



enabling
healthcare
potential

White paper

Empowering Healthcare Organisations: Unlock the Potential of a Modern MES

Understanding MES 2.0: How the modern Managed Equipment Service has evolved to help healthcare organisations drive transformational change



Executive Summary

In today's fast-paced and high-pressure healthcare environment, NHS Trusts often face challenges when it comes to making substantial investments in new technology and digital solutions. However, there is a solution that can bridge the gap between demand and resources and bring about transformative change: the modern managed equipment service (MES) partnership.

Unlike its predecessor from two decades ago, the contemporary MES is characterised by flexibility, collaboration and innovation. It goes far beyond simply securing investment to replace outdated equipment. Instead, it fosters a deep partnership between a Trust and its supplier, resulting in the development of innovative solutions and services that drive optimal clinical, operational and financial outcomes. The modern MES not only addresses equipment needs but also offers a range of transformation services aimed at revolutionising healthcare delivery and patient experiences.

By embracing this comprehensive approach, NHS Trusts can unlock the full potential of the MES partnership and pave the way for a truly transformative healthcare system.

This white paper explores the power of collaborating with a trusted MES provider to help NHS Trusts deliver high-quality, value-based healthcare while making significant improvements across six key focus areas:

1. **Value:** Discover how to achieve better outcomes at a reduced cost, both in the short and long term.
2. **Technology:** Learn how to leverage cutting-edge technology solutions to enhance patient care, safety and clinical quality.
3. **Digital Transformation:** Explore the opportunities presented by new digital and AI solutions and how to effectively deploy them.
4. **Efficiency:** Uncover strategies for realising cash-releasing benefits, cost savings and efficiency improvements.
5. **Long-term Investment:** Transition from short-term funding solutions to long-term strategic planning for sustained success.
6. **Workforce:** Address the growing workload demands on the existing workforce and develop plans to meet increasing demand.

This approach is scalable. Whether it's a single hospital department, multiple departments within a hospital or collaboration across a network or an Integrated Care System (ICS), the benefits of a modern MES are accessible to all.

By embracing a collaborative and forward-thinking approach to healthcare management, NHS Trusts can unlock the full potential of a modern MES partnership and drive positive transformative change throughout their institutions.

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Setting the scene

It's never been a more difficult time for NHS Trusts

In today's healthcare landscape, the NHS is under mounting pressures, including a backlog of more than seven million elective procedures¹, budget shortfalls, a need for financial balance following recent industrial action², outdated infrastructure and workforce shortages. These issues negatively impact service delivery and clinical outcomes – and the challenges will only grow as the population ages, driving ever-growing demand.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Healthcare organisations must also align with long-term NHS strategic plans with ambitious targets related to the workforce, sustainability, digital transformation and efficiencies. All this is set against a backdrop of change as NHS Trusts look ahead to their place in new integrated care systems (ICSs).

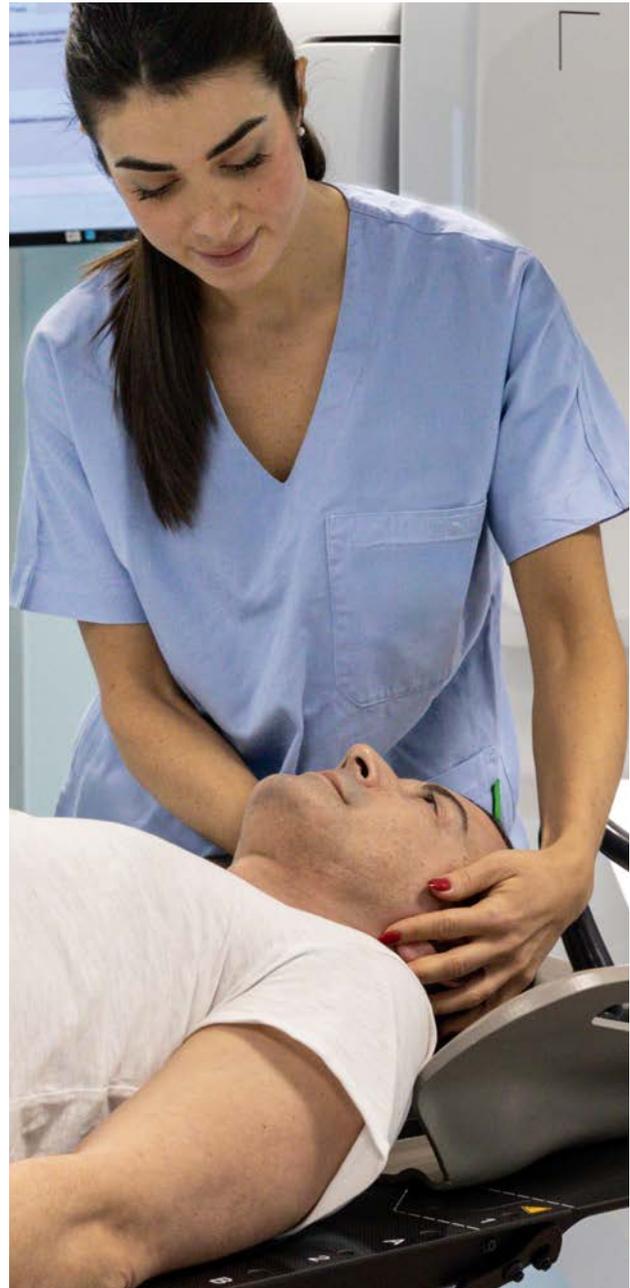
Yet there is opportunity as well. Technology, especially AI-enabled technology, is driving a paradigm shift in diagnostics and treatment, which will radically change operational flows and staff structures. The cusp of this revolution is here, and hundreds of innovative providers are keen to engage. However, some care providers are unsure how to take advantage of productivity benefits whilst minimising risks.

Enter the modern MES

Working with the right managed equipment services (MES) partner delivers high-value solutions that enable NHS Trusts to break free of short-term, reactive decision-making to implement proactive and innovative solutions that achieve long-term strategic objectives.

A collaborative MES partnership can help Trusts do this across six key focus areas: value, technology, digital transformation, efficiency, long-term investment and workforce.

But first, we'll take a closer look at the key characteristics of a modern MES and explore how it has evolved over the years to become a powerful enabler of healthcare transformation.



MES 2.0

Today's managed equipment services are so much more than the MES of 20 years ago

The meaning of a managed equipment service can vary depending on an individual's role or level of familiarity with the solution. An MES can also be called managed services or managed technology services.

In simple terms, an MES is when the NHS engages an external partner to assist them in the delivery of an end-to-end clinical service, allowing NHS staff to focus on patient care. The contractual agreement can be tailored to the specific needs of the Trust. One of the key benefits of an MES for the Trust is financial predictability – peaks of capital investment can be smoothed out over a longer term based on a monthly or quarterly payment schedule.

This model emerged more than twenty years ago as an equipment solution for new hospital build projects. The standard MES of that time included just a few core components: technology, maintenance, project management and applications training – all wrapped up in a funded model with the benefit of VAT reclaim.

Today's modern MES represents a true advancement in capability. The basic building blocks may be the same, but today's partnerships deliver substantially more value than the solutions of twenty years ago. A modern MES incorporates AI tools and data analytics, digital and infrastructure transformation and continuous improvement programmes with the flexibility to adapt to evolving clinical needs for fast-moving technical innovation.

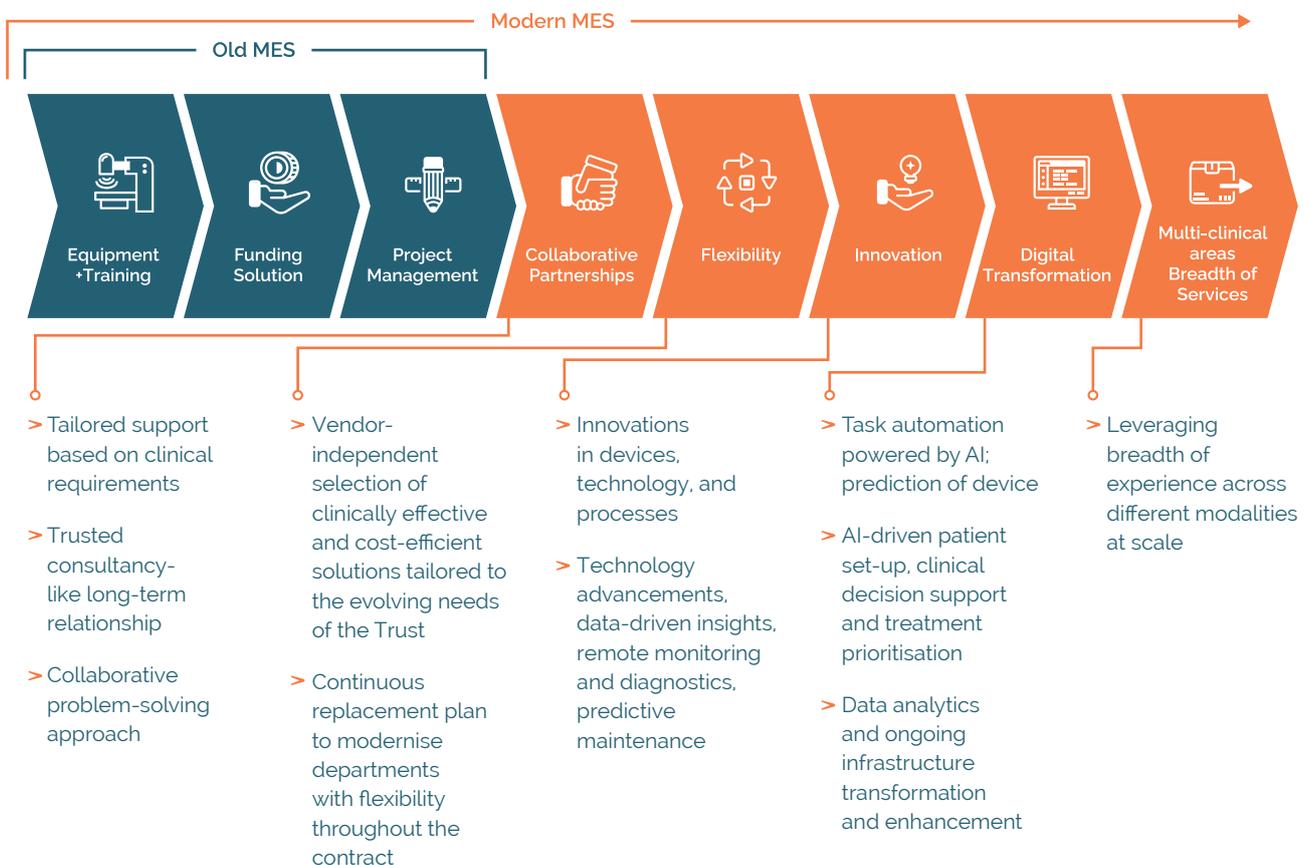


Figure 1: Evolution of the modern MES

What's in a name?

MES suppliers often call their solutions 'managed services' or 'managed technology services'. Others choose more generic names like value partnerships, strategic partnerships or transformation solutions.

That's because suppliers are keen to demonstrate that a modern MES is more than just an equipment or technology solution. Collaborative partnership and innovation are the true value-adds of a modern MES. Whilst NHS Supply Chain calls it 'managed services', make no mistake that whatever name it goes by, a modern MES offers so much more than the MES of the past.

What differentiates a modern MES?

A modern MES is a comprehensive solution that is much more than the sum of its parts:



Digital transformation improves efficiency, facilitates data-driven decisions, enables predictive maintenance and supports the integration of new technologies.



Innovation means keeping pace with the evolving healthcare landscape while maximising the value of devices, technology and processes across the NHS organisation.



Collaborative partnerships are when two parties work together on aligned goals and objectives with deeply shared understanding underpinned by subject matter expertise.



Flexibility is the security of knowing that a long-term MES agreement can flex and adapt to changing requirements.

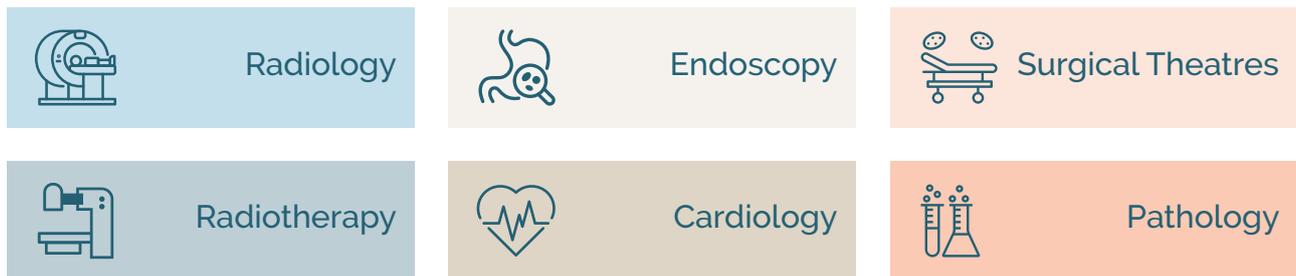


Multi-clinical areas mean scalability and support for healthcare networks across multiple locations and modalities, ensuring needs are met effectively and efficiently.

Scalability of a modern MES

An MES is a scalable solution that spans multiple areas of a hospital or wider network. Not restricted to just one department, a modern MES can be customised to meet the modality needs of an entire healthcare Trust across multiple locations.

Vendor-neutral MES suppliers stand out by offering a comprehensive range of transformation services that cover various modalities including:



The design of a modern MES is highly adaptable and scalable. It supports healthcare networks across multiple locations and modalities, facilitating centralised management and efficient resource allocation. This approach ensures that the hospital's equipment needs are met effectively and efficiently, promoting seamless operations and improved patient care throughout the organisation.

Transformation services that enable healthcare's potential

In a modern MES, technology is an enabler, not just an outcome. To tackle the healthcare challenges facing the NHS today, Trusts need comprehensive, vendor-neutral solutions designed to optimise patient care and service sustainability across the entire clinical, operational and financial spectrum.

That's why we at Ergéa call our MES offering Transformation Services. We see the MES as a critical enabler of healthcare's potential. We believe that an MES partnership should empower and facilitate 'the transformation' – not just 'the tech'.

Key focus #1: Value

How to deliver better outcomes for lower cost in the short and long term

NHS Trusts are tasked with delivering financial plans with near-impossible short-term savings goals. Local leaders find themselves trapped in vicious short-term yearly cycles that don't allow them to plan strategically. All the while, they know delivering cost savings beyond short-term targets is a change that can take years to plan and deliver.

In this challenging landscape, value is the ultimate goal: better outcomes delivered at a lower cost. For NHS Trusts, that includes operational and clinical outcomes.

An MES partnership can deliver high-value outcomes while effectively controlling costs by optimising short-and long-term strategies for using resources, technology, innovation and digitisation.

Quick wins: driving short-term value

A good MES partner is not afraid to take a deep dive during discovery consultancy sessions to find quick wins and explore ways to drive short-term operational efficiencies and cost savings.

Delivering value in the short term means coming up with creative solutions for:

- > Delivering CIP targets
- > Reducing waste
- > Clearing waiting lists
- > Improving referral to treatment (RTT) waiting times

In today's planning cycles of just 12–24 months, achieving these short-term outcomes can feel like the highest priority. However, short-term value cannot be gained at the expense of quality long-term clinical outcomes. That's why value discussions must always navigate a fine balance between achieving the short term outcomes listed above versus implementing medium-and long-term strategies that can meaningfully impact long-term outcomes.



Enabling long-term clinical excellence

Long-term value is synonymous with the pursuit of clinical excellence. True long-term clinical excellence is defined by consistently delivering high-quality healthcare outcomes, as opposed to focusing on high-volume procedures aimed at clearing waiting lists with potentially lower quality standards.

An MES partnership is an enabler of clinical excellence. However, this can only be achieved when there is a deep partnership, shared understanding and fully aligned objectives between the Trust and supplier.

Within this framework, a managed services partner can help redesign clinical pathways for better long-term outcomes. This can be achieved by bringing innovation throughout the entire process – updating technology, facilitating better imaging, implementing digital transformation, and modernising processes and workflows.

How can continuous improvement deliver value?

Genuinely transformative solutions are those that safeguard short-term and long-term value throughout the entire process by implementing continuous improvement programmes. This starts with putting in place crucial baseline assessments to measure improving outcomes over time.

Continual improvement within an MES means:

- > Assessing further areas for improvement
- > Keeping abreast of the latest technological advances
- > Proactively improving operational efficiencies year after year

In this way, continuous improvement bridges the gap between delivering quick wins and ensuring long-term clinical excellence.



Case study snapshot: Leeds Cancer Centre

The challenge for Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) was to remain a leading national cancer centre, managing complex, high-volume patient demand with limited resources whilst offering the highest quality cancer care and patient experience.

Over a 15-year MES partnership starting in 2007, Ergéa in partnership with St James's Oncology (SJO), Equans and LTHT, has helped establish the Leeds Cancer Centre as a cutting-edge diagnostic and therapeutic cancer centre with a modern, user-friendly environment. We've done this by providing the Trust with a comprehensive range of radiotherapy and related diagnostic imaging equipment systems. We just recently facilitated the implementation of a cutting-edge MRI Simulator capable of producing high-definition and high-contrast images, enabling clinicians to administer more accurate and targeted radiotherapy treatments while minimising the risk of side effects.

As a testament to the value of the relationship, the Trust has extended the partnership for another 15 years to include an equipment update encompassing 60 individual pieces of equipment, comprising 26 radiology systems and 19 radiotherapy systems.

The MES partnership between Ergéa and the Trust has demonstrably delivered value across several fronts:

- > Ergéa has assumed financial risk related to equipment pricing, room enabling work costs throughout the term of the partnership.
- > Access to state-of-the-art equipment has enabled more accurate diagnosis and treatment, potentially resulting in better clinical outcomes.
- > Guaranteed uptime leads to reduced waiting lists, thus increased patient satisfaction.
- > Streamlined procurement processes leading to more efficient use of staff time.

By the numbers

80k

treatments in 2022

15

years long partnership extension

60

individual equipment replacements

98%

equipment uptime

24/7/365

maintenance support

Key focus #2: Technology

How to leverage innovative technology solutions to ensure patient care, safety and clinical quality

A clear plan for the ongoing replacement of capital equipment assets is fundamental to the delivery of modern, high-quality clinical services. Equipment facing obsolescence is more likely to disrupt services with breakdowns, leading to further delays in diagnosis and treatment and putting patients at risk. In its 2021 report, COCIR data showed that in the UK and Ireland, 28% of MRI machines were 10 years or older, and 21% of CT scanners were 10 years or older.³

In the UK, the obsolescence of existing equipment is coupled with a critical lack of equipment across all major modalities. The graph below illustrates the deficiency of the UK's diagnostic imaging infrastructure, revealing a notable scarcity of CT and MRI scanners compared to peer nations.

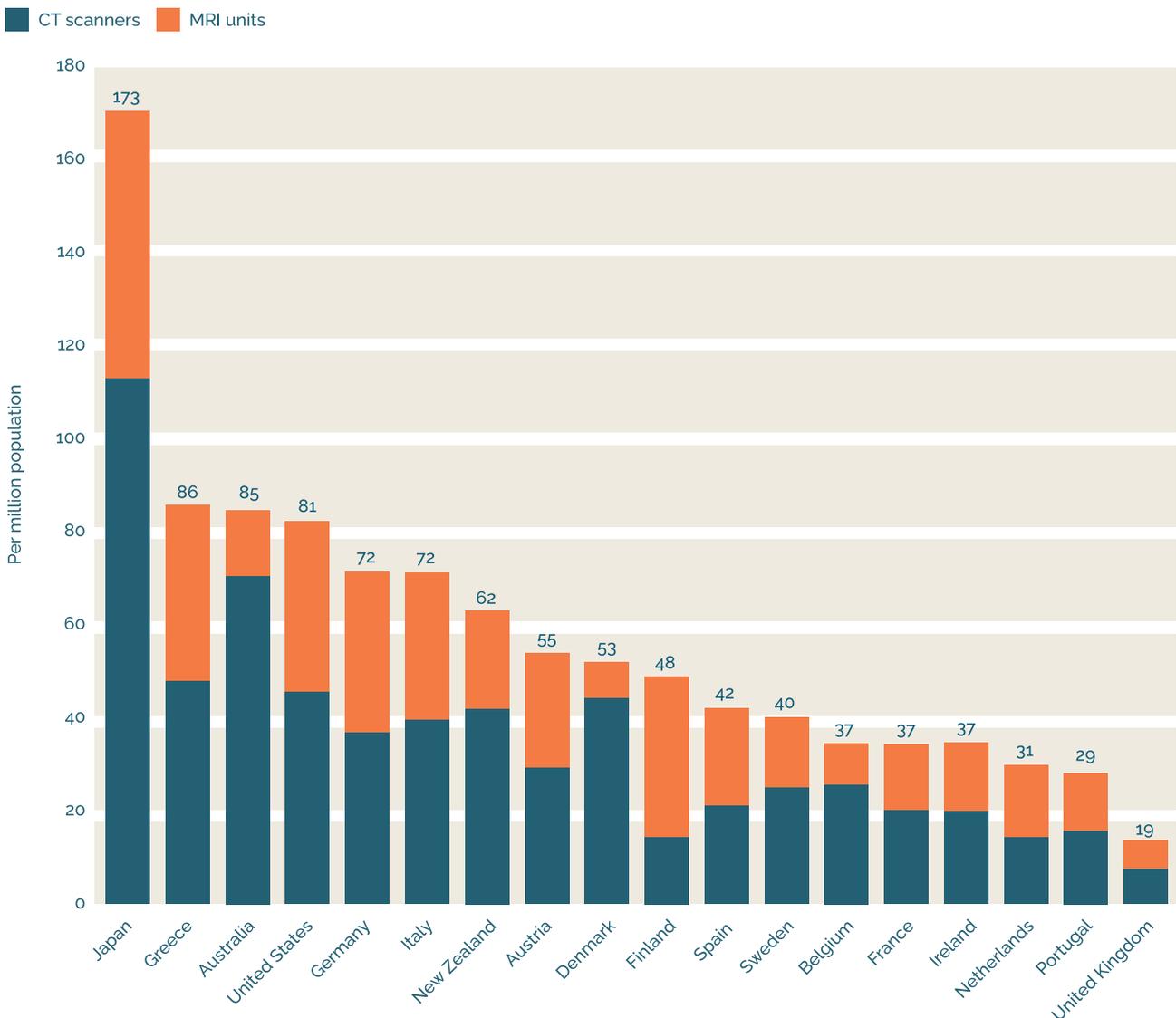


Figure 2: CT and MRI scanners per million head of population, 2022 or latest available⁴
(Equipment outside hospitals are excluded for Portugal and United Kingdom)

As the demand for advanced medical technologies intensifies due to the burden of an ageing population, this underscores a critical challenge faced by the NHS, emphasising the urgent need for strategic interventions.

The right MES partner can advise Trusts on how to get the most from their existing assets and replace aged equipment where appropriate. One method of doing this is by measuring utilisation, looking at historical data and working with staff to maximise clinical and operational performance.

It's important to note, however, that the goal of an MES isn't just to replace old technology with new best-of-breed models. An effective MES partnership can help cash-squeezed and busy departments across all modalities modernise their processes and infrastructure to improve the patient and staff experience. That means ensuring investments in new infrastructure that are fit for purpose for today's needs but are also future-proofed as those needs evolve.



What is true vendor neutrality (and why does it really matter)?

Although vendor neutrality may seem like a box-ticking exercise, with vendor-independent (VI) contracts having become the norm, the importance of true vendor independence cannot be overstated.

True vendor independence (as opposed to VI contracts offered by OEMs) allows genuine collaboration with easily aligned outcomes. A MedTech partner might offer vendor-independent contracts, but their alignment with the client is inherently conflicted – they have a vested interest in selling their own equipment and technology.

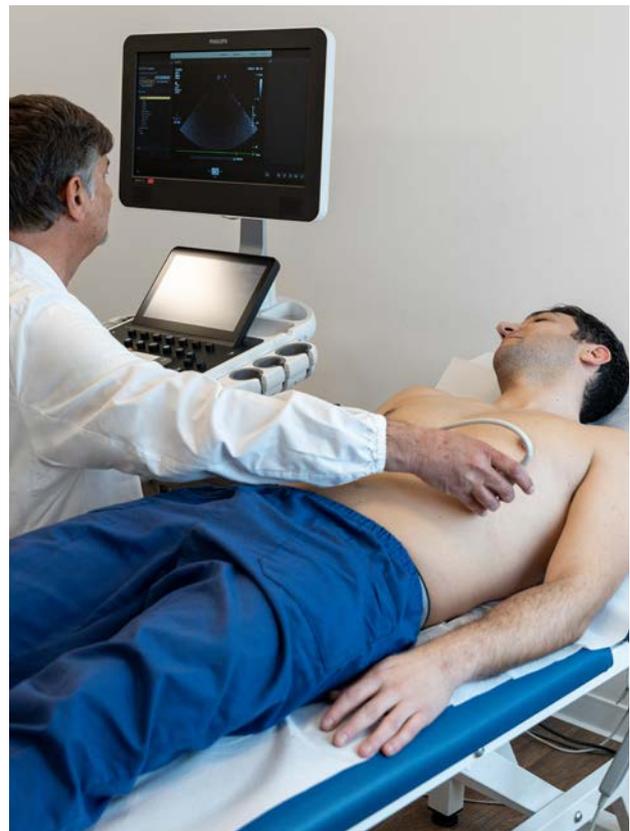
Truly vendor-independent contracts, on the other hand, are driven by the clinical needs of the care provider. This could mean agreements include less equipment or lower specification equipment, bringing the Trust significant cost savings. A true vendor-independent partnership drives value by offering a 100 per cent choice of equipment, ensuring sustainability and long-term benefit.

Looking at the big picture

Managed equipment services can be a vehicle to facilitate the 'right product at the right price in the right place' approach, optimising technology resources across a whole department or multiple sites.

Better outcomes are secured by providing products that are not only clinically safe and effective but also operate faster and embrace AI-enabled technology to assist users or provide clinical decision support. System data from the latest 'intelligent' technologies can also be leveraged to drive clinical excellence, operational efficiencies and enhanced patient experience.

The benefits of new equipment stem not just from its performance but also from optimising its operating environment and redesigning workflows for maximum gain. NHS organisations with an MES in place benefit from a funding mechanism that encompasses both the necessary infrastructure and accompanying processes required for the technology.



Key focus #3: Digital Transformation

How to leverage and deploy the growing number of new digital and AI solutions

Equipment technology evolves rapidly, making it difficult to keep up with the latest innovations over an asset's lifecycle – and new digital and AI add-ons are further accelerating the evolution of technology.

Given the rapid pace of change in the digital realm and the continuous release of new products, it is increasingly important for the NHS to remain at the forefront of these advancements. By actively monitoring new digital developments such as artificial intelligence (AI), large language models (LLMs) and machine learning (ML), departments can ensure they are equipped with the correct tools to meet the needs of their clinical service.

Embedding the correct digital product along the clinical pathway will ensure the entire clinical pathway has been analysed and optimised for efficient working and delivering best-in-class patient care. However, it's critical that this implementation aligns with the organisation's overarching digital strategy.

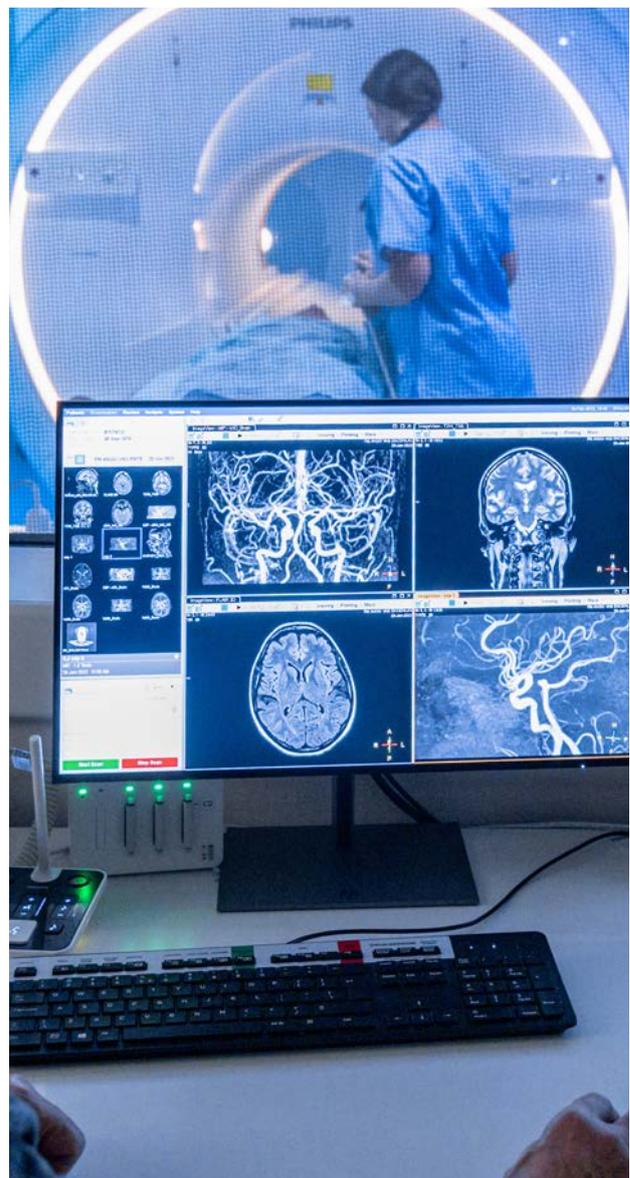
Harnessing the AI revolution

Software and devices incorporating AI, and specifically, the subset of AI known as machine learning (ML), have become an important part of operational and clinical pathways.

AI tools can support clinical teams by assisting with patient set-up, procedure efficiency, clinical decision support and treatment prioritisation – leading to better clinical outcomes. AI-enabled tools can also assist with operational efficiencies such as automating routine administrative, set-up and operational tasks, thereby optimising workflows and freeing up healthcare professionals to focus on patient care.

AI can also play a pivotal role in forecasting when maintenance or repairs are required for MedTech devices. This proactive approach minimises unplanned downtime, allowing non-emergency repairs to be scheduled during non-critical periods. Innovations in predictive maintenance across the whole range of MedTech devices, irrespective of the manufacturer, stand out as a key component of the future of MES solutions.

Predictive maintenance not only leads to cost savings but also improves patient care by ensuring the continuous and reliable operation of medical equipment.



Leveraging data and analytics for optimal gain

Data and analytics tools can generate clinical and operational insights that identify opportunities to reduce waste, support decision-making and drive quality improvements.

Current examples of innovative digital solutions include RFID/RTLS solutions to improve the visibility of biomedical equipment, operating theatre management systems to enhance and improve OR utilisation and software to track and record the entire decontamination process.

MES as a vehicle for digital transformation

An MES has long been a vehicle for NHS Trusts to secure investment in capital equipment. Today, the flexibility of the modern MES model acts as a vehicle for securing digital infrastructure alongside traditional capital equipment.

An MES can be structured to ensure technology is updated or upgraded as necessary, ensuring users have access to the latest technology and the breadth of new digital and AI solutions, without constantly replacing existing equipment. Within the flexibility of an MES structure, hospitals can easily access the growing number of innovative digital and AI solutions, accelerating digital transformation and unleashing the vital operational efficiencies and heightened productivity the NHS urgently requires.

An Ergéa snapshot: A pioneering new initiative

Ergéa is piloting and investing in new initiatives that have the potential to drive quality healthcare outcomes. One such initiative is the launch of 'connected' assets within NHS healthcare facilities.

By leveraging the data and information that is gathered from a 'connected asset' and combining it with data available within hospital or departmental IT systems, our partner hospitals can use powerful AI and analytics platforms to:

- > Provide information on equipment utilisation and performance across the whole asset base or multiple sites
- > Support staff with transformation insights on what to do next to deliver better operational, clinical and cost savings impact
- > Identify improvement areas to optimise diagnostic or treatment pathways

Key focus #4: Efficiency

How to deliver efficiency improvements within existing short-term budget constraints

Year on year, hospital Trusts must balance the ever-more demanding need for efficiencies and cost savings against the imperative of providing high-quality healthcare services. With chief budgeting challenges that include fixed capital departmental expenditure limits (CDEL) and ambitious annual cost improvement plan (CIP) targets, local leaders are under intense pressure to meet financial and operational objectives without sacrificing quality clinical outcomes.

An MES delivers efficiency improvements and cost savings in several key ways:

- > Flexible and creative funding options
- > Vendor-neutral equipment selection
- > Clinical consumable management

Flexible and creative funding options

An MES partner can offer a full-service cost review to identify areas in which cost improvements can be made or identified.

Collaborative ways an MES partner can help find cost-saving opportunities:

- > Unlocking cash-releasing opportunities (e.g., buying equipment from Trusts)
- > Uncovering cost-out opportunities
- > Looking at how procurement factors into the Trust's CIP
- > Participating in gain share arrangements

Cost savings in practice: examples from our partners

Ergéa has many tried and tested methods of looking at our partners' existing clinical service and coming up with significant cost savings whilst also improving the overall service delivery. Below are just two ways we've helped our partners achieve efficiency improvements.

- > Using data-driven insight from our client's radiology department, our expert technologists recommended replacing their overhead ceiling-mounted X-ray with a fully digital mobile machine. This reduced the cost of equipment replacement by up to 20% and decreased the need for enabling works.
- > At a client site in the North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust, our team suggested a change in the specification of the fluoroscopy room to address the demand for CT colonoscopies over traditional barium studies. By flexing the specification, the Trust did not need to find additional funds for a CT scanner, resulting in potential savings of over £300,000.

Vendor-neutral equipment selection

When it comes to equipment selection and procurement, opting for a vendor-neutral MES partner can yield substantial cost savings. Because there is no vested interest in replacing older equipment or upselling, a vendor-neutral partner can align completely with the Trust's objectives. When equipment remains fit-for-purpose, safe, reliable and matched to operational requirements, it can be flexed or upgraded within an MES and maintained for a longer period.

Often, a true MES partnership that is vested in a Trust's financial, clinical and operational objectives won't result in a larger contract value. These solutions might even suggest a downgrade of the equipment specifications or recommend a reliable workhorse machine rather than the latest model if the clinical requirements and evidence show that it would be sufficient for clinical needs.



Clinical consumable management

Consumables is a category which has seen dramatic cost increases as a consequence of the logistical chaos created by the COVID-19 pandemic. An outsourced consumable management solution (CMS) delivered by an MES partner can save NHS Trusts up to 30 per cent of their annual consumables spend, as well as optimise stock management and inventory selection, reduce wastage and free up clinical time to focus on patient care.

NHS Trusts that participate in consumables solutions take advantage of significant VAT efficiencies and leverage their MES partner's economies of scale, leading to real procurement savings and cost avoidance.

Case study snapshot: UHL consumables management

As part of our long-standing managed service at the University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL), Ergéa provides an onsite team which manages all the clinical consumables and devices for eleven interventional catheter laboratories across UHL and the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre.

Without compromising clinical choice or vendor-led innovation, significant cash savings were achieved through our:

- > Procurement expertise and buying power
- > Cost avoidance techniques
- > Managed service and inventory management efficiencies

UHL savings over a two-year period:

11,248

staff hours saved
(incl 5,120 clinical)

£2m

stock reduction

£4.7m

VAT concession

£48,750

'one off' savings

£980,112

service delivery savings

Key focus #5: Investment

How to transition from short-term funding solutions to long-term strategic planning

Whilst large, one-off capital allocations are always welcome – think new community diagnostic centres and elective surgical hubs, upgrading MRI scanners, and so on – the reality is that one-off allocations are typically awarded based on need.

For everyone else in the queue, Trusts must design a long-term, strategic plan for replacing key technology assets.

MES as a way to address years of underinvestment

An MES offers a way to procure equipment without the need for significant upfront capital investment.

Managed services contracts are long-term agreements with planned investments to replace all equipment, associated infrastructure works and transformation services. The costs of this service are spread out over time (payments can be billed monthly or quarterly), meaning senior leaders get financial security and the ability to plan longer-term.

An MES can help NHS Trusts implement department-wide or hospital-wide solutions to replace ageing technology and infrastructure versus replacing individual assets on risk registers.

Only by taking a holistic, strategic and long-term view of equipment replacement will the NHS effectively address years of substantial underinvestment in diagnostic equipment (such as MRI and CT scanners) and radiotherapy equipment (such as linear accelerators) and upgrade its supporting infrastructure.

Flexibility is key

Flexibility is one of the fundamental characteristics of a modern MES. Although contracts can last anywhere from five to fifteen years, there is minimal risk to Trusts due to the flexible nature of agreements. Not only is an MES tailored to the Trust's unique needs, but the agreement can also be changed and adapted throughout its term.

The flexibility of an MES contract allows a Trust to continuously review its needs and scope:

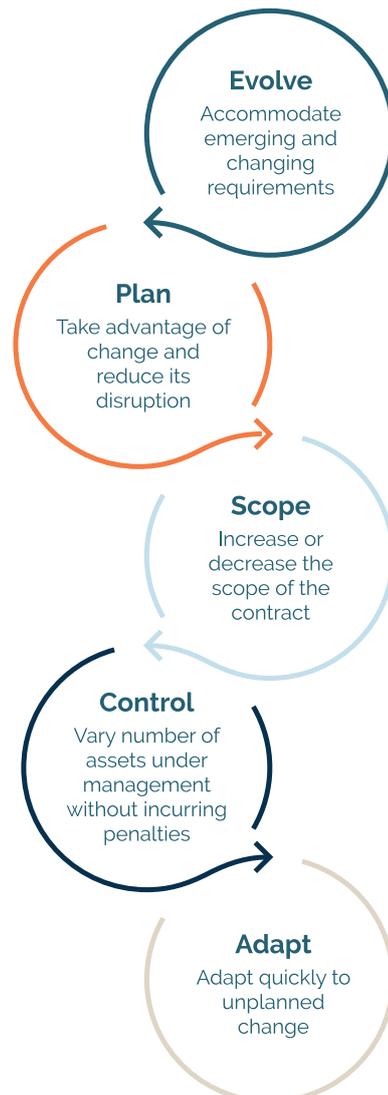


Figure 3: MES contract flexibility

When combined with a truly vendor-neutral solution, this flexibility means that hospitals have the freedom to choose best-of-breed technology. As vendors swap places as leading providers for each modality, or new technology providers enter the market, the Trust's ability to change vendor loyalty throughout the life of the MES allows them to maintain a crucial competitive and commercial advantage. Furthermore, the flexibility of a vendor-neutral partnership ensures the Trust can adapt to the technology space as it develops.

Why a managed services partnership delivers superior long-term value over direct procurement

NHS Trusts that work with an MES partner gain several clinical, operational and financial advantages over those using direct procurement:



Holistic, knowledgeable and vendor-independent advice for new technology and software acquisitions based upon objective needs assessment and recommendations.



Optimised lifespan of existing equipment and tools.



Outsourcing the bureaucracy related to procurement and compliance as well as responsibility for the performance of the equipment, allowing the department to focus on clinical work.



Better value for money by taking advantage of a partner's increased buying power.



VAT reclaim benefit and collaborative LT partnership that allows flexible funding models based on the current needs and limitations of the Trust (for example, gain share or purchasing the equipment from the Trust).



Cash-releasing benefits (such as optimisation of the available budget) where resources can be completely re-allocated, or the cost can be removed from the budget

Key focus #6: Workforce

How to manage the increasing workload for the existing workforce and plan for growing demand

The NHS is facing a chronic workforce crisis, as acknowledged by the 2023 Long Term Workforce Plan. In March 2023, there were a reported 112,000 vacancies across the NHS workforce⁵, and the NHS's ongoing struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff, coupled with the constant and growing demand for service, further increases the prospect of treatment delays, late diagnosis and poor patient outcomes.

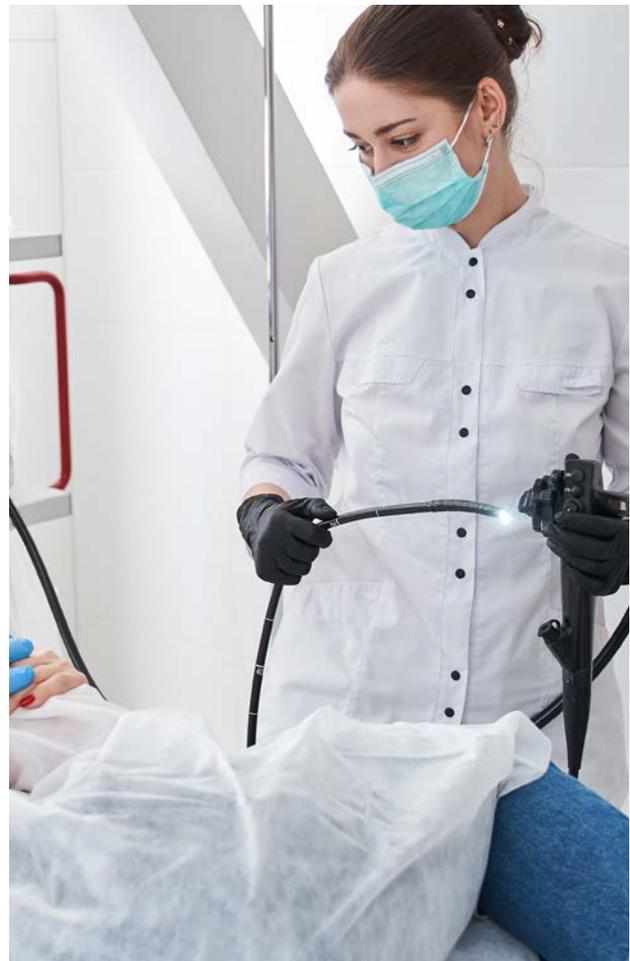
Whilst an MES typically does not provide clinical or administrative staff as part of its core offering, an MES partnership can support under-resourced Trusts by helping them to decrease their outsourcing costs, reducing the existing workload by harnessing digital tools and freeing up clinical staff from administrative tasks to focus on patient care.

Reducing the reliance on costly outsourcing solutions

Outsourcing solutions can be an important and necessary short-term solution to address long waiting lists and ensure patients receive the treatment they need with as little delay as possible.

However, short-term or temporary capacity solutions that include admin or clinical staffing to fill gaps can become very costly.

With the growing rise of endoscopy screenings and minimally invasive endoscopic surgeries projected to rise further, endoscopy is one modality that has seen a significant increase in outsourcing solutions. An MES partner can work collaboratively with endoscopy teams to invest in the facilities, technology and operational improvements needed to provide their own long-term solutions – reducing the reliance on outsourcing solutions.



Decreasing the workload by harnessing the power of digital transformation

The digital transformation of diagnostics and treatment services through new AI-enabled technologies can enable the current workforce to optimise their working patterns and better facilitate the expansion of service capacity.

Leveraging the flexibility of a modern MES to incorporate AI-enabled devices and AI tools into operational and clinical pathways not only reduces the workload of existing staff but also enhances the overall quality of healthcare delivery. More efficient and effective healthcare outcomes result in:

- > Less pressure on staff and enhanced morale
- > Increased staff satisfaction and retention
- > Greater staff productivity and efficiency

An ideal MES partner can play a pivotal role in empowering NHS staff to embrace the emerging prospects offered by AI and digital tools by providing crucial support in enhancing digital skills and capabilities among healthcare professionals.

Freeing up staff time to focus on patient care

With a projected NHS workforce gap of more than 260,000–360,000 staff by 2036, endoscopy isn't the only modality facing critical workforce shortages and at risk of rising outsourcing costs.⁶

One area where outsourcing can be entirely beneficial to departments is procurement. Working within an MES arrangement frees up staff from complex, time-consuming procurement and consumable management activities.

Meaningfully comparing product quality, performance and pathway cost is difficult and resource intensive. An MES partnership provides a team of experienced technologists supported by appropriate real-world evidence across multiple departments to aid in effective decision-making and choice, freeing up clinical time to focus on patient care.

Giving our partners the tools to invest in their own long-term solutions

At Ergéa, we approach endoscopy transformation services with the aim of being a true partner. We start by conducting a thorough discovery phase to dive deep and understand the department's unique workforce challenges. Our goal is to enable a Trust to maintain control whilst providing it with the tools and support to improve its clinical, financial and operational outcomes. This can include modernising the department to increase capacity during regular business hours, implementing new technology and digital innovation and delivering staff training and skills development programmes.

Looking to the future

How a full-service MES can empower healthcare transformation

Today's modern MES has broken out of the box and expanded its limits to become something much more dynamic than just an equipment solution.

Whether you call it a transformation service, a managed service or something different altogether, the MES of today has evolved to become a creative and innovative solution around technology, AI and digital tools – all combined as part of a flexible, long-term partnership.

A modern, full-service MES includes solutions that support transformation, along with continuous clinical operations support throughout the contract's lifetime.

The key components of a full-service MES include:

Continuous services:

Compliance

- Best practices in medical technology management
- CQC and MHRA compliance, KPI reporting, auditing and health checks

Workforce and user support

- Trainings
- Process innovations
- AI-driven efficiencies

Consumables

- Significant savings on selecting, procuring and managing clinical consumables

Asset management

- Availability and replacements planning
- Performance management
- Maintenance and repairs

Transformative solutions:

Funding

- Flexible funding models
- VAT reductions
- Part- or full-funded solutions

Design and build

- Project management
- Build works
- Room and department design

Procurement

- Technology and software
- Impartial and flexible solutions

Digital transformation

- Integrated IT systems
- AI and data efficiencies
- Workforce optimisation



Figure 4: Components of a modern MES

Key takeaway: Choosing the right MES partnership

Not all managed equipment solutions are created equal. Although various frameworks exist to help the selection process, when it comes to choosing an MES partner for the future, there are five essential traits to look for:



Flexibility

An MES plan should be tailored to a hospital's unique requirements and adaptable enough to accommodate changing needs and new technologies and innovations..



Collaboration

A genuinely collaborative partnership is one in which both sides work together to achieve the same goals and objectives.



Innovation

A key driver of excellence, innovation should be at the heart of every managed equipment service.



Expertise

Highly experienced specialists are essential to providing a professional, trusted service and impartial advice tailored to the Trust's exact requirements.



Sustainability

Sustainable practices should be integral to the solution and align with the partner organisation's corporate ethos and social value commitment.



Looking ahead to a scalable future

Amid short-term financial pressures and immediate challenges, departments and hospitals often focus on finding the right solutions for specific issues. However, true transformation requires NHS Trusts to adopt a broader perspective and consider larger-scale solutions.

As the healthcare landscape evolves and NHS Trusts transition from standalone entities into wider collaborative hospital networks and integrated care systems (ICSs), we believe that MES partnerships can be the key to unlocking scalable solutions that will shape the future of healthcare.

MES providers have the potential to expand their services, offering network leaders and integrated care boards (ICBs) innovative and multifaceted solutions that drive widespread transformation and enduring value. These partnerships not only serve current healthcare needs but are also poised to evolve and adapt, ensuring that networks and ICSs have the tools and resources they need to deliver excellence in care, improve clinical outcomes and maximise long-term value for both healthcare providers and the communities they serve.

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About Ergéa UK

Ergéa is the leading service provider of Managed Equipment Services (MES) for the NHS and the private health sector in the UK . With over 20 years of operational experience, the company brings a wealth of expertise and a deep understanding of the challenges facing clients in the UK and Ireland.

Ergéa UK was formed in 2022 following the acquisition of two market-leading medical service companies – Althea UK and Medipass Healthcare – by Ergéa Group, a pan-European cancer care and diagnostic imaging services platform.

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