

Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust chooses iD infrastructure management

Over the last two years Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust has been upgrading its local infrastructures, including the replacement of all network communications equipment and the replacement and/or upgrade of all existing structured cabling. With around 140 sites, some accommodating as many as 2,000 staff, this was an ambitious project. Recording moves and changes in structured cabling installations, and their compliance against approved standards, is crucial for effective infrastructure management, but often finding the right method is a challenge.



Without a reliable documentation system, change control and the auditing of moves and changes becomes a headache. Manual patching records are, for large or multi-site organisations like Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, difficult to manage and error-prone. Even where PC-based spreadsheet systems are involved, their lack of portability makes mistakes during the transfer of information more likely. Instead of being able to update information at the time of a change, technicians have to wait until they are back at their desks to do the documentation, which increases the likelihood of distraction or error.

Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust needed a network management tool flexible enough to handle all of their sites and buildings, that was built on proven technology and accessible from all 140 sites, preferably using portable handheld computers. HellermannTyton's iD system proved the perfect solution. It is Network Manager James Smith's job to supervise the existing structured cabling and data network infrastructure of the various sites, as well as the recent upgrade. James says: "I need records of every single structured cabling installation and its compliance against approved standards.

"Prior to the implementation of iD we were attempting to manage our structured cabling infrastructure using electronic test results from cable test equipment. We were also in the process of building our own local database to record structured cabling installations with a link to test results. Thankfully we only got as far as creating a data dictionary." HellermannTyton's iD solution combines barcoded patch panels, patch cords and faceplates with a powerful portable software platform using pocket PCs and barcode scanners. The barcode on the iD connectivity components, and other network assets such as computers, printers, and telephones, makes traceability easy and allows IT managers complete management of their cabling and network infrastructure from anywhere on or off site. iD enables IT managers to select any port within the network and view connectivity components (patch panel outlets, patch cords, etc.). It can also be used to monitor active equipment in order to maintain accurate visibility of equipment utilisation, information on the hardware platform and any software installed on it, view floor plan locations of all equipment and power supply connections to that equipment. Graeme Wagg, iD Product Manager, HellermannTyton, explains: "In recent years active patching systems have entered the market, offering real-time monitoring of connections by means of computer software and active patch panels.

Despite the availability of such solutions, many organisations still resort to error-prone manual methods because of the limited options and high cost associated with active patching – up to 60% more than a traditional fully installed cabling system. “iD bucks this trend by making infrastructure and cabling management portable, allowing IT managers to view and document their entire network when and where they need it.” Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust’s sites are a combination of Trust-owned, leased, or shared with other local partnership organisations; social services departments from both Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, primary care trusts, acute hospitals, Nottinghamshire Police and local housing associations. All of the 140 sites have a dedicated Wide Area Network connection back to one of two major computing centres.



Picture shows Arnold’s Lodge, one of the Nottingham Healthcare NHS Trust sites

James says: “It was the portability, practicality and affordability offered by iD’s intelligent infrastructure management technology that made it the right choice. “We were already in the process of reviewing our procedures, and iD is now integral to our improved way of working. iD is very powerful; the database records all our infrastructure data and is built around proven technology. We have not experienced any problems coexisting with existing hardware and software.”

iD has been vital to the implementation of change control within the Corporate IT Department. It now has access to all its wiring records from remote sites. The capacity of its structured cabling and network equipment is available instantly. The increased visibility of the structured cabling system has also led to an increase in service desk incidents being resolved on the first visit. “With iD we now have visibility of our physical structured cabling system, and can also identify used and unused switchports on all of our network equipment using the iD connections”, explains James. “This information was previously unavailable to staff outside of the network team. “HellermannTyton provided advice and recommendations on building our iD database, and the implementation was made easier by the industry standard platform that iD uses.” Research shows that ineffective management of network infrastructure can cost large companies more than £1/4 million per year in downtime, labour and wasted infrastructure – all of which is avoidable. Using iD can recoup these costs and overcome the limitations of error-prone, manual, paper-based patching records and other active patching solutions currently available. All NHS Trusts face similar pressures in increasing value for money and producing per performance data related to their provision of services. iD assists in producing performance data and gives visibility of wiring data to other IT disciplines to assist in their work, this in turn assists in the increase in the number of service desk incidents that are resolved on the first visit.