

# improving patient care in a cost-cutting economy

## A transformation framework

**In today's NHS the overriding challenge is to balance the delivery of high-quality care with the imperative to reduce costs.**

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust faces more challenges than most. Serving an ageing population in a relatively deprived area, it operates under huge pressure on services.

Following a red risk-rating from the health regulator, the Trust's new Chief Executive would accept no compromises. She commissioned Atos because she believed that financial and performance targets must be met while improving the quality of patients' experience.

Achieving this in such an intense and complex system as a hospital brought huge challenges - not least engaging a fractious group of stakeholders across the health economy. In particular they successfully enabled clinician-led change while listening to the voice of the patient.

Atos helped the Trust overcome the systemic barriers typical of many health economies. Together they designed and implemented wide-scale, ongoing change designing new care pathways to deliver service improvements while creating efficiencies. Through Atos' approach, the ability to balance patient experience with meeting targets was made tangible.

As a result the Trust is meeting its financial, performance and outcome targets and is well on target to save 10% of its total budget (£25 million) by 2012-13.

Atos helped the Trust to create the necessary momentum and work with stakeholders to solve problems that otherwise they had not the time, skills nor collective will to address.



# Atos

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# Savings from projects delivered represent an 8:1 return on investment in consulting, totalling around £5.7 million recurring savings so far.

## The Challenge

The Trust serves around 400,000 people and comprises a PFI acute general hospital and two outpatient centres. It faces intense pressures, with limited capacity for community-based care in the area. Under the national NHS agenda Quality, Innovation, Productivity, Prevention (QIPP), it must save 10% of its total budget (£25 million) by 2012-13.

In late 2009 the Trust was under severe financial strain. Impacts on patient care were surfacing. Specifically the health regulator Monitor had assigned a red risk-rating because only 88% (against a 98% national target) of patients arriving at A&E were being treated and admitted or discharged within four hours.

The Trust faced an urgent requirement to meet the competing demands of improving quality of care and delivering sustainable cost savings.

## The Solution

In Autumn 2009 the Trust commissioned Atos urgently to address its failure against the four-hour target.

Atos' approach was that in a complex health economy, problems cannot be solved by looking at one element in isolation. The team needed to analyse what was happening beyond A&E, not least how bed-stock across the economy was being managed. Atos fielded a team to:

- ▶ conduct a detailed analysis of the flow of urgent-care patients from A&E to discharge home or to another institution
- ▶ support implementation of the necessary changes.

## Competing pressures

Solving the problem meant engaging with many stakeholders, including ambulance services, nursing homes, local authorities, social services and patient groups. Each had their own cultures, systems and structures. All were under intense pressure from targets, cost-cutting, lack of time, scepticism and change fatigue. A previous improvement programme by the Trust had floundered after only five months, due partly to a failure to engage senior clinicians.

- ▶ There seemed little systematic accountability for a patient's treatment programme. One case could be assessed very differently by different stakeholders (for example whether it was urgent) because they used different metrics.
- ▶ Serious imbalances existed within the system - with different sets of performance targets and funding criteria, sometimes working in conflict.
- ▶ With only anecdotal evidence of what needed to improve, combined with pessimism about change, there was a parochial focus on performance targets.
- ▶ Historically, data had been difficult to capture and share between agencies, which made joint decision-making difficult. Uncertainty about its accuracy increased tensions.

## Overcoming barriers

Atos worked with every stakeholder group to build the most detailed picture of patient-flow from admission to discharge that this health economy had ever had. Throughout, Atos measured the Trust's operational and financial performance against targets according to the criteria set out in QIPP.

A key innovation was their addition of two criteria: patient experience and staff engagement, which the Trust now calls QIPP+2. While these indicators are inherent in QIPP at a national level, this was the first time they had been made explicit and is unique to this Trust. This established:

- ▶ the critical importance of the patients' voice in any aspect of hospital delivery
- ▶ the imperative to get clinical leadership and engagement in the change.

Together the Trust and its stakeholders broke through entrenched positions to get a whole view from the patients' perspective. As a result they could see new opportunities for making changes they could believe in.

## Creating consensus

In August 2009 the team held a major event with senior stakeholders from across the health economy.

Atos presented the team's analysis, with a compelling case for transforming all parts of the Trust. Atos' focus wasn't just on the Trust itself; it made the case for reconfiguring service provision across the health economy.

The Trust saw what changes were needed far beyond A&E to meet the four-hour target. This was revolutionary.

Recognising transformation as the key to meeting the challenges of QIPP+2, the Trust decided, with Atos' help, to simultaneously:

- ▶ embark on an ambitious programme to transform A&E
- ▶ replicate the success of the urgent-care analysis across the whole Trust to initiate a wholesale transformation.

## Transforming A&E

Between October 2009 and March 2010 Atos led a joint team to transform A&E.

This meant addressing problems across the Trust ranging from inappropriate attendances and better work-flows at A&E, to improving discharges from acute beds by working more effectively with community partners.

A safer, better patient experience is at the heart of the transformation process. The team created a 'voice of the patient' by talking to patient groups. Atos transferred to the Trust's team skills in lean thinking and whole-systems analysis, including detailed benchmarking of best-practice.

The ability to balance patient experience with meeting targets was made tangible. This transformation became the model for the other 18 projects. However, to create long-term empowerment within the Trust, these would be implemented by the Trust's own staff, with advice and support from Atos.



**This is an example of consulting delivering far beyond initial investment to deliver major financial, cultural, organisational benefits in the NHS.**

“Against all odds, during the worst winter for 20 years, with Atos we successfully turned round A&E. This was the start of the transformation journey we’re now on with their support.

Working with the NHS isn’t easy. Atos overcame the barriers through their knowledge, experience and sheer determination to show there is a better way for staff and patients. We’re now seeing major changes in the way teams are working.

There is a buzz around the Trust. Transformation is embedding itself and building an enthusiasm to go further in delivering a new future as the NHS continues to evolve.”

**Paula Clark**

**Chief Executive, Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust**

### Aligning the strategy

While the A&E transformation project was underway, Atos worked intensively with the executive team to:

- ▶ articulate the compelling case for strategic change (making innovative use of a resident artist)
- ▶ develop a new strategic framework and business-planning cycle aligned at all levels with QIPP+2.

This work shaped the future strategic direction of the Trust.

### Whole-hospital analysis

Atos carried out a vast data-analysis exercise and developed a model of the whole Trust using the same processes as before.

In May 2010 Atos presented the results to over 60 senior Trust employees including clinical directors, directors, matrons, the chaplaincy, general managers, PFI partners, clinicians and nursing staff.

This was the most comprehensive analysis of the whole Trust that had ever been produced.

- ▶ With its detail and sophistication, this was one data set everyone could agree on – across functions, organisations and regions
- ▶ So forensic was the use of data that individual nursing homes, or post codes were analysed
- ▶ Real-life problems were highlighted which previously hadn’t even been reported.

The attendees selected a portfolio of 18 Trust-wide strategic transformation projects which together would meet the Trust’s QIPP+2 targets for 2010-11, as a foundation for meeting strategic objectives to 2015.

### Preparing for transformation

In parallel Atos assessed the Trust’s readiness for transformation, identifying that:

- ▶ key clinical and non-clinical managers weren’t yet exhibiting the behaviours needed to implement major change (for example creating necessary urgency)
- ▶ lack of accountability – both internally and with external stakeholders – did not engender the trust and collaboration needed to sustain the transformation.

### Developing leaders

Atos worked with the Trust to shape a leadership development and coaching programme to embed the necessary skills and behaviours within the Trust.

This was innovative in its design (built around the Trust’s strategic objectives and culture) and through the inclusion of the critical layer of middle managers needed to champion and sustain major transformation.

### Creating accountability

Atos supported the Trust’s executive team in demonstrating its accountability for the transformation. This included a comprehensive performance management framework, linked to the transformation. Through this, strategic, team and individual objectives are now aligned and cascaded. This constitutes unprecedented alignment and transparency of goals and accountabilities at all levels.

### Delivering transformation

18 priority projects have each been implemented by teams of clinicians and non-clinicians using the same lean transformation methodology – all supported and coached by Atos.

With 40-year contracts, PFI arrangements could obstruct change. Atos helped the Trust negotiate win-wins with its PFI partner to make improvements.

To ensure the change is sustainable, Atos trained the Trust’s newly formed Lean Transformation team, comprising 25 nurses, business analysts, back-office and financial specialists. This team supports the Trust’s change projects, validating delivery against standards and monitoring progress.

## Client relationships

Success depended on Atos' close partnership with the Trust at all levels.

- ▶ Momentum and high levels of personal commitment by the Trust's executive team were visible to all stakeholders
- ▶ Atos engaged the clinical community throughout, closely involving them in key decisions
- ▶ Atos focused on enabling the Trust itself to deliver change, with relatively few contracted days spread over long periods of time, providing specialist advice where needed
- ▶ Atos established credibility early at all levels through specialist knowledge and robust data analysis.

“Atos is by far the best management consultancy I've worked with. Their engagement with the Trust has been far-reaching.”

**Richard Beeken**

Director of Operations and Transformation,  
Dudley Group

“Atos recognised the spiritual dimension that's intrinsic to healthcare. This is refreshing, exciting and very affirming. It identifies the need to resource the emotional and spiritual cost of caring - a model for others to aspire to.”

**Mark Stobert**

Chaplaincy Team Leader, Dudley Group

## The Benefits

With its new strategic framework and the transformation methodology and skills in place, the Trust is equipped to meet the ongoing challenges of major government-led NHS reform.

The programme to transform A&E delivered against its objectives. By January 2010 the Trust was sustainably meeting its target of 98% of patients against the four-hour target. Lengths of stay in A&E reduced by an average of 12%.

The wider transformation is delivering ongoing, sustainable, replicable improvements and meeting the Trust's targets against QIPP+2. It has also enabled the Trust to meet more recent imperatives against performance and outcome measures. The Trust is well on target to save 10% of its total budget (£25 million) by 2012-13.

## Next steps

For further information, please call 020 7830 4444 or visit [uk.atos.net](http://uk.atos.net)

# About Atos

Atos is an international information technology services company with annual 2010 pro forma revenues of EUR 8.6 billion and 74,000 employees in 42 countries at the end of September 2011. Serving a global client base, it delivers hi-tech transactional services, consulting and technology services, systems integration and managed services. With its deep technology expertise and industry knowledge, it works with clients across the following market sectors: Manufacturing, Retail, Services; Public, Health & Transport; Financial Services; Telecoms, Media & Technology; Energy & Utilities.

Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organizations to create their firm of the future. It is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic Games and is quoted on the Paris Eurolist Market. Atos operates under the brands Atos, Atos Consulting and Technology Services, Atos Worldline and Atos Worldgrid. For more information, visit: [atos.net](http://atos.net)