The Department of Health and Social Care has published 'a plan for digital health and social care' that aims to digitise trusts, create lifelong shared care records, develop new digital services for patients, and accelerate digital transformation.

Ewa Truchanowicz, the managing director of Dignio, commented: "There is a lot to be optimistic about in the new strategy. I like the focus on the basics, such as rolling out electronic patient records. The absence of EPRs is shocking in this day and age – it is impossible to deliver co-ordinated care if everybody is working on their own paper files.

"At the same time, I like the focus on scale. Dignio uses technology to bring patients and clinicians closer together, through an app and remote monitoring platform. When NHS England published its operational priorities and planning guidance at the start of the year, it said it wanted every integrated care system to set up 40-50 virtual ward beds per 100,000 people in their population.

"That focused attention on the development of virtual wards, and the new strategy wants to build on that, to create step-down and step-up pathways for patients who might otherwise be treated in hospital. That's good, because we don't need pilots to prove that 'remote works'; Covid proved that it does, and now we need to deploy at pace and at scale.

"Two more things I like are the focus on standards, and on enforcing their use, and the commitment to reducing the number of digital procurement frameworks. Companies that want to work with the NHS should be willing to invest in meeting national standards, because they are so important to patient safety.

"And reducing the number of procurement frameworks should help SMEs, by making sure that commissioners who are looking for best in class systems know where to find them. Finally, I like the strategy's recognition of sustainability. The last thing we want is to see the NHS digitise and introduce the health tech equivalent of Bitcoin mining in the process!

"However, I have one concern, and that is how the strategy will be translated into frameworks and services on the ground. 'A plan for digital health and care' talks about forming partnerships with the private sector, which is great, unless rules are put around those partnerships that exclude smaller companies.

"For example, a requirement for a certain level of turnover can push the NHS into working with a few, big organisations; and that is not good for the market or the taxpayer. So, I'm optimistic about the strategy, but as it is implemented, the NHS needs to make sure that it remains open to the agile, innovative suppliers it will need."

Dignio was established in 2010 with an ambition to impact healthcare systems and the lives of patients globally. Its mission is to make healthcare less dependent on time on place, to give patients more information about their health and care, to improve outcomes, to enable healthcare providers to operate more efficiently, and to enable healthcare to become smarter and more sustainable.

Dignio enables patients to monitor their conditions and communicate with their clinical teams through an app. Clinicians use a web-based portal, Dignio Prevent, to monitor patient information with the support of automatic triage tools. Dignio is working with forward-thinking NHS organisations and local authorities on virtual ward and remote monitoring projects.