

## Article

### Playing CLUEGLE: How Dorset solved the problem of the disappearing letters with WCI Healthcare and SharePoint Server

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At the end of the 1990s, staff at Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust worked with local students to build a widely admired store for patient letters and other documents. Recently, they asked WCI Healthcare, part of the Ascribe group of companies, to deliver a Microsoft SharePoint solution to make the system easier to search and ready for future IT developments. Lyn Whitfield reports.

Finding letters and other paper records and then making sure that they are available when they are needed has always been a challenge for the NHS. Finding vital information after hours or in an emergency, when secretaries and other staff have gone home, can be a near impossibility.

That was the problem facing staff at what is now Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. "A decade ago I had three secretaries who typed letters for me, and each of them had their own filing system," says consultant psychiatrist Dr Geoff Searle.

"Searching was straightforward for the secretary who had created the system. But if the secretary was not there, it was difficult to find things because they were all filed in a different way."

Dr Searle and colleagues set about addressing this problem. They found two final-year students from Bournemouth University to build an electronic system in which documents could be stored. They also developed rules for naming the folders in the system so they could be found.

The result was CLUES – the Clinically Useful Enquiry System. "The original CLUES was about keeping letters in an organised way on our servers," says Dr Searle. "It was an 18 month stop-gap system that has been used for ten years."

"The students were tremendous, because they didn't do something very complicated or exciting, but something we needed, that was well structured and that everybody could use. However, it was still problematic because you had to understand the system to find things in it. You had to be able to go the right server and the right folder; there was no search functionality."

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#### The problem

About two years ago, staff at the trust learned that it was likely to be getting a new patient administration system. This meant CLUES needed to become an archive; a store of letters and documents received and generated before the new system came in and this made search essential.

Richard Harris, a technology consultant from WCI Healthcare, says it was approached for advice after senior IT members of the trust attended a Microsoft event and saw how SharePoint Server could solve some of their problems.

"The big issue was that CLUES was done a long time ago by students, and it was done using file shares," he says. "So it worked but nobody could pinpoint documents."

"What we did was to make use of the indexing capabilities of SharePoint. We crawled the file shares to build an index of the different documents, in much the same way that Google crawls the web to build a background for search. Then we built a custom search web part with trust-specific parameters, such as the NHS Number, to make the interface more user-friendly."

Dr Searle says the user group wanted to call the new search CLUEGLE "but we thought Google might be upset about that." However, as far as users are concerned, the similarities are obvious. "There is a box and you put in what you want to find and the data comes up," he says. "Or rather, it tells you where the data is. There is a further step to access it, for confidentiality reasons."

#### The solution

Mr Harris says WCI Healthcare faced two main challenges in building the CLUES SharePoint enhancement. One was that despite the original rules on how folders and documents should be created and labelled, errors and changes had crept in; so there was a need to clean the data to ensure consistent results.

The other was that some of the trust's smaller clinical sites had poor communications links. "The crawling had a big impact on some sites with really low bandwidth, so we split them out into separate content sources and crawled them at weekends and overnight," he says.

Security and confidentiality were also considerations. WCI Healthcare used a dedicated crawler account and mapped the CLUES user group's membership against the trust's Active Directory to determine who should have access to what information.

Even if he can't call it CLUEGLE, Dr Searle is delighted with the result. "The big thing is that you can find stuff, especially stuff you did not expect or know that you had," he says. "Before, you had to know exactly what something was called to find it. Now, we can find things if we do not have all of that information – for example, if we only know a bit of somebody's address."

He points out that this is particularly useful in his present job, heading up Dorset's Crisis Team. "I look after everybody who is becoming acutely ill across Dorset," he says. "The new system means we can find information on people coming into contact with us that we do not already know."

Dr Searle says the trust may now continue to use CLUES even when its new patient administration system is installed. Meanwhile, Mr Harris would like to see the trust making use of some of SharePoint's other capabilities. "The CLUES team could use it to collaborate and share documents," he points out. "That may be something that is developed in time."

**About WCI Healthcare:** For 20 years, WCI Healthcare has worked in partnership with the NHS to deliver solutions that meet the specific process, service and technology needs of healthcare organisations. As a Microsoft Gold Partner, it has a demonstrable track record of delivering solutions that improve patient care, streamline processes and improve efficiency.

**Tags:** clinically usefulequiry system, cluegle, document management, dorset healthcare nhs foundation trust, search, sharepoint

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