



Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026

Analogue to Digital Award

Virtual Bones

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Virtual Bones is a clinician-designed digital platform transforming how Emergency Departments (EDs) assess, treat, document and refer musculoskeletal (MSK) injuries, which account for up to 31% of attendances. Developed at West Suffolk Hospital following a Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC) audit that identified avoidable referrals, inconsistent documentation, and reliance on an impractical A1 poster covering 70+ injuries, the solution replaces analogue tools with an interactive mobile and web application.

The platform features an intuitive skeletal interface, structured injury pathways aligned with Trust and British Orthopaedic Association guidance, splinting and casting videos, embedded radiographs, and a live Content Management System enabling instant updates. It supports all clinicians, including locums and rotating junior doctors, by providing standardised point-of-care guidance, while patients receive digital leaflets via QR code or email to promote self-management and reduce paper use.

Designed and delivered by frontline NHS clinicians, and built in partnership with a technology provider, the project combined audit data, staff feedback and iterative PDSA cycles, and was co-produced with multidisciplinary teams. It meets NHS DTAC standards for safety and accessibility and bridges long-standing gaps between ED and Trauma & Orthopaedics.

Evaluation at West Suffolk across 518 patients demonstrated significant improvements, including reduced ED time (166 to 122 minutes), increased patient information provision, and fewer inappropriate VFC referrals. Documentation quality improved, clinic capacity increased, and £167,808 in annual inefficiency costs were avoided. Following recognition with the 2024 HSI Digital Award, the platform is now being implemented at East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust, with further rollout in progress.