



Case Study: Implementing Test and Assurance Framework in Leading NHS Trust

Introduction

The NHS is going through a digital transformation like no other. The complexities of the organisational model along with the cutting-edge technology being introduced makes this an exciting yet difficult prospect. Over recent years this was most apparent within NHS Trusts who were not only attempting to deliver on their digital transformation commitments, but were trying to do so during the most significant pandemic of a life time.

Attest Digital were approached by Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust as they attempted to implement a new version of their Electronic Patient Record solution. The Trust knew there were risks in what they were attempting, not least the migration of data from one solution to another. They wanted to make sure that the data migration, the new functionality and the infrastructure on which the new solution would sit was tested thoroughly such that there was confidence in the implementation.

The Trust knew that Attest were experts in the field, and specifically requested help in setting the test strategy. They wanted a test and assurance framework that could fit in with their delivery processes, adding confidence throughout the lifetime of the programme. They were keen to put something in place that was pro-active rather than re-active so that every participant in the organisation could be assured of the quality of the delivery.

The Challenge

Initially focusing on the data migration, Attest were asked to look at the current approach to test and assurance.

Whilst the migration looked simple on paper, the EPR solution supplier was ploughing ahead with the delivery plan giving the Trust little opportunity to test. The Trust knew how they wanted to check the data once it was migrated but did not know how to do this in a controlled way to ensure the quality was there. Attest's first impression was that the approach to data migration testing felt rushed and unstructured.

On further investigation, this was evidently true across all aspects of the EPR upgrade. The onus of functional testing was being put on the Trust rather than the supplier, and non-functional testing had not yet been planned.

The Trust were aware of Attest's reputation in implementing pragmatic test processes that did not impact timescales, but did allow participants to assess quality and be fully informed of the risk of upgrading. This level of assurance keeps all participants informed, allows decisions at all levels to be made seamlessly, and allows both suppliers and customers to work collaboratively to achieve the common goal. This approach was just what the Trust was looking for.

Our Input

Attest's initial input was to identify areas that required some attention and highlight a series of recommendations. These were:

1. Supplier assurance – introduce change control and test entry/exit criteria; introduce checks on supplier deliverables prior to Trust test activities
2. Test scope – participants to define what needs to be tested (the scope of the test) and what the priorities are prior to starting to test
3. Test processes – ensure robust defect management and test reporting is in place
4. Agile use of resources – be creative yet pragmatic; user participation in test activities, wise use of test environments and test data

With the backdrop of “the horse has started to bolt” Attest helped the Trust to work out the art of the possible. What could be introduced to put more confidence in the implementation? How can the Exec Board be assured that the implementation is safe to proceed?

Attest's test framework included the basics – clear definitions of the test phases, introduction of a defect management process and test reporting, introduction of test readiness checks.

But Attest also enabled the Trust to challenge more. Not just the supplier, but also their own people – what is the risk, what are the priorities, what does good look like? And this was key. By taking a step back and asking “what do we want to get out of this”, Attest enabled the Trust to get some clarity on what they wanted to achieve and how they were going to achieve it.

The Results

After just a few weeks, the Trust's EPR implementation programme manager was commenting on a renewed clarity to their approach to testing. The Trust's digital team had taken that step back and were thinking about how to test each data migration run. They were thinking about how they could include tests on the new functionality, thus saving time and effort. And the infrastructure and application team were considering the non-functional implications of the implementation. And a renewed collaborative approach with the supplier meant that all aspects of test and assurance were ensuring quality was at the forefront of the delivery.

Putting confidence in an upgrade such as this via a test and assurance framework that is structured yet pragmatic allows participants at all levels be assured that risks have been identified and

mitigated. Within a backdrop of patient safety, and a beleaguered organisation coping with a global pandemic, this assurance is essential to a successful delivery.

Looking forward

Attest provided further clarity on functional integration and non-functional testing, and provided the Exec Board with a thorough assurance statement outlining the outstanding risk. The Trust can take the test processes implemented by Attest forward to achieve a successful delivery.

Attest are confident that the test and assurance framework they have implemented can be adapted for any organisation in both the private and public sectors, especially in a post-pandemic world where people are wary but keen to move forwards.

If you wish to speak further about how we can help your organisation then please contact us at info@attest-digital.co.uk and we would be glad to help.