. This will require dedicated resource and ongoing training.

We will continue to focus resources on priority initiatives like Plexus and My Health and Care Record (PKB), identified at an ICS level, and work closely with our partners to deliver agreed digital improvements.

Recognising the importance of financial sustainability, we will help shape a collective response to challenges by making the best use of available resources, maximising the benefits of digital transformation, and achieving shared objectives.

Additionally, we will collaborate with our primary digital suppliers to enhance the functionality of their systems, seeking opportunities to make them more efficient and user-friendly for our staff.

Our ambition:

" To enable staff to work effectively and efficiently by providing them with the right tools and fast, secure, and reliable systems, connectivity, and devices."

Additionally, we plan to achieve net zero targets, replacement of the intranet, and launch a telephony replacement programme.

Our strategy includes addressing issues arising from the expiry of Microsoft licenses or software, implementing a number of management systems to enhance our cyber security, and reviewing and enhancing infrastructure as needed.

We will also develop a business case to support the upgrade to Microsoft Office 365 and deploy it across the Trust along with the upgrade to Windows 11.

Collaboration between digital and finance teams will optimise expenditure on technology projects.

Pillar 5 – Efficient and reliable

Our ambition:

" For QVH to have systems in place that free up clinicians' time, allowing them to spend more of it with patients, and support efficient back-office services, reducing the reliance on paper."

These systems will enable effective management of the organisation through increased visibility and transparency of information, ensuring a more streamlined and effective operation overall. To achieve this, we will implement an Electronic Patient Record (EPR) system and explore options for additional essential functionality such as E-consenting to further digitise patient processes.

As part of the EPR implementation we will identify areas that still rely on paper that will and develop a plan to address the ongoing use of paper in those areas. Additionally, we aim to optimise EPR processes and workflows, increasing integration and interoperability with partners.

Further initiatives include migrating to the Sussex ICS Integrated Clinical Environment (ICE) system. We will also create funding plans to address the lack of dedicated IT systems in Ophthalmology and the specific challenges faced in Critical Care (CCU).

The re-procurement of systems will be reviewed alongside the functionality provided by the new EPR. A systems roadmap will be created to define the future requirements.

We will introduce a new patient check-in platform to replace Enlighten and develop systems to support the Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) digital pathways. Additionally, we will continue to be national leaders in the enhancement of functionality as part of the CDC programme, including additional GP requests and on boarding.

We will support our core research and innovation ambition through the development and implementation of an innovation forum as one of the key steps to position QVH as a centre of excellence. This will be led by research and innovation, with digital input to support the required innovation. Establishing a strong emphasis on upskilling staff to ensure digital readiness, particularly in the evolving field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), is central to this. Along with improving the infrastructure at QVH, we will identify and implement digital solutions in both clinical and non-clinical services that can enhance operational efficiency and bring higher standards of patient care and safety. Finally, fostering a culture of innovation within the Trust is essential for effectively integrating digital solutions that meet the unique needs of our organisation. Empowering our teams to explore and develop these innovations through research will not only drive progress but also ensure we remain at the forefront of healthcare excellence.
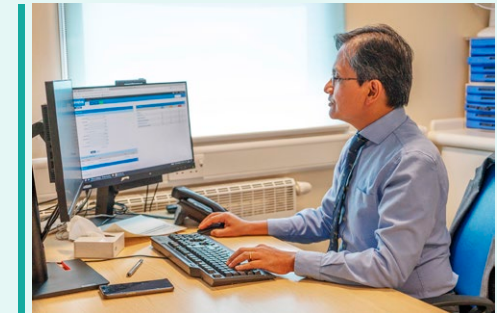
All pillars of the digital strategy will be key enablers to the success of the Trust's clinical strategy.

We recognise that providing excellent patient experience and outcomes, and staff experience, means having the right systems in place to provide the right information at the right time, in a way that is interoperable.

Similarly to the green strategy, we must enable a more 'digital' culture, to encourage engagement, but also support a paperless agenda. This will require staff support and digital skills development.

The people and culture strategy also relies on the digital strategy to improve staff experience, making workflows more efficient and reducing administrative burdens. These will contribute to a more supportive and inclusive workplace environment.

The delivery of an EPR will also enable the improvement of high-quality data reporting, on which several other strategies and initiatives are dependent, such as the health inequalities data objectives. The health inequalities strategy will also be supported by digital initiatives that make our services more accessible and inclusive, particularly for underserved communities, through increased use of remote consultations and care.

There will also be financial benefits from digital efficiencies, reducing operational costs, and delivering best value.