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## The first Trust Direct Managed Equipment Service contract of its kind Airedale NHS Trust

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## Case Study Airedale NHS Trust

“We’ll get the contract out if we have to, but we try to leave it in the drawer if at all possible. The aim must always be to find middle ground and that’s what we invariably succeed in doing.”

*John Sutcliffe, planning manager, Airedale NHS Trust*



The first Trust Direct Managed Equipment Service contract of its kind

### Fact file

In 2001 Siemens signed a 15-year agreement worth over £15 million to provide and maintain medical equipment for Airedale NHS Trust.

It was the first Trust Direct managed equipment service contract of its kind, entered into directly with the NHS Trust rather than through a more traditional PFI (Private Finance Initiative) hospital new build programme. This MES Direct provides for the supply and upgrade of equipment at the existing rather than new hospitals.

- Siemens is supplying, upgrading and maintaining 39 items of x-ray and other equipment to help modernise the Trust’s diagnostic facilities at four sites.
- In 2006 the Trust chose Siemens to deliver a new voice and data network across Airedale General Hospital. The wireless network gives staff instant access to critical information, speeding up decision-making and helping to enable even faster responses to emergencies.
- Airedale General Hospital has nearly 400 beds.

### Siemens Expertise

#### Dependability

One reason Airedale chose Siemens to provide a managed equipment service (MES) was its commitment to providing an exceptional service. As planning manager John Sutcliffe remarks, “Siemens gave an uptime guarantee of 98 per cent, which was better than the assurances other companies were prepared to give”. Linda Thomlinson, head of radiology and cardiology, agrees that equipment availability and throughput is all-important to the Trust and says there has been very little downtime with the managed equipment service: “That reflects the age of the equipment and the way it’s being maintained by Siemens.”

#### Responsiveness

Rapidly sorting any issues that may arise is a clear expectation on both sides. “The Siemens team provide an excellent service,” says Linda. “If there’s a problem, we ring them, the parts arrive and an engineer comes and fixes it; it’s a very automated, efficient and seamless process.”

#### Proven equipment

Airedale rates reliability above having the latest technology. “For a district general hospital, the guarantee of leading-edge equipment is not quite as high on the agenda,” believes Linda Atack. “What we want most of all are highly reliable, user-friendly, efficient systems that enable us to treat more patients more quickly.”

#### Finding solutions

An aptitude for problem solving is also valued by the Trust. “When we had an issue getting answers about a piece of kit supplied by one of Siemens’ competitors that we had brought into the MES contract, the Siemens MES manager used his contacts to extract the information we needed from the original supplier,” explains Linda. “Siemens seem able to get to the right people.”

### The Benefits of a Managed Equipment Service

#### Improved diagnosis

Opting for a managed equipment service means that Airedale has replaced kit that in some cases was 28 years old with state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment.

“There’s been a very positive impact on examination times and image quality,” says Linda Atack. “That reduces the need for repeat examinations which in turn reduces radiation exposure. There’s no question the diagnostic capability we have today is vastly better than it was before.”

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*Linda Thomlinson, Head of Radiology and Cardiology*

#### Well maintained equipment

One big benefit of an MES, both financially and operationally, is the transferral of risk to the MES partner, but another is maintenance standards says Linda. “We have a scheduled maintenance programme and know equipment will always be fit for purpose and maintained to a very high standard. That’s very attractive.”

#### A single point of contact

Having a single point of contact whenever a query arises with a piece of equipment – even if it’s not Siemens kit – is also very much appreciated by the Trust.

“When you provide a 24/7 service you don’t want to waste time searching for different call centre numbers and equipment asset numbers,” explains Linda. “Calling just one Siemens number is a much more streamlined process.”

#### In step with medical advances

The flexibility of the rolling equipment replacement programme is a further bonus. Although the level of investment is fixed, the Trust is not tied to particular assets.

Explains Linda: “If advances in medical technology mean that some pieces of equipment become redundant, then we don’t want to be stuck with them for the rest of their asset life. With our managed equipment service, we’re not.”

#### Value for money

When Airedale expanded its x-ray services after the MES contract was signed, the Trust had no hesitation in procuring additional equipment via the same route.

“I would choose to procure any capital equipment under an MES agreement,” says Linda. “The way the managed equipment service is working here has exceeded my expectations.”

#### Working together

John Sutcliffe reflects on the secret of a successful managed equipment service. “A good working relationship is vital. The aim must always be to find middle ground and that’s what we invariably succeed in doing. As a result, we have a scheme which has both transferred risk and given us excellent value for money.”