Virtual Wards

Delivering care for patients at home who would otherwise have to be treated in hospital, by enabling earlier supported discharge and providing alternatives to admission.
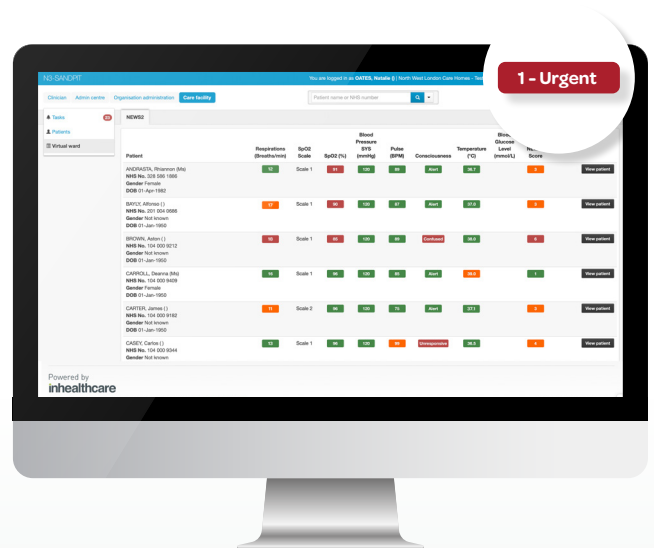
Background

By December 2023, NHSE expects ICSs to have completed the development of virtual wards towards a national ambition of 40-50 virtual beds per 100,000 population – equivalent to 24,000 virtual ward beds. At a minimum, each ICS is expected to implement virtual wards for two pathways: acute respiratory infection and frailty.
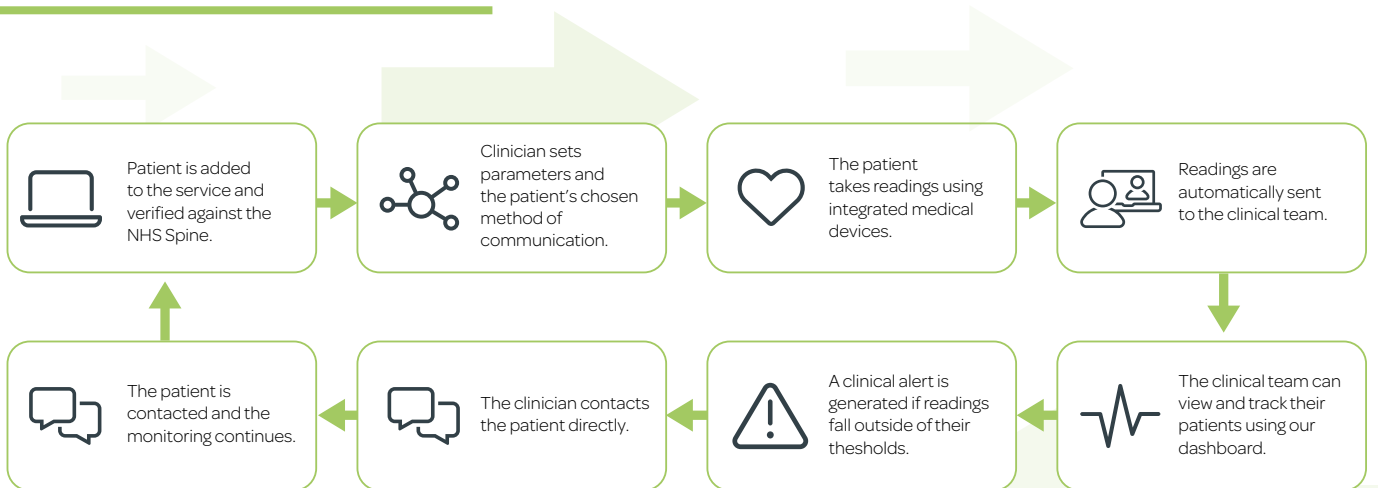
Solution

Our technology-enabled virtual wards monitor patients in their own home through our digital health platform. Patients or carers measure agreed vital signs and enter data using a communications method that suits them. This includes smartphone app, SMS, automated phone call or online portal meaning the service is truly digitally inclusive.

Inhealthcare's technology offers patients different frequencies of monitoring according to clinical need. This ranges from one or two times a week to several times every day, to the use of wearables that continuously monitor.

Clinical teams can view individual patient measurements through our dashboard. Teams will be alerted when patients move outside of agreed parameters, allowing them to take appropriate action.

How does the service work?

Patient is added to the service and verified against the NHS Spine.

Clinician sets parameters and the patient's chosen method of communication.

The patient takes readings using integrated medical devices.

Readings are automatically sent to the clinical team.

The clinical team can view and track their patients using our dashboard.

A clinical alert is generated if readings fall outside of their thesholds.

The clinician contacts the patient directly.

The patient is contacted and the monitoring continues.

Outcomes

Case study: Covid Oximetry @Home and Covid virtual ward with Sussex Health and Care Partnership

In May 2022, the Sussex @Home programme manager produced an evaluation of the Covid Oximetry @Home service to consider findings from the service and make recommendations for the future.

A patient survey was designed with support from the Sussex CCGs Public Involvement Team. The survey was distributed to patients on discharge.

Key findings from the patient survey, based on 302 responses:

- The **majority** of patients reported that they felt looked after, safe and reassured while using the service and knew what to do if their health got worse.

- Approximately one-quarter of respondents indicated that their health did get worse whilst on the service and, of those, **93%** were able to access support.

- **99%** of responses reported the service as either good or very good experience.

Assuming that survey responses are representative of all users, there is potential for the service to have saved over **440** A&E attendances, **1,150** calls to 111, **750** GP visits, **146** pharmacy visits and 84 walk-in clinic attendances.

"The service works brilliantly and kept me from going to A and E. I knew that if my condition deteriorated help was immediately at hand."

Covid-19 patient