

No	Question or comment	Response
1	How do we upgrade the awareness of, and capability for, digitisation of the whole estates team?	<p>The whole estates team needs to understand the organisation’s digital strategy and how they fit into that.</p> <p>The strategy is likely to deal with how to maintain legacy systems until such time as they are integrated or obsoleted.</p> <p>Elsewhere it has been suggested that future estates teams are likely to include a data scientist. It is important for the estates team to understand that this does not relieve them from the need to embrace digital systems but re-assures them that the intention is not to make everyone digital experts. In order to achieve engagement of the team it will be necessary to explain and demonstrate the benefits digitisation will have for each team member. Key elements of upgrading capability must be an understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data do we need to collect? That is, what decision do we need to make and what data do we need to make those decisions evidence based? • How will the data be captured, stored and retrieved? • How will the data be analysed, how often and by whom? • How can we improve our data systems?
2	Agree with this, we will need information and hard data on how this can deliver real long term revenue savings to a Trust and what the potential ROI would be to get it off the ground. Otherwise, it’s all just words and aspirations and unlikely to gain any traction from the board to invest compared to spending more on clinical resources to spending more on clinical resources.? Jeremy? Alex – unpick components before answer	<p>This will completely depend on what the immediate strategic issues are for a Trust. The areas to think about are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining insight and understanding of space efficiency through data analytics around space allocation, utilisation, condition and operational cost of space. This will help inform strategic decision making about real, tangible efficiency improvements on critical areas such as out-patient, A&E, PFI and non-clinical spaces in primary sites. • Focus on levers with a clear causal chain from data → decision → operational change → cash-releasing or cost-avoiding benefits such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Energy optimisation (targeted schemes informed by meter/BMS + asset condition) ~ Maintenance optimisation (shift reactive → planned, reduce repeat failures, better spares/plant strategies) ~ Space utilisation / non-clinical space reduction (consolidation, repurposing, lease exits) ~ Contract & PFI performance (transparent obligations, handback readiness, dispute avoidance)

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ These are all explicitly positioned in our internal NHS estates digitisation materials as the kinds of questions digitisation helps answer (compliance, prioritisation, cost-effectiveness) • We would also encourage you to think about ROI timelines. When would you expect certain investments to generate returns? When would you expect the investments to break even? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ The longer the timeline, the riskier the investment. This is a good way to establish the risk appetite of your board. ~ Typically, a digital product that can generate returns within 1 year of initial investment is deemed as low risk. ~ A product that generates returns within 5-7 years is a medium but reasonable level of risk. ~ A product that generates returns beyond 5-7 years is higher risk. However, if the upfront investment is low, it might be worth it. • We would also encourage you to think about risk transfer. How much of the risk currently carried by the Trust would be transferred to a digital product or service? Where significant risk is transferred to a provider, this might provide added value to the Trust beyond the core service purchased. • With many digital products nowadays, there are multiple business models which involve subscriptions / revenue sharing models / partnerships. The traditional relationship between buyer and seller is changed. This is a key factor in the decision to invest or buy a certain product as there are significant commercial advantages to be achieved with new business models.
3	Do you have some exemplar of where a Trust has been able to move forward on digitisation and how all the various systems we have can be brought together to prove the benefits you have suggested?	<i>Case study to follow</i>
4	Lots of good work going on in the Higher Education sector, particularly Birmingham and Oxford Universities but at the time they had better funding streams	Agreed- the Higher Education sector has been leading the way in estates digitisation, especially universities like Birmingham and Oxford. There is a great deal the NHS can learn from this cross-sector experience. I'd encourage colleagues to explore the UHEI (Universities and Higher Education Institutions) Conference & Exhibition in Oxford (uhei.uk/oxford) , which brings together estates and facilities professionals from across higher education and offers

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		valuable insight into how integrated digital approaches have been successfully implemented. Many of the challenges around data standards, asset management, and space utilisation are directly transferable to NHS estates. <i>UHEI conference</i>
5	A concern for making estate decisions Data Driven means cost and quality over services gets overlooked- resulting in long term complications due to poor service. How would this digitisation avoid this?	<p>Digitisation is not about handing out readymade digital tools – it is about understanding functional requirements and processes and using technology to facilitate and improve delivery of those functions. When applied in this way there will always be efficiency gains and service improvement.</p> <p>Getting accurate quality data that is fundamental to this-and that’s often the biggest issue in the NHS. You need to understand your end point and start gathering the right information and data before making any vast changes. Data collected retrospectively is time consuming and difficult and often will not yield the necessary information on which to base good decisions. You collect data for statutory returns – but this needs to be changed into collecting data for its genuine value and the guidance it gives rather than to check a box. Understanding your end point is a must. Once on the road to this good quality data results in a much better visibility and understanding of your estate and its needs both in the immediate and longer term. This will lead to avoidance or prevention of complications and ultimately better services. Digitisation is not the panacea – understanding your functional requirements and needs is – and digitisation should just make delivery of your functions far more efficient and cost effective.</p>
6	It's currently really hard to get Board support to address Estates Digital issues with the current financial situation and competing demands. What will hopefully be an enabler is the publication of the recent NHSE digital maturity questionnaire. This will then show where individual trusts are on their journey and concentrate Exec minds.	<p>Absolutely right. Securing Board support for estates digital investment is one of the biggest barriers Trusts face. The NHSE Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) is a significant step forward here. Once the national and trust-level DMA reports are published, they will hopefully provide more evidence that Boards need to see: a clear picture of where each Trust sits on its digital maturity journey relative to peers, and where the gaps and risks lie. This kind of benchmarking data makes the case for investment far more compelling than aspirational language alone. It will concentrate Executive minds by making digital estates maturity a visible, measurable, and comparable metric.</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organisations (including NHS Estates teams) are collecting more and more data but the amount of analysis of data is staying the same. 2. Data collection costs money.

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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Money is being wasted collecting data that no-one uses. 4. A low cost starting point is to understand <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. what data are being collected b. how much that costs c. are they being used, if not, either benefit from data analysis or stop wasting time and money collecting the data 5. Data are being provided by many suppliers to Estates: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. has the format been agreed b. is it efficient? 6. No point asking the board for shiny new toys if you are not playing with the old ones. 7. Get your legacy act together first.
7	<p>Integration of an EFM digitisation strategy with Trust ICT strategies will be an important hurdle to overcome- any thoughts on how to bridge the gap which can often exist?</p>	<p>First, understand both the clinical and digital strategy of the wider Trust. Once this is clear then you can review how the estate can support that wider strategy and specifically how estates digitisation can help. This may take the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • embedding technology physically into the estate (e.g. digital wayfinding, sensors, advanced BMS etc) • enabling efficiencies into the estates operational function (cut down manual handling and processing of data, use of AI etc) • improving insight and decision making (join up siloed estates data so that insight and understanding can be improved).
8	<p>NHSE are suggesting that Estates Digital is both raised at Board level and included in future Digital Workstreams ?comment Carl</p>	<p>This is an encouraging and important signal from NHSE. Elevating Estates Digital to Board level and embedding it within future digital workstreams is essential if we are to move beyond piecemeal approaches. The DMA national and trust-level reports should provide stronger evidence for the need to invest in digital estates infrastructure. When Boards can see where their Trust stands on digital maturity compared to the national picture, it creates both accountability and urgency. The key now is ensuring that estates digital is not treated as a secondary consideration within broader digital strategies, but recognised as a critical enabler in its own right, one that underpins operational efficiency, compliance, and long-term estate sustainability.</p>

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9	<p>If we genuinely want to turn the NHS estate from a passive asset into an operational enabler, what specific data standards, ownership models, and accountability mechanisms need to be mandated nationally rather than left to individual Trust interpretation, to ensure estates data is interoperable, trusted, and usable across the full lifecycle from design through to operations and for benchmarking purpose?</p>	<p>This is one of the most critical questions facing NHS estates. If we want truly interoperable, trusted data across the full asset lifecycle, we need nationally mandated standards rather than relying on individual Trust interpretation. The Academic and Industry Partnership (AIP) is doing important work in this space. The AIP brings together universities and industry partners around a common set of technical and ethical principles, focused on ensuring inclusive and sustainable improvements to the built environment through open, interoperable standards. Their work on data standards for both new-build projects and retrofit of legacy estates is directly relevant to the NHS context. We need this kind of collaborative, standards-driven approach mandated nationally to ensure estates data is consistent, interoperable, and usable for benchmarking, strategic planning, and operational decision-making across the full lifecycle from design through to operations.</p>
10	<p>We often see CAFM back-end systems becoming highly advanced, while the front-end tools engineers use for data capture often lag behind- lacking offline capability, usability, or alignment with asset structures. This leads to poor data quality, heavy cleansing work, and again local practices undermining national standards. Are the any central solutions experienced bridge this gap and help ensure data capture in the field is consistent, intuitive, and aligned with central CAFM governance?</p>	<p>Firstly. CAFM systems can be hugely beneficial for streamlining processes like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work orders • space planning • preventive maintenance to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ improve efficiency ~ reduce costs • asset tracking • room booking • energy management. <p>But all of these require a genuine understanding of the landscape in which they are delivered and this requires good data. A CAFM system will not assist if the implementation is not based on your actual needs and processes. The process should not rely on collecting data retrospectively. It is best achieved when you work through what your issues are and decide what data you need to collect. Then set up robust data collection processes that are clear, clean and specific, and easily measurable.</p> <p>I tend to think of digital maturity crudely as a sequence of “bits of paper, spreadsheets, clever IT systems”. This is potentially a painful personal journey, but the jump from “bits of paper” to “clever IT systems” rarely works painlessly. In many cases data are held in spreadsheets which might as well be “bits of paper” because they have been designed in such a way that data analysis is impossible, for simple reasons such as merging cells or dirty</p>

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		data. If the design of spreadsheets is controlled with picklists which do not allow free texting, there is a greater chance that the data will be clean and can be analysed. Although spreadsheets are not the end goal, they can provide the input data to more complex systems based on databases, provided they are properly designed and used.
11	You mentioned "low hanging fruit" a lot- what are examples of easy wins? in terms of digitisation and data collection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use one or 2 systems properly. This will instantly reduce licence costs on multiple systems and the amount of time people take to move data and understanding between systems.• Use your Wi-Fi data to understanding building utilisation.• Simple use of AI to quickly find information and documents.• Look at your filing system and structure. Is it simple clear and well understood. If not then this is simple to change and reduce filing and data handling time.