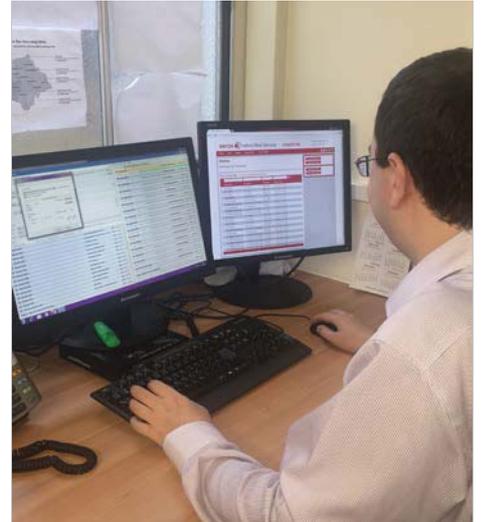


“Getting letters to patients — for appointments, referrals, reports and so on — is one of those things that is really important but unbelievably wasteful of time if done by hand. We’re getting that time back, thanks to Xerox.”

– Stacy-Ann Thompson, Electronic Documentation,  
IT and Systems Department  
Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust



### Our Challenge

“We were sending out around 750 letters per day, inviting diabetics to an eye screening appointment. Not everyone realises how important this is. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in adults under 65 years old, but regular eye screening can detect early warning signs and save the eyesight of so many people.

So when we took on screening responsibility for the surrounding areas of London, creating a service 2.5 times bigger, we knew we needed to do something to ensure that we could reliably dispatch around 1,000 *more* appointment letters than we were before — day in, day out.

Our existing in-house process couldn’t scale to do it. Not without more staff.”

### Our Solution

“The hybrid mail service from Xerox has more than met our needs. In fact, we’re rolling it out across the whole trust: scalability just isn’t an issue and we can apply it to any use case we want.

Unlike some potential providers, Xerox could integrate their service with our electronic patient record systems. They could also pick up the artwork and printing of our leaflets and other inserts, which hugely simplifies our ability to send the right attachment with letters.

We’ve got capabilities we didn’t have before, from duplex printing to the inclusion of maps in letter templates, not to mention end-to-end tracking of mail. All for a competitive price and a really straightforward implementation from an IT perspective.”

### Our Results

“Xerox is making a huge difference here with a well controlled, well monitored, smooth-running hybrid mail service. The response from users is beyond doubt. Bottom line: they love it.”

- More than 1.5 FTEs freed across the first two services migrated: time spent helping clinicians and patients instead
- Failsafe inclusion of maps and attachments with eye-screening appointment letters, where before it was hit-and-miss
- Faster delivery, visible through tracking: eliminating the need to call patients by default just to check if they’ve received a letter
- Better brand consistency: a result of rationalising and standardising letter templates during service implementation
- Better control over the quality of patient address data
- Visibility for the first time of outgoing mail volumes and costs

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## Dealing with growing pains

Just three months.

That’s how long [Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust](#) had to expand its diabetes eye screening programme by 150%, after being chosen as the screening provider for the whole of north-east London.

Without delay the existing screening service moved to solve expected resource issues — one of which was the need to send out 1,000 more appointment letters every day.

Before the expansion, dispatching eye-screening letters was taking an administrative assistant more than one day every week, mainly to operate the enveloping machine. Turning that into three days was out of the question. In fact, the service wanted that day back, to manage referrals and take patients’ calls in the expanded programme. An obvious solution was to outsource letter dispatch to a specialist hybrid mail provider.

## From challenge to opportunity

Stacy-Ann Thompson works in the trust’s IT and Systems Department, where she’s responsible for electronic documentation throughout the trust. She manages programmes to digitise paper-based workflows, and sees to it that electronic workflows and systems meet the daily needs of staff and patients.

When Thompson learned that the diabetes eye screening programme wanted to procure a hybrid mail service, she saw an opportunity for the whole trust. Not just for Homerton University Hospital, but for the 70-plus other trust sites offering health services to the communities of Hackney and the City of London.

“Everywhere,” she says, “there are staff spending frustrating amounts of time printing letters, folding them, finding appropriate leaflets, stuffing envelopes, addressing them or checking that the envelope window isn’t giving away the contents. Important as all of this is, it’s not exactly the highlight of anyone’s day. And it’s time that could be better spent.”

## It’s all up-side

Six months after a hugely successful hybrid mail rollout for the eye screening programme, community paediatrics became the second service to be migrated to it, freeing 1.5 full-time employees’ worth of secretarial time to respond to the needs of clinicians and patients more quickly and effectively.

“The time we’re saving is particularly noticeable when a secretary is ill or, as now, when we’re recruiting to replace someone who has left,” says Miriam Dixon, Senior Clinic Coordinator for community paediatrics. “Before hybrid mail, we could potentially get into trouble whenever below full strength. Now we can manage with fewer staff if necessary, and deliver a much better service when at full strength.”

From IT’s perspective, the Xerox service is the best kind of solution for at least four reasons:

### 1. User acceptance

There’s no resistance from users because there’s no big change to the way they work. They create letters and reports as before, and press ‘print’ as before. Only now, the rest of the process, the frustrating bit, is handled by Xerox — much more quickly and reliably.

### 2. No complex technology

The service can be integrated with any patient system and doesn’t require processes to be re-engineered.

Essentially you’re just installing a printer, building a server and drop folder, and you’re done.

### 3. New levels of control

For the first time the trust can measure mail volumes and costs. It can track every letter from the moment a secretary presses ‘print’ to when it’s delivered to the patient. All of which is valuable data feeding into future improvements. The trust can also act more promptly to contact patients in a different way if a letter is returned.

There’s also much better quality control. For example, Thompson describes a case where one patient mistakenly got an incorrect attachment with their letter.

“Before we could even blink, Xerox had identified where the error occurred and provided additional training for the device operator to ensure that it didn’t happen again. For ONE error with ONE letter they did this. That gives us a lot of confidence in the service.”

### 4. The perfect excuse to improve

Although there’s a lot to do to specify the process for each use case, this is always a great opportunity to optimise and improve. With eye screening, the migration project uncovered more than 30 different letter templates and reduced these by half. It specified rules for when to use 1st-class postage rather than 2nd. It made changes to the data updating process to improve data quality control. To name just a few examples.

“We have a really productive working relationship with Xerox,” says Thompson. “Whatever we need, they help us do it. If we need to change something, they’re always on the ball. There’s no doubting the value of the hybrid mail service, and we’re moving ahead to roll it out across the trust.”