

Greater Manchester Pathology Network works with Clinisys on an integrated, interoperable LIMS service

Four trusts will deploy a standardised, interfaced version of WinPath Enterprise to support collaboration and lay the foundation for further innovation

Four trusts in the Greater Manchester Pathology Network are working to deploy Clinisys' laboratory information management system (LIMS) in a way that will enable them to work more collaboratively and improve services for clinicians and patients.

In a series of tenders, Tameside, Stockport, Bolton, and Northern Care Alliance (NCA) NHS Trusts have all awarded Clinisys for their WinPath LIMS, and plans are now being developed to interface the systems to create an "integrated, interoperable LIMS service" across the network.

Katie Moss, programme director for the Greater Manchester Pathology Network, said: "The idea is that there should be a standardised system at each organisation and a standard interface across Greater Manchester, so we can view patient results in the Greater Manchester Care Record (GMCR) from all electronic patient records (EPRs).

"That should help to reduce unwarranted variation in the way tests are conducted and reported, supporting a more collaborative way of working. It should also make it easier for clinicians to see if a patient has had a test taken already, so they can avoid repeating the test or use the results to reach a faster diagnosis or treatment decision."

The Greater Manchester Pathology Network is one of the largest pathology networks in England. It serves an estimated 2.8 million people from a total of seven NHS Trusts. Collectively, they conduct more than 71.4 million tests every year. Despite this, the area's laboratories are currently working with a mix of laboratory information management systems, some of which have reached the end of their life.

Now, work is underway to make sure these systems use the same test lists, coding and naming conventions. Katie Moss added: "The new LIMS service will open up a lot of opportunities across Greater Manchester.

"We have talked about more collaborative working for a long time, and during Covid-19 it really started to happen. Nobody wanted to have to go through a pandemic, but it did encourage pathology services to work together. Now, we want to work on the same platform, using the same workflow, so we can help each other, deliver the benefits of system-wide reporting, and level up across the region."

The new approach will also support the development of the network. In response to two reports by Lord Carter of Coles, NHS England has been encouraging laboratories to form pathology networks to improve efficiency and quality.

It has also developed a maturity matrix for networks that says they should have modern IT systems in place by the end of 2024-25 - which is when the trusts in the Greater Manchester Pathology Network are planning to have the new LIMS service in place.

Phil Bell, digital systems lead for the Greater Manchester Pathology Network commented: “The four laboratories are working closely together to share knowledge which will accelerate the implementation and maximise the functionality of the new LIMS.

“The standardisation of test and profile descriptions, along with the common interfaces to EPR systems and the GMCR, will provide a user-friendly view of pathology results for all Greater Manchester clinicians. This marks an important advance in pathology standardisation and demonstrates how the benefits can be realised downstream from the lab systems.”

Tony Oliver, programme director and clinical safety officer at Clinisys, said: “Greater Manchester Pathology Network is a big and a complex environment to be working in, but we are fully committed to supporting its emerging approach to harmonising working practices and encouraging collaboration across the system.

“We have a master build for Clinisys WinPath that encourages standardisation, based on best practice from laboratories across the UK. That should help the network to realise its ambitions, while enabling trusts to customise the LIMS to work for them.

“It’s great to see that clinicians in Greater Manchester are starting to work together on a vision of what an interoperable LIMS service could do for them and their patients. There are significant efficiency and quality benefits to be achieved, and we look forward to helping to deliver them.”

ENDS

About Clinisys

Clinisys enables healthier and safer communities as a global provider of intelligent diagnostic informatics solutions and expertise that redefine the modern laboratory across healthcare, life sciences, public health and safety. Millions of laboratory results and data insights are generated every day using Clinisys’ platform and cloud-based solutions in over 3,000 laboratories across 34 countries.

About the Greater Manchester Pathology Network

The Greater Manchester Pathology Network is a collaborative network across seven Greater Manchester NHS provider organisations which include:

- Bolton NHS Foundation Trust
- The Christie NHS Foundation Trust
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
- Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust
- Stockport NHS Foundation Trust
- Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Wroughtington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The network strives to deliver better patient care across clinical and diagnostic pathways and address health inequalities across the region.