

Case Study: Developing the NWPDN as a placement for Pre-registration learners

Summary

The North West Placement Development Network (NWPDN) in collaboration with University of Liverpool worked together to develop the NWPDN as a placement area. This placement was developed in order to increase and expand learning opportunities for pre-registration healthcare learners to prepare them to be part of the future health care workforce. This project initially explored the concept of providing a two week spoke placement for pre-registration nursing students in the 2nd or 3rd year of their degree programme. A spoke timetable linking to key stakeholders that tie in with the NWPDN has been developed highlighting learning opportunities to complement and expand on learners' knowledge of the Network.

- To date we have supported two students with a third due to commence placement.
- Taking students has led to a better understanding of student perspectives in relation to placement expectations
- There has been an increase in student, and stakeholder engagement with the Network.
- Feedback from students has encouraged the professionals involved to step back and reflect on their own professional practice
- Improved collaborative communications with key stakeholders.



Background

The NWPDN is funded by Health Education England and is hosted by University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust.

The North West Placement Development consists of both nursing and allied health professionals, working in collaboration with HEIs (Higher Education Institutions), NHS organisations and care providers across three localities within the North West to develop sufficient capacity to ensure high quality learning environments across the North West region for a range of healthcare learners. This includes working across primary care, community, NHS, private, independent, and voluntary organisations.

The aim is to ensure the future workforce are fit for purpose and fit for practice to work across different care settings, with a multi-disciplinary ethos.

The project was set up to reflect our mission statement **'Enhancing health and social care learning experiences, to deliver excellence, choice and breadth beyond traditional boundaries to meet the needs of the future workforce.'**

It provides a non-typical experience for learners beyond traditional boundaries. The experience encompasses the application of clinical knowledge to leadership, decision making and strategic thinking, but also complements the learners' knowledge and experience.

Other factors that led to the set up of the NWPDN as a learning environment included the need to lead from the front when developing new placements by setting an example to new organisations who wish to become learning environments. In addition to this, there is a recognised need for leadership and management skills within the health care sector to help improve quality of care, manage resources effectively and deal with the challenges of a constantly changing

environment. It is important that health care learners are equipped with these skills so that they can lead improvements and champion quality from the frontline.

Key Aims

Learning environments need to be developed to reflect the diverse range of skills and knowledge required for the healthcare workforce. By developing a learning environment within the Cheshire and Mersey (C&M) team we aim to;

- Complement the learners clinical knowledge and enable them to apply it to strategic development
- Increase strategic awareness of the health economy
- Develop decision making and knowledge management skills at a strategic and commissioning level
- Gain an understanding of the diverse range of healthcare roles including primary care and allied health professionals
- Gain an understanding of the requirements for quality learning environments and how these are assured



Key Stages of Set-up

Initially the C&M team of the NWPDN met with the academic link from the University of Liverpool to discuss learning opportunities with the Network and explore opportunities for spokes with stakeholders. The NWPDN Toolkit (see Appendix 1) was then utilised to capture the placement information including all mentors details, possible learning opportunities and how the placement would link with spokes. This information was then used to complete the Practice Learning Support System (PLSS) profile so that the information about the learning environment was available to learners prior to the start of placement. The C&M team then developed a Learner Welcome Pack (see Appendix 2) which included workbook questions to help the learner gain the most from the placement. An educational audit of the learning environment was completed and the placement was opened as a spoke experience for learners.

The whole process from completing the toolkit, discussing with the team and meeting with the link lecturer from the University of Liverpool to finalising the audit took approximately eight weeks. Following this the first student was welcomed at the end of November 2015.

How it Works

The education provider (University of Liverpool) identifies and allocates a pre-registration learner who would be interested in a leadership/management spoke placement and notifies the NWPDN C&M team. Spoke placements are a short two week placement incorporated within the hub placement which is usually ten to twelve weeks in length. Spoke placements allow students to diversify their learning experience whilst on a hub placement (see Fig. 1).

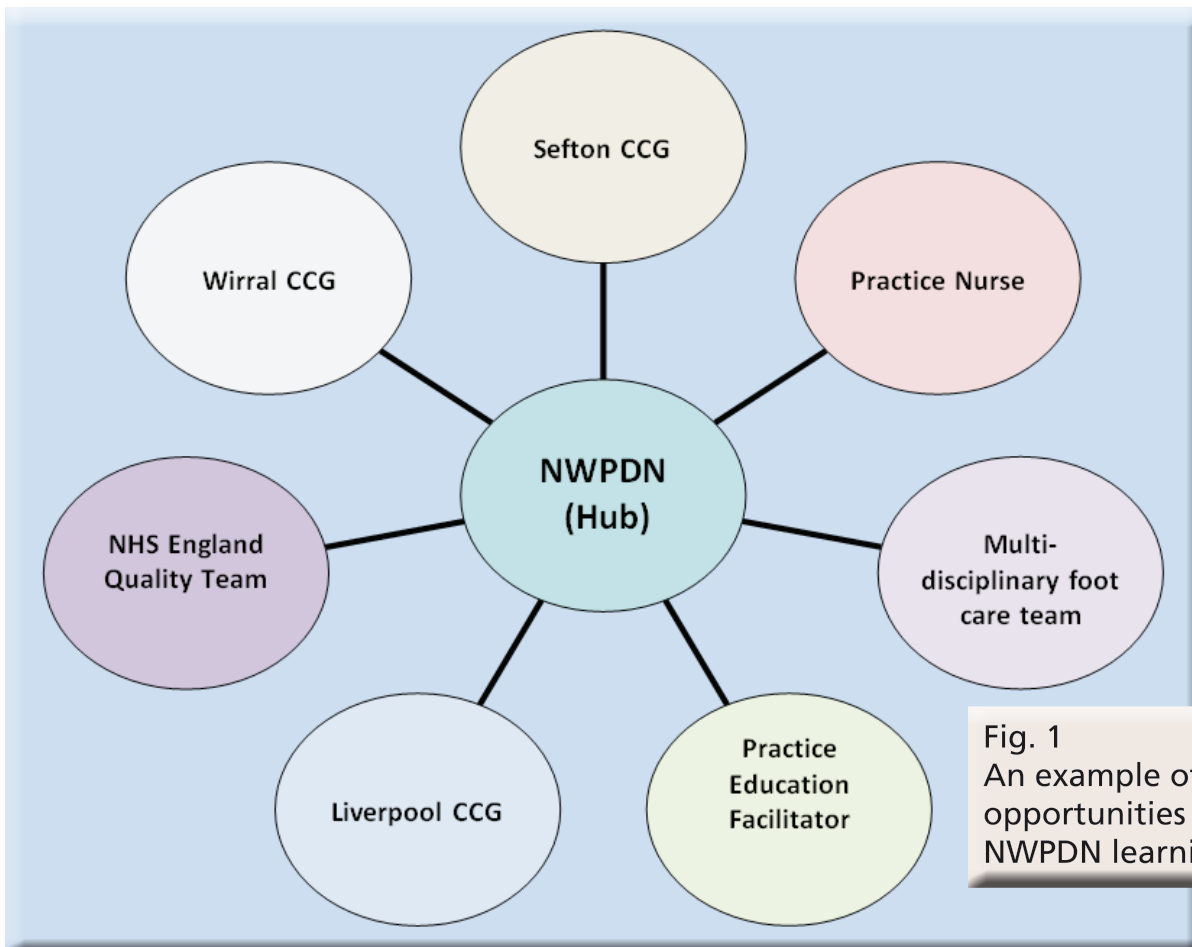


Fig. 1
An example of spoke learning opportunities available in the NWPDN learning environment

The mentor within the team contacts potential spokes for availability and drafts a spoke timetable to link in with learning opportunities in the Network. Learners spend two weeks with the Network which also incorporates day visit opportunities. The mentor sends out the welcome pack prior to the learner arriving to increase the learner's background knowledge and understanding of the placement. The learner attends the placement and has an initial meeting with the mentor to review learning outcomes. Learning opportunities are identified as well as how they might be achieved. The learner spends time with the named mentor and with each member of the team to learn about the role.

During their time on placement students spend time observing various meetings with key stakeholders and have the opportunity to follow through the process of developing and opening placement areas. In addition to these opportunities students are also invited to spend either a full or half day with our collaborative partners: CCG's, Practice Nurses, Allied Healthcare Professionals (AHPs) and other health and social care providers. The mentor and learner meet throughout the spoke to identify learning opportunities, consolidate knowledge, and reflect on and evaluate the learner's experience.

Feedback from learners has been positive - they enjoyed increasing their knowledge of health care services as well as realising the opportunities and challenges of educating the future healthcare workforce.

Resources

The most significant resource is time of the following staff;

- Placement Development Managers – co-ordination of placement and mentorship of student
- Placement Development Lead – co-ordination of student and mentorship of student
- Mentors from the spoke learning environments that link in to the placement – supporting and mentoring the student

Key Challenges

- Learner expectations – learners were unsure of relevance of placement to their course. This was addressed by providing the learner with a workbook aspect of the welcome pack with information about the placement and questions for reflection
- Learners were concerned about the lack of 'hands on' patient care. This was addressed by providing a choice of spokes within the placement that provide direct patient contact and also by enabling the learners to understand how they can apply their clinical knowledge to develop placements
- Ensuring that learners were able to capture the diverse role of the NWPDN. This was addressed by enabling the student to work with different members of the team and spoke out to the Networks' key stakeholders
- Understanding of learning opportunities within the placement. This was addressed by encouraging the learner to identify own learning opportunities using reflective practice and consolidation of knowledge
- Travel – the placement requires travel to different sites across the North West. This was addressed by ensuring the mentor co-ordinates placements that are accessible to the learner

Key Learning

- The learner needs to have background knowledge of the placement so that they can fully engage in the learning opportunities being provided.
- Providing a rotation of spoke placements means the learner is able to underpin their knowledge by seeing its application in the health economy.
- Evaluations from the learners will be used to inform and improve the experience for future learners.

Sustainability

Future placements in the Network will be facilitated by the distribution of a completed student timetable, with a directory of possible spokes available that can be utilised depending on the needs of the learner. Feedback from the learners will be used to constantly monitor and evaluate the placement.

Next steps

- Development of further spokes to build up a spoke directory
- A formal evaluation form to be added to the welcome/information pack, as currently spoke placements are not evaluated.
- Explore the possibility of supporting a wider range of health care learners

Supporting Material

- Appendix 1 – North West Placement Development Toolkit
- Appendix 2 - Learner Welcome Pack

Further Links

[North West Placement Development website](#)

[Better Leadership for Tomorrow, NHS Leadership Review, Department of Health, 2015](#)

[The NHS Five Year Forward View, NHS England 2014](#)

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