NHS trusts turn away Palantir data platform

LEVEL C1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What public services in your country rely most on data?
2. When should a public body replace an IT system?
3. What makes people trust or distrust a technology supplier?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

platform
A digital system that supports connected tools and data.

effectiveness
How well something works and achieves results.

duplicative
Needlessly repeating what another system already does.

revert
To go back to a previous state or system.

transparency
Clear, open sharing of information so people can see decisions.

interoperability
Different systems working together through shared standards.

procurement
The process of buying goods or services for an organisation.

lobbyist
A person paid to influence government decisions.

III. READING

Many NHS trusts in England are declining to use Palantir's £330m Federated Data Platform, saying it brings little advantage over tools already in place.

While a few sites reported gains in waiting-list management, FOI responses show 16 trusts and boards do not use the platform; some reverted to their old systems after trials.

Examples range from Greater Manchester's care board calling the system duplicative and retrograde, to University Hospitals Birmingham expecting limited benefit. Others, such as University Hospitals of North Midlands, said existing solutions were sufficient.

The disclosures, gathered by Medact and posted on the transparency site WhatDoTheyKnow, come as Andy Burnham's government weighs a break clause in the seven-year deal. Palantir's senior vice-president and lobbyist Tom Watson argues rivals had a fair chance in open procurement.

Meanwhile, two parliamentary committees have urged ending the contract, and Martin Wrigley says the NHS should prioritise interoperability over a single supplier. Public protests add pressure, amid concern about Palantir's wider associations and the platform's effectiveness.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Palantir patient data tech rejected by many...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much is the NHS data platform contract worth?
2. How many trusts and boards said they do not use the platform?
3. What did some sites say the platform improved?
4. Which decision is the government currently considering?
5. What alternative does Martin Wrigley say the NHS should prioritise?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should public bodies accept small gains if trust is low? Why?
2. What evidence would show a health data platform is effective?
3. Is one national system better than interoperable local systems?
4. How should protests influence procurement choices in health?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Adding emphasis - inversion with negative adverbials

Place a negative or limiting adverbial (Never, Seldom, Little, Not only, Only after, etc.) at the start, then invert: auxiliary + subject + verb. With Not only, invert only the first clause.

*"**Not only did one board** reject the system, but it also called it retrograde."*

*"**Seldom do boards** report clear gains beyond local systems."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Choose the correct option in each sentence.

1. Never (have some trusts / some trusts have) adopted it. _____
2. Seldom (a contract has / has a contract) drawn such protest. _____
3. Only after trials (did some trusts / some trusts did) drop it. _____
4. Little (patients know / do patients know) who holds their data. _____
5. Rarely (is a tender / a tender is) this open, says Watson. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: FOI (freedom of information), break clause, interoperable/interoperability, procurement. Highlight that 'duplicative' and 'revert' are common in tech/government news.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist (why some trusts declined) then detail (numbers, names). The topic touches politics and public services; start opinions in pairs and keep comments about protests focused on policy impact, not personal beliefs.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise one paragraph in one sentence; others underline evidence phrases (figures, sources, committees). Allow students to consult the vocabulary box during questions.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick poll, then pair up students to argue for or against accepting small gains; push for a concrete example from the text.
2. Elicit measurable outcomes first (waiting times, cost, accuracy). Ask for one metric and how to collect it.
3. Split the room: one side for a single national system, the other for interoperability; after 3 minutes, swap speakers to summarise the other side's point.
4. List possible effects of protests (media, politics, public trust). Keep debate on policy choices, not personal views.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, prepare 2-minute opening statements for or against exercising the break clause, then rebut for 1 minute.

Writing: Write a 90-word briefing note summarising the FOI findings for a hospital board meeting.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Adding emphasis - inversion with negative adverbials

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much is the NHS data platform contract worth?
   £330m.
2. How many trusts and boards said they do not use the platform?
   Sixteen.
3. What did some sites say the platform improved?
   Waiting-list management.
4. Which decision is the government currently considering?
   Whether to use a break clause in the seven-year deal.
5. What alternative does Martin Wrigley say the NHS should prioritise?
   Interoperability over a single supplier.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Choose the correct option in each sentence.

1. Never (have some trusts / some trusts have) adopted it. **have some trusts**
2. Seldom (a contract has / has a contract) drawn such protest. **has a contract**
3. Only after trials (did some trusts / some trusts did) drop it. **did some trusts**
4. Little (patients know / do patients know) who holds their data. **do patients know**
5. Rarely (is a tender / a tender is) this open, says Watson. **is a tender**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Place a negative or limiting adverbial (Never, Seldom, Little, Not only, Only after, etc.) at the start, then invert: auxiliary + subject + verb. With Not only, invert only the first clause. (Examples constructed.)

*"**Not only did one board** reject the system, but it also called it retrograde."*

*"**Seldom do boards** report clear gains beyond local systems."*