

Introducing **NZeC** Consultancy
part of **NZeCommerce** Group

In 2007 a leading senior clinician and far sighted management of a 1,000,000 member mutual society's hospital trust, had a dream of setting up a world class Fertility Centre, IVF service and business.



From 2007 to 2009 NZeC founding director Trevor Sharman was working as the interim manager of a programme of commercial projects for the Benenden Hospital Trust with the objective of enabling delivery of a number of profit-making services and facilities, for the benefit of members.

Benenden Healthcare Society with its solid 100 year history of providing healthcare support for public service employees and their families, provides a health insurance product that is in effect an in-expensive back up to the National Health Service for its one million members. While the Benenden Healthcare Society is a nationwide health insurer providing services through a range of 3rd party providers, members in the South East of England and certain specialities nationally were serviced through Benenden's own Hospital Trust.

Benenden Hospital Trust, is a quite large, well run, well staffed, clean, infection free hospital located some 50

miles south east of London, deep in the Kent countryside.

As part of a modernisation effort including better utilisation of the hospitals assets and resources, a range of additional commercial services were being discussed to earn money that would be ploughed back into the hospital and society's coffers for the benefit of members.

New services would be provided to 3 core markets:

- members at a significant discount
- private patients at going rates

- the local NHS which was sourcing services from a growing pool of approved 3rd party providers, at NHS tariff rates

Along-side this project we also set up an Orthopaedic Joints Replacements service (knees and hips) and several more services were in the pipeline to roll out, we delivered a number of other capital improvements, but the jewel in the crown, from my perspective, was the Fertility Centre.

The key players were in need of some dedicated project management to corral their respective views and plan out a clear path demonstrating feasibility, securing funding and pulling together all of the strands of such a complex and potentially challenging project

So I set up a formal project with the first objective being to prepare and get approval for a business case.

Sponsor

The project sponsor and driving force behind the Fertility Centre project was Mr Mohamed Hefni a FRCOG and a world- renowned gynaecologist and fertility expert

The service had long been talked about as a logical extension of an existing service where members were referred, by their GPs, to Mr Hefni and his colleagues who provided a range of procedures, some surgical. Where the patients needed assisted reproduction they were then transferred elsewhere to other specialists in IVF and related procedures. Mr Hefni and his team had an exchange programme and close working relationship with a major IVF unit in London at Guy's Hospital and this meant that they had access to the knowledge and were working in fact in a unit delivering the proposed services.

Business Case

So we had 50 plus potential patients a year and if not all the knowledge we had access to it, potentially we had the facilities (an old block at the centre of the hospital was assessed, earmarked and deemed suitable in early informal discussions). Now we just had to get the money!

Like any other business case we had to research the competition and confirm the numbers and market etc – this was a pretty comprehensive business case and after several iterations we eventually got approval from the:

- Hospital Management Board
- Society Management Board
- Board of Govenors

Components

In order to build on top of the existing fertility centre's services we needed to provide a significantly increased range of infertility treatments and storage options for patients. These all needed to be defined, processes and procedures documented.

Key resources were to be hired and training planned. Interestingly the first embryologist and a major driver in getting us licenced was a kiwi, who commuted out to Kent each week from somewhere up north!

The facilities conversion needed to be planned, costed and approval sought both from the council from a building planning perspective but also, and more importantly from the HFEA (the authority regulating these treatments) and then the government Care Quality Commission (CQC) at various stages.

We converted a pharmacy department building into:

- Main Procedure room & Recovery area
- IVF Operating Theatre
- IVF Lab
- Andrology Lab
- Offices etc

All of these needed appropriate air and other utilities, surface materials of a certain type, formed to remove corners and all set up with the appropriate equipment, furniture & fittings.

Licences and permission to operate – from the HFEA, CQC, the Hospital's own Governance forum.

Finally we had to set up an independent business with all the systems and processes, equipment, accounts including among other things setting the prices & discounts and observing strict rules on patient confidentiality.

Challenges

This was all challenging, although my workload was shared with some quality senior people from various functions still we had to balance the need for extremely high standards, physical constraints, financial & time constraints, multiple stakeholders from varying disciplines including senior clinicians, technicians, managers, external suppliers, builders etc, often with other day jobs, all contributing to a challenging mix of personalities!

For a fairly conservative organisation like Benenden to put its faith in our project team and see it through was fantastic. It was a great opportunity to be there from end to end; capturing a concept on paper, crunching the numbers, documenting and resolving the issues and arguments, co-ordinating and focusing the team,

managing, living breathing the project for several years right through scope, design, documentation, procurement and eventual opening and seeing, from afar via the internet, the first babies that had been born directly as a result of this service.

The project was delivered close to budget and in time no doubt generated significant cashflows back to the society.

The service roll-out was deliberately slow and understandably no promotion or fanfare was made until a number of babies were on the way.

By the time the Benenden Fertility Centre was formally opened in 2012 I had left and moved back to New Zealand.



Trevor Sharman, Director & Principal Consultant
at NZeC Consultancy
... we were there ... making things happen!

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