

# Enabling GDEs to drive digital maturity – translating policy into practice

By Dan Johnston

## **Global Digital Exemplars – what are they and why do we need them?**

Healthcare is currently experiencing unprecedented challenges and rate of change, and technology offers a phenomenal opportunity to facilitate service improvement and transformation. An opportunity is presenting to advance patient outcomes, quality, and experience even while service demand and expectation is outstripping resources and investment. This dichotomy is playing out in the NHS with well documented pockets of innovation showing the ‘art of the possible’ in a highly pressurised environment. The innovation seen to date has produced new models of exemplary care delivery as demonstrated in NHS test beds for combined innovation, but it has also highlighted barriers to adoption and progress. For example, clinicians have many different systems that provide patient information, but gaining access to those systems can be time consuming, cumbersome and repetitive, leading to less than optimal clinical workflows, compliance, and security.

The Global Digital Exemplar (GDE) programme is a leading national government initiative designed to deliver meaningful technology that has significant capability to drive extensive care efficiencies and support by using digital technology. GDEs are intended to transition specific English hospitals into internationally recognized digital pioneers in healthcare that actively champion high levels of digital maturity. 15 acute GDEs and seven mental health GDEs have been nominated, and there is now a programme of ‘fast follower’ trusts which is ‘hot housing’ deliverable technology-enabled health services. In short, GDEs are trailblazing digital maturity within the NHS, actively tasked with being models for proliferating tried, tested, and effective digital technologies capable of engaging with modern day challenges.

## **Digital maturity**

So called ‘digital maturity’ is a pathway that is evolving during an era of personal digitisation that has empowered the individual, disrupted the world of business, and befuddled government. The civil service and its departments have been slow to understand how to champion the citizen, and that includes patients in our healthcare system. The burgeoning concept of citizen-centric data is driving governments to become more transparent, accessible, and responsive, but such progress in the UK healthcare system is stifled by limited investment, complex regulation, and a gap in scalable solutions.

The concept of digital healthcare policy has been innovative and rapid in the UK and the US, some would say leading the way in defining digital maturity, but translating these policies into practical initiatives that have tangible meaning for patient outcomes is still very much work in progress in the UK. This is where the new GDEs are so valuable.

### **Patient-centric approach**

The concept of paperless healthcare is an accepted goal, but achieving this by 2020 or even 2023 (as recommended in the Wachter Review published in September 2016) is still daunting for the majority of trusts. However, improving services with digital transformation is not about simply digitising paper, it is about a patient-centric approach, the design of which has input from all key stakeholders with a focus on embedding safety, quality, and experience.

The relaunch of the Digital Maturity Assessment, the GDEs, and the fast follower programme is not only delivering tangible results in the provision of citizen-centric healthcare, but it is also a catalyst for re-imagining the workflow of healthcare staff who deliver that care. This digital innovation has the potential to be an enabler for transformation, placing the patient at the centre of healthcare as the common denominator for policy, clinicians, managers, and government.

### **Data is the lifeblood**

A key component in the adoption of patient-centred healthcare services based on digital technology is data. Clinicians need fast and secure access to patient information to deliver safe care. In addition, the necessity of data interpretation, analysis, and transactions supports all digital transformation. To be most effective, the technology used must be invisible to the end user. Imprivata is working with many of the GDEs to help facilitate transformation by removing duplication and waste, focusing on the gap in service that can be supported by deployment of the right technology.

