



Andy Purvis reveals measures that are being taken to ensure that security remains in rude health

It should be taken as a given that a hospital is a safe place. It is a place for healing, for refuge, for security. It is somewhere where you should feel comfortable. The staff are all experts in their fields and they are helping you get better. While this is happening you shouldn't have to worry about external forces. Doing so will not help the healing process.

The same is true of the medical professionals working within the hospital. To be able to do their jobs properly and to the standard that is required of them, they need to be fully focused. Distractions such as security should not come into their thoughts while reacting to potentially life-threatening situations, whether this be

concerns over the access controlled doors restricting the general public from entering staff-only areas or if the CCTV cameras are operating correctly.

Hospitals are complex buildings, which are always evolving – often at a fast pace. Every expansion calls for regular and ongoing assessments of security risks and safety challenges. Constant structural changes can pose challenges for access control, monitoring movements and defining boundaries.

This is why a fully integrated, security system is so important, as well as the ability to react to even the most unlikely and threatening situations, while making sure it doesn't impact the work of those within the hospital.

Both end users and providers need to stay ahead of the curve to keep the hospital safe

Never has the importance of this been more significant than at one of the UK's busiest Emergency Departments. Take King's College Hospital in Lambeth for example. Located among the highest concentration of gang culture within the UK, as well as having one of the busiest Emergency Departments in Britain, the safety of its 12,000 staff – who treat a staggering 1.5 million patients a year at the hospital – is of paramount importance. So how do you secure such a vast operation?

OPEN-DOOR POLICY

What can not be underestimated is that hospitals are public buildings and operate on a 24/7 basis. You don't have somebody "locking up at the end of the day". Patients, visitors, hospital workers and contractors are constantly streaming in and out of the doors. Therefore, there needs to be the correct balance between securing areas/providing surveillance and the public being able to navigate these vast complexes, while feeling comfortable and safe. Visitors don't want to feel like that they are in a high security prison, but need to feel reassured that they are in a safe environment.

IT IS NOT JUST A CASE OF PUTTING AN EXTRA COUPLE OF CAMERAS BY THE FRONT DOOR

Unfortunately, many of these sites have a mishmash of systems. Some of which have not moved with the times, nor adapted to the increase in size of the properties that they are supposedly "securing". It is likely there is a large number of mechanical digital locks installed to secure doors, which are both cumbersome and also not very secure. Codes are required, and these codes are commonly known throughout the hospital staff, easy to guess and are changed infrequently. Such antiquated systems should not be in any site, let alone hospitals, where security should be a priority.

It is important to note that CCTV and access control measures are not going to completely rid you of crime or incidents. What they can do, however, is assist in identifying suspects, provide evidence of wrongdoing and act as a deterrent to all but the most determined. And such is the size and nature of somewhere like King's College, this technology needs to be state of the art and fully integrated. Currently there are too many CCTV systems that are still analogue and are of very poor quality, meaning that they are failing to do the job at the required standard. It is not just a case of putting an extra couple of cameras by the front door as cheaply as possible. It is about accurate and thorough planning, taking into consideration the complexity and structure of the building, as well as its facilities and grounds.

It is about keeping up with the latest technologies and practices to ensure the safety of all within the hospital. There is no room for complacency.

Just like in other sectors, the security industry landscape is rapidly changing due to the constant technological innovations. What was standard practice a decade ago, is now obsolete with new technologies in place. Even technology less than 12 months old can

seem dated. This rapid change is vital, especially in a world where criminals are becoming more and more sophisticated in their approach. Staying ahead is therefore vital.

Cloud-based systems are something that are becoming ever more popular, and for good reason. By its very nature, the cloud provides the opportunity for high-level data to be stored offsite. This could be important security data or sensitive and valuable client information. Other technologies that are growing in popularity, and should be considered are biometric systems and IP-based CCTV systems. Biometric systems ensure that only the correct persons are entering areas, as opposed to people using other people's cards/codes. A misplaced card could be catastrophic if it falls into the wrong hands, so it is good practice to limit these. Meanwhile, IP-based CCTV systems offer high-definition images and are far more effective, allowing searches for a particular facial image or vehicle number plate.

It is not just down to the end user to stay ahead of the curve. Providers need to keep their finger on the pulse, utilising the very latest innovations in technology, which requires keeping on top of future developments and embracing the digital age. This can be achieved by communicating with leading manufacturers, as well as discussing these new ideas and concepts with the hospital in question. Communication and collaboration is key.

Productive relationships don't just occur over night. They take years of working together and many conversations between supplier and customer. What needs to be established at the very beginning of any relationship, is what outcome the customer wants. A clear vision is vital. Muddled thinking not only causes delays in implementation, but is also not the best foundation to build a successful relationship on.

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

This communication needs to continue in the long-term if there is any hope for a productive and fruitful relationship. Just because security systems are in place, it does not mean the role of the provider is finished. It needs to be there for support, both on a technical level and a consultancy level. For example, if a hospital believes that something is not quite working in the way they expected, they should be comfortable in approaching their security providers, and together working towards a solution.

Securing a hospital is no easy task. There needs to be a consideration of the huge amount of movement that is taking place within the walls, be it the public, medical professionals or hospital staff in general. There needs to be a feeling that the site is accessible but secure. This is why communication, as well as investment in the latest security innovations, is of the utmost importance. Without it, that balance between openness and security will prove difficult to achieve.

Due to its unique location, King's College Hospital in Lambeth is at the epicentre of gang culture within the UK. Along with having one of the busiest Emergency Departments in Britain, this means the safety of its 12,000 staff who treat a staggering 1.5 million patients a year at the hospital, is at the forefront of peoples' minds.

Kent-based NT Security has installed over 900 CCTV cameras since upgrading the hospital's system, as well as ensuring that they are working at the required high standard. The security firm has also fitted over 1,300 access controlled doors, which are recording over 400,000 activations a day.

It is the role of the King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to ensure that the hospital continues to invest a large amount of capital in helping to keep the hospital safe and secure. This investment includes having a very visible security team on duty 24/7, provides reassurance to the

THERE ARE TOO MANY CCTV SYSTEMS THAT ARE STILL ANALOGUE AND ARE OF VERY POOR QUALITY

public as well as ensuring that the relationship with NT Security continues to be fruitful for both parties.

Prior to NT Security's involvement, the hospital had a variety of different systems in place, which were not up to the task due to the volume of access controls needs. NT Security was able to provide a single solution, the ACT PRO. This offers a range of access controls suitable for multi sites and for environments.

The Enterprise software allows the system administrators to facilitate and manage the day-to-day operation of the system, which processes more than 400,000 door actions per day.

NT Security and King's College Hospital have been working closely for the past decade, and the relationship allows them to build an integrated and comprehensive security system. Connections with suppliers has also meant that all three parties are able to work together to ensure the installation is tailored to the very individual needs of the hospital ●

Andy Purvis is Managing Director of NT Security and has been at NT Security since 1993, where he began his career as a Sales Director. He became Chairman and Managing Director in 1998 and has held the position ever since. NT Security specialities include CCTV, Hotel Locking Systems, Access Control, Biometric Identification, Video Analytics, Time and Attendance and more.



Picture credit: King's College Hospital Trust

Biometric systems ensure that only the correct persons are entering areas