

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



“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 in educational settings it is not the technology that makes a network or COP successful.<sup>2</sup> Using existing networks, where people already know each other, and combining technology with face-to-face engagement, is more a 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>23</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> Hanwald, R. (2013) 'Teachers' learning in online communities of practice: two case studies from Australia.' *International Conference on Educational Technologies*.

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

Site/ Platform	About
<b>Yammer</b>	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. <a href="https://www.yammer.com/">https://www.yammer.com/</a>
<b>NHS Networks</b>	A free NHS approved networking site (not just for NHS staff). Create your own network sites or join existing networks. <a href="https://www.networks.nhs.uk/">https://www.networks.nhs.uk/</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>
<b>Slack</b>	A ‘workflows’ site for team/ project work. Create team threads and workspaces. <a href="https://slack.com/">https://slack.com/</a>
<b>SharePoint</b>	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. <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>
<b>Existing networks</b>	
<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.nhsig.nhs.uk/">http://theedge.nhsig.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>Other apps (some of these are likely to be blocked by some trusts and 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 threads (#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>

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