

# Online platforms for networks & Communities of Practice (COPs)



“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis”<sup>1</sup>

The literature shows that ‘investment in technology offers no guarantees for gathering collective intelligence’.<sup>2</sup> Using existing networks, where people already know each other, and combining technology with face-to-face engagement, is a more successful approach. On the next pages are some existing platforms you might want to consider.

It is recommended that you:

- Establish a code of conduct and identify priorities
- Select a technology that is based on user need (consider digital literacy skills)
- Select something intuitive and user-friendly
- Have at least one dedicated site administrator (two is preferable)
- Post regularly
- Document lessons learned<sup>3</sup>

Levels of participation will vary within the group, but the coordinators should take responsibility for ensuring the site stays vibrant and up-to-date.

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<sup>1</sup> Etinne Wenger, taken from NHS Digital ‘Collaboration’ postcard <http://kfh.libraryservices.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Collaboration.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Health Foundation. (2014). *Effective networks for improvement: developing and managing effective networks to support quality improvement in healthcare* p. 19  
<https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/EffectiveNetworksForImprovement.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://wenger-trayner.com/resources/slide-forms-of-participation/>

<b>Site/ Platform</b>	<b>About</b>
<b>FutureNHS Collaboration Platform</b>	<p>A secure online hub originally developed for vanguards, new care model teams and other stakeholders. Includes “workstreams” where registered users can store and access documents, have discussions, collaborate and learn.</p> <p><a href="https://future.nhs.uk/">https://future.nhs.uk/</a></p>
<b>Yammer</b>	<p>A kind of corporate social media – groups can be created with those internal, and external to the organisation, providing the administrator’s organisation has access to Yammer through Office365</p> <p><a href="https://www.yammer.com/">https://www.yammer.com/</a></p>
<b>NHS Networks</b>	<p>A free NHS approved networking site (not just for NHS staff). Create your own network (group) sites or join existing networks (groups).</p> <p><a href="https://www.networks.nhs.uk/">https://www.networks.nhs.uk/</a></p>
<b>SharePoint</b>	<p>Web-based collaborative file-sharing platform, community-type sites can be created if the network administrator has access to Office365. Good for version control and document management.</p> <p><a href="https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/What-is-SharePoint-97b915e6-651b-43b2-827d-fb25777f446f">https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/What-is-SharePoint-97b915e6-651b-43b2-827d-fb25777f446f</a></p>
<b>MSTeams</b>	<p>Microsoft Teams is part of the Office365 suite. It is a chat-based workspace where teams can collaborate, share documents and videoconference. You can create channels and threads.</p> <p><a href="https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/video-what-is-microsoft-teams-422bf3aa-9ae8-46f1-83a2-e65720e1a34d?ui=en-US&amp;rs=en-GB&amp;ad=GB">https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/video-what-is-microsoft-teams-422bf3aa-9ae8-46f1-83a2-e65720e1a34d?ui=en-US&amp;rs=en-GB&amp;ad=GB</a></p>
<b>Slack</b>	<p>A ‘workflows’ site for team/ project work. Create team threads, channels and workspaces.</p>

	<a href="https://slack.com/">https://slack.com/</a>
<b>Knowledge Hub</b>	Digital collaboration platform used by the public sector, and wider. Create your own groups (not all group types free).  <a href="https://khub.net/help-and-support/-/wiki/Main/Groups">https://khub.net/help-and-support/-/wiki/Main/Groups</a>

### Existing networks

<b>The Edge</b>	For anyone engaged in developing health and care in a positive and progressive way - hosted by the Horizon Group of NHS England. <a href="http://theedge.nhsiq.nhs.uk/">http://theedge.nhsiq.nhs.uk/</a>
<b>Doctors.net</b>	The largest and most active online professional network for all UK doctors, including medical students. Must be GMC registered to join. <a href="https://www.doctors.net.uk/">https://www.doctors.net.uk/</a>
<b>NHS Networks</b>	As well as being able to create sites there are hundreds of existing networks you can join, or apply to join. Full directory here: <a href="https://www.networks.nhs.uk/network_finder">https://www.networks.nhs.uk/network_finder</a>
<b>CHAIN (Contact, Help, Advice and Information Network)</b>	Open to anyone working in health and social care, in the public, voluntary, educational or private sector. <a href="http://chain.ulcc.ac.uk/chain/index.html">http://chain.ulcc.ac.uk/chain/index.html</a>
<b>FutureNHS Collaboration Platform</b>	As well as the ability to create workstreams there are lots of pre-existing workstreams that registered users could request to join or immediately join depending on the access permissions.

<b>Other apps (some of these may be blocked by NHS trusts and other organisations)</b>	
<b>Google Groups</b>	Can be used online or email-based to host discussions, make plans or organise events. <a href="https://support.google.com/groups/answer/46601?hl=en">https://support.google.com/groups/answer/46601?hl=en</a>
<b>Facebook</b>	Most people are familiar with this social networking site, but closed and open groups are increasingly being used for networking. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527/">https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527/</a>
<b>Twitter</b>	Often used to follow breaking news and for current information. You can use hashtags (#s) to follow updates or have Twitter chats on a topic or create lists of accounts that share something in common. <a href="https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585#">https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585#</a>
<b>LinkedIn</b>	Create groups with professionals in the same industry or with similar interests. Often used for networking and for advertising/ finding job opportunities. <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/1164/groups-overview?lang=en">https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/1164/groups-overview?lang=en</a>
<b>WhatsApp</b>	A popular free instant messaging service. Create group conversations, share links, video and images instantly via the internet. <a href="https://www.whatsapp.com/about/">https://www.whatsapp.com/about/</a>
<b>Microsoft Kaizala</b>	Part of the Office365 suite Microsoft describe it as “a simple and secure mobile chat app for work”. <a href="https://products.office.com/en/business/microsoft-kaizala">https://products.office.com/en/business/microsoft-kaizala</a>