

Derbyshire Health Informatics Services Implements ITIL-Compliant IT Service Management





Overview

Derbyshire Health Informatics Services (DHIS), based in Derby, UK, provides leading-edge IT services for eight National Health Service (NHS) primary care trusts as well as Derbyshire Mental Health Services and Trent Strategic Health Authority. The company employs 160 people and supports some 16,000 NHS users.

Connecting for Health (CfH), the central agency responsible for the National Programme for IT (NPfIT) within the NHS, is encouraging the adoption of ITIL® best practices for IT service management—with the aim of increasing efficiencies, reducing costs, and improving services. DHIS was keen to align itself with ITIL, but its existing IT service desk solution was not flexible enough to adapt.

“As an organization that serves the public sector, we work within tight budgets, and the need to deliver ever higher levels of service points to the adoption of a framework like ITIL,” comments Daryl Barber, Customer Service Manager at DHIS. “After a very rigorous evaluation process, we began working with Avocent to deploy a solution based around LANDesk® Service Desk—helping us drive improvements in Incident and Problem Management across the board.”

Challenge

With several NHS trusts, a Strategic Health Authority, and several other NHS organizations among its key clients, DHIS has a complex IT service management challenge to solve. More than 16,000 users generate over 70,000 Incidents and Service Requests every year—and DHIS needs to be able to resolve all issues within demanding SLAs, while delivering outstanding value for public money by operating within tight budgetary constraints.

“Each of the NHS trusts has its own IT strategy, and its own specific service level agreements (SLAs) that we need to meet—which adds more complexity,” comments Daryl Barber. “We need to implement a two-level SLA approach—a baseline that would meet the general requirements of all our clients, and then a number of specific SLAs on top. This kind of flexibility was not possible with our existing service desk solution, so we began looking for a new approach.”

DHIS wanted a solution that would help it align with ITIL, the internationally recognized set of best practices for IT service management that helps organizations around the world reduce costs, improve services, enhance customer satisfaction, and standardize processes in the most efficient manner.

“ITIL isn’t a mandatory framework, but NHS Connecting for Health is keen to see it adopted across the country—and it makes sense,” says Barber. “If there’s a standardized approach to IT service management, it enables greater consistency in the way we respond to incidents, which makes it much easier to meet SLAs and improve customer satisfaction.”

Challenge

- Existing proprietary service desk software could not easily be integrated or developed in line with the organization’s ITIL strategy and with NHS Connecting for Health (CfH) guidelines.
- Derbyshire Health Informatics Services (DHIS) needed a solution that could scale to enable a small staff to handle 16,000 users and more than 70,000 incidents per year.
- The solution needed to meet tight budgetary requirements, in terms of both acquisition and ongoing costs.

Solution

- DHIS implemented LANDesk® Service Desk from Avocent and integrated it with the Microsoft Active Directory user directory.
- The in-house team customized the LANDesk® solution to extend its Problem Management capabilities to fit the company’s unique requirements.

Results

- Structured, ITIL-verified approach to Incident and Problem Management—each incident is prioritized and allocated to the right people to enable rapid resolution.
- All work done by the service desk is accurately tracked and recorded, facilitating audits and enabling accurate apportioning of workload to the relevant customers.
- Flexible, open platform makes it easy for in-house team to extend the solution without expensive development work.
- SLA performance in excess of 99 percent, ensuring customer satisfaction.

Solution

DHIS began a rigorous procurement process, selecting the top 10 vendors recommended by the IT Service Management Forum and the Service Desk Institute in the UK and sending them invitations to tender.

“We set up a panel including members of our own senior management, our IT team, and stakeholders from all areas of the business,” comments Daryl Barber. “The panel reviewed all the proposals and selected four to take part in a full tendering process. We drew up a very comprehensive list of specifications, and the vendors set up demos to show how their solutions could meet our requirements. Each member of the panel spent time with each of the four systems, rating them for usability, functionality, and performance—and in the end, we had two clear favorites.

“The other criterion was references. Only two of the 10 vendors had experience of working with the NHS—and when we visited their customers, only one solution was recommended. This was one of the two products we had shortlisted, which gave us confidence that we were making the right choice.”

The solution DHIS selected was LANDesk® Service Desk from Avocent, an ITIL-verified IT service management solution that provides comprehensive tracking, prioritization, and allocation of all reported incidents. When a user calls or emails the service desk to report a fault, a new incident is created in the system, and data is drawn from various sources to help IT staff resolve the issue as quickly and effectively as possible.

“For example, we have integrated LANDesk Service Desk with our Microsoft Active Directory system, which gives the service desk a comprehensive and accurate list of users,” says Barber. “This enables us to log incidents and requests against the users who reported them, helping us to follow up appropriately.”

The solution uses a sophisticated matrix to determine the severity and business impact of each problem, and prioritize the workload effectively—ensuring that the most urgent and important issues are resolved first. It also uses a defined hierarchy to allocate tasks to the most appropriate people—starting with front-line service desk staff, and escalating through to particular technical experts and senior managers as appropriate.

“The openness and flexibility of the LANDesk platform is a huge advantage,” says Barber. “Without any need to buy in external consultancy, I have been able to customize and extend the solution to complement the out-of-the-box Incident Management functionalities, and introduce Problem and Change Management into the system.”

Problem Management helps improve communications within the service desk, allowing engineers to build up a full picture of underlying problems in the infrastructure and provide reports to managers and customers.

“Previously, if we had a situation where a single problem was causing lots of users to contact the service desk, logging all these incidents could be counterproductive. The engineers who were trying to fix the problem would be continually bombarded with more and more complaints from users, distracting them from the task at hand. By introducing a sophisticated Problem Management system that is fully integrated with the Incident Management solution, we can work much more effectively. Front-line staff can handle the interaction with users, while technical experts focus on resolving the issue.”



“With its highly granular reporting features, ITIL®-compliant processes, and comprehensive record of all IT service management-related activities, LANDesk® Service Desk helps us maintain our credibility with customers and regulators, and ultimately enables us to provide the best possible service to the NHS and the wider public.”

Daryl Barber
Customer Service Manager
Derbyshire Health Informatics Services

Results

“Our SLA performance has always been extremely high—better than 99 percent,” comments Daryl Barber. “The LANDesk solution helps us maintain this high level of customer satisfaction, while considerably improving our ability to analyze and report on our own internal processes.”

He concludes: “We are among the top-rated NHS accredited service desks—the first to accredit out of 394 across the NHS—and achieving this rating isn’t just about resolving problems quickly; it’s about demonstrating that you have the tools and processes in place to run an efficient operation and meet CfH requirements within tight budgetary constraints. With its highly granular reporting features, ITIL-compliant processes, and comprehensive record of all IT service management-related activities, the LANDesk solution helps us maintain our credibility with customers and regulators, and ultimately enables us to provide the best possible service to the NHS and the wider public.”

About Avocent Corporation

Avocent delivers IT operations and infrastructure management solutions for enterprises worldwide, helping customers to reduce costs and simplify complex IT environments via integrated, centralized in-band and out-of-band hardware and software. Through LANDesk, Avocent also is a leading provider of systems, security, and process management solutions. Additional information is available at: www.avocent.com.

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