



Summary

CUSTOMER

MERIT

CHALLENGE

Coordinate care and information sharing for mental health patients

OUTCOME

Clinicians empowered with real-time information

Patients better supported throughout care pathway

Created a blueprint for wider integrated care record expansion

MERIT + InterSystems

Mental Health Project Provides Better Connected Care for Patients in Crisis

A first-of-its-kind NHS project involving four West Midlands mental health vanguard trusts – and more than 3 million patients – coordinates care for mental health patients and provides a model for the entire region

Mental health tragedy highlighted time for change in data sharing

In 2013 a Birmingham homicide investigation unearthed a fundamental flaw in the sharing of mental health data between Mental Health Services. Clinicians didn't have visibility of a person presenting at multiple Mental Health Trusts who might be heading towards a crisis or where intervention might be required. The tragedy underscored the regions' urgent challenge to tackle poor information sharing across organisational and geographical boundaries and the need to rapidly activate the necessary support and intervention service users need.



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**West Midlands
mental health
vanguard trusts**



**3 million +
patients**

In response, a consortium of Mental Health Trusts from across the West Midlands region came together to establish the only dedicated mental health data sharing network in the UK – the Mental Health Alliance for Excellence, Resilience, Innovation and Training, or MERIT. The four Mental Health Trusts – Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT), Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (BCPFT), Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust (CWPT), and Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (DWMH) – united with a common goal: to create a model of excellence in crisis care. This would be used to improve the quality and consistency of practice and ensure better collaborative working with the long-term aspiration of producing a replicable blueprint.

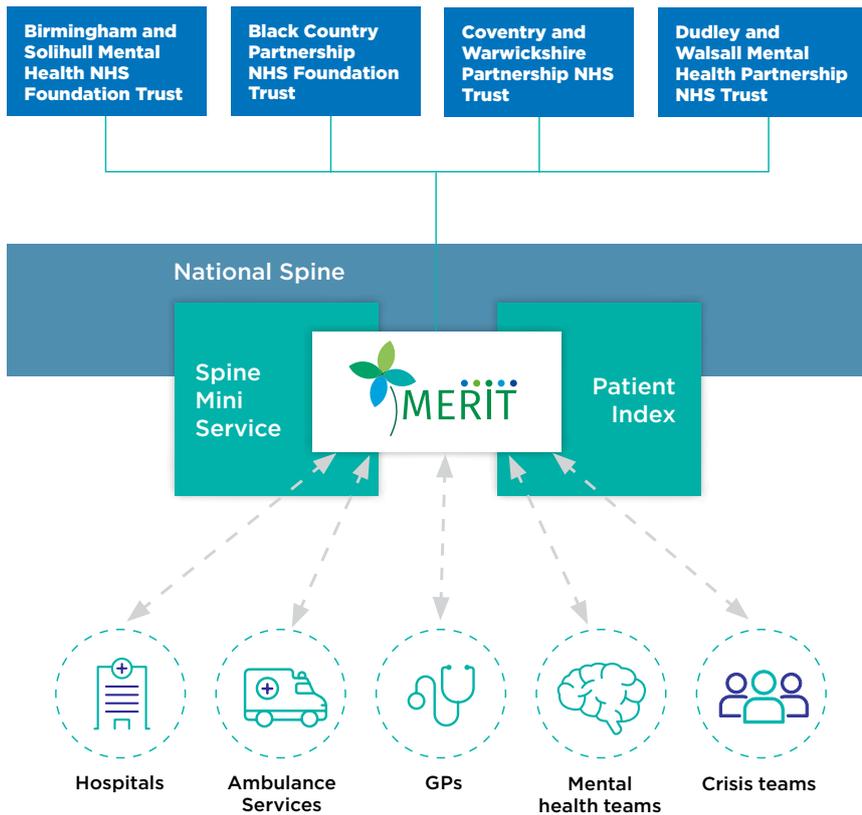
Collaborating with InterSystems, the consortium established an integrated care record system across all four Trusts so that wherever a service user is located, they would receive rapid help, regardless of which Trust's geographical area they come from.

Unifying four different systems

The first hurdle to overcome was bringing together four very different and complex systems all operating on different standards. Some were also completely digitised while others were still paper based. The first cog in the machine was to implement a fully interoperable integration engine – InterSystems HealthShare Health Connect – to create a bridge between the different systems so they could effectively talk to each other.

The next step was to eliminate the blind spots that can lead to gaps in care and empower the Trusts to embrace a collaborative approach to care delivery. Bringing together the information from across all systems, MERIT implemented HealthShare Unified Care Record and Patient Index to rapidly merge multiple sources of patient information into a single, accurate, unified care record. Coupled with InterSystems Spine Mini Services Platform (SMSP), which connects to the national Spine, the system enables MERIT to access patient demographics in real-time, and further ensures that the Trusts have the right information about the right patient at the right time.

With the groundwork in place, the next question was “what will clinicians see?” and “how will they be able to use it?”. With HealthShare as the unifying component, patients' summary care records appear within the context of the Trust's existing systems through the clinical viewer. This provides details such as diagnosis, appointments, and sections under the Mental Health Act. Now, vital information that previously might have been unknown can be surfaced in real-time, and is available from different infrastructures and systems, in a dedicated mental health data sharing platform.



11,000

staff involved
in the MERIT
consortium

Better data, better care

What's more, the previously lengthy and disconnected process of compiling a person's history, carrying out triage, verifying that information and contacting their care-coordinator, is now possible much more quickly and effectively. This avoids causing any further distress to people when they're at their most vulnerable. With the platform in place, clinicians instantly know more about the people who need care and can make swifter clinical decisions. This is paramount in the most urgent of circumstances or when people are at their most vulnerable.

Take, for example, a person who typically receives care in Dudley and Walsall but is visiting central Birmingham for the day, goes into crisis and is picked up by the local West Midlands Ambulance Service and taken to the closest A&E. Using the unified care record, the authorised clinicians can view the summary record for the patient and contact the appropriate care provider or refer them to their main mental health crisis care unit where they will receive consistent support and care.



The pandemic: A catalyst for change

With a robust data sharing foundation already in place, the areas covered by the Mental Health Trusts were in a strong position to replicate the MERIT infrastructure when COVID-19 hit.

In March 2020 it served as the blueprint for the **Birmingham Nightingale Hospital**. What would typically have taken around two years to integrate the records and data from 8 acute hospitals and over 50 interfaces into the Nightingale Hospital, took just a matter of months.

The opportunity to engage more organisations and expand beyond Mental Health became ever more promising.

What the region was able to achieve in such a rapid turnaround for the Nightingale Hospital was a catalyst for much broader care transformation in the region. Since then, the Birmingham and Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire, and Hereford and Worcestershire health and care services have come together to create the West Midlands Shared Care Record where neighbouring areas can now view information to help ensure the best possible care.

The blueprint for region-wide care transformation

The MERIT platform has empowered clinicians with real-time information to make earlier interventions, swifter clinical decisions, and has created an opportunity to better understand patients, how to best deliver patient centric care, ensuring the patient doesn't need to keep repeating their story, while supporting them throughout their care pathway. But more than that, MERIT has created a blueprint for wider integrated care record expansion – not only in the region but also nationally.