

London NHS trust turns to secure messaging tech to help 10,000 staff amid Coronavirus epidemic

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust deploys Hospify to help professionals communicate, and to broadcast important messages to staff.

The first ever secure clinical messaging app to be approved for the NHS Apps Library has been made available to more than 10,000 employees at a major London NHS trust, in a bid to help staff communicate with each other and with patients more effectively during the COVID-19 crisis.

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust, which provides care for more than a million people across its four hospitals and number of community services, has worked with health tech start-up Hospify to make the company's secure messaging app available to thousands of staff across its organisation.

The platform, which became the first general-use medical messaging app to be approved by NHS Digital for the official NHS Apps Library in early March, was co-founded and developed by NHS vascular surgeon Neville Dastur and former technology journalist James Flint, known for covering digital developments and developing online tools for outlets including Wired, the BBC, and the Telegraph.

Hospify will allow teams at London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust to coordinate and message each other instantly using their mobile devices, whilst keeping communication secure and compliant with data protection rules. Teams can create chat groups, talk directly, and contact external parties to help share information safely and instantly at a time when close interaction is being reduced and many staff and patients are in self-isolation.

Sonia Patel, chief information officer at London North West Healthcare NHS Trust said: "Hospify's approved messaging app provides our people with a critical communication channel at what is an extraordinarily challenging time. Rolling-out this service not only helps our teams to communicate at a time when normal interactions are more challenging but is a step in a wider strategy to improve our digital offering to all health and social care staff."

The Hospify app offers similar functionality to popular consumer messaging apps. Staff using the app will be able to take part in one-to-one and group messaging and exchange unlimited text and photo messages, with additional features to protect privacy such as a built-in passcode, the masking of personal details such as phone numbers or email addresses, and no harvesting of behavioural or other metadata that could otherwise be resold for marketing or advertising purposes.

For clinical teams and trust management, the Hospify Hub online admin portal helps with onboarding staff and provides the trust with the ability to broadcast important messages and document attachments to keep staff quickly apprised of new developments. This can be used to communicate with the trust's entire staff or to target individual teams and shifts, without the need for people to have access to a PC.

James Flint, CEO of Hospify, said: "The onset of coronavirus has underlined the growing importance effective digital clinical communications. Though consumer alternatives do exist, our healthcare professionals need access to technologies built for their needs, technologies that are easy to use and that they know they can trust to keep sensitive information secure, that can maintain privacy for staff and patients, and that have been rigorously tested and approved for the NHS."

Since the Covid-19 outbreak hit the UK, Hospify has seen a rapid growth in use, and has been downloaded by healthcare professionals spread across more than 150 hospitals and other clinical sites across the country, where it is helping improve data compliance by encouraging clinicians to stop sharing sensitive health data using consumer messaging applications.

NHS Wales, Devon CCG and individual NHS trusts including London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust, Lincolnshire Community NHS Trust, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust and South Tyneside NHS Trust have also all signed off the app for use by their employees.

Neville Dastur, chief technology officer at Hospify, added: “Thousands of health professionals and patients are now using our technology, confident that they can communicate safely and quickly with all the ease and efficiency of the best consumer messaging apps, but without any compromise to their data or privacy.”

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Editor’s notes:

About Hospify

Hospify is a compliant, trusted healthcare messaging app that anyone can use. It was designed in close consultation with the Information Commissioner’s Office to ensure compliance with both UK data protection laws surrounding health data and the GDPR. The free version of Hospify is available right now on via the Apple and Android mobile app stores and is in daily use at over 150 clinical sites around the country.

Hospify encrypts and deliver messages from phone to phone and then deletes the messages from its servers, so the only copies are in the phones of the people in the conversation or group; even here, messages are automatically deleted after 30 days.

Hospify is compliant with the latest National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) Evidence Standard Framework for Digital Health Technology (March 2019, <https://www.nice.org.uk/about/what-we-do/our-programmes/evidence-standards-framework-for-digital-health-technologies>).

In line with the NICE guidelines, Hospify contracts a clinical safety officer and maintains a DCB0129 Clinical Safety Case Report that provides the assurances that the Hospify app is clinically safe in the context of the NHS Digital clinical safety standards.

The Hospify Hub is available via the Crown Commercial Service digital marketplace (aka G-Cloud 11) and through the London Procurement Partnership DPS.

Useful links:

- Hospify’s website: <https://www.hospify.com>
- Hospify on Twitter: @hospifyapp
- Hospify in the NHS App Library: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/hospify/>
- Hospify’s ORCHA reviews: <https://appfinder.orchha.co.uk/review/186774/> <https://appfinder.orchha.co.uk/review/42639/>
- Hospify on G-Cloud: <https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/g-cloud/services/780175613809074>
- Hospify’s Compliance Pack (for NHS Trusts and other customers): <https://www.hospify.com/client-resources>
- Hospify’s Press pack, including downloadable images and logos: <https://www.hospify.com/press>
- Hospify’s main public point of contact: info@hospify.com