

# Case Study: Evidence Champions: a programme for commissioners of health and care services

Supporting innovation and improvement by transforming the way in which evidence is applied in the commissioning of health and care services. A collaborative initiative between Innovation Agency (Academic Health Science Network for the North West Coast) and CETAD, Lancaster University.

This postgraduate programme is a unique, enhanced, evidenced based approach to health and care services commissioning that aims to support a culture of innovation, improvement and transformation. The programme has recently been completed by a group of clinical and senior managers responsible for commissioning services on behalf of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and local authorities within the North West Coast (Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire & South Cumbria). The programme took learning from the GP clinical evidence fellows initiative in the West of England AHSN. Building on this, by providing an educational offer to commissioning managers and GPs, a partnership was formed between the Innovation Agency and CETAD, Lancaster University's Centre of Excellence in Work-Based Learning.

After working with NHS England to develop a commissioning tool that focussed on research and evidence in practice, the Innovation Agency recognised that there was a need for investment in developing evidence based skills and capacities for commissioners of health and care services. The specific target group being GPs, trainee GPs and Senior Commissioning managers from Primary Care, CCGs and Local Authorities.

Innovation Agency approached CETAD to co-design a new initiative. CETAD was able to co-create a bespoke learning programme with the Innovation Agency, and delivered a postgraduate improvement and innovation programme to meet the needs of the commissioners from both the health sector and local authority: namely, a Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice (Evidence Based Commissioning).



Innovation Agency was not specifically looking for a traditional academic themed content based programme, but sought to collaborate with CETAD on the basis of their reputation for delivering high quality, work-based approaches, and their reputation of being able to support a culture of innovation, improvement and transformation complemented by the academic rigour, standards and quality of a Postgraduate Certificate.

A fully funded programme of training, developing knowledge and skills for evidence-based enquiry, complete with action learning, coaching and mentoring led the way to an opportunity to create a community of practice across the North West. The programme applied a 'real world' context that also allowed for learning from work-based projects. Participants identified key projects to meet their own development needs in their specific commissioning areas, and each project had to deliver benefits for their host organisation that demonstrated their commitment to the innovation and improvement agenda. Benefits included; improved patient experience, service improvements, cost efficiencies, clinical outcomes, community care initiatives and increased staff and stakeholder engagement.

Throughout the programme, participants consolidated and extended their evidence-based practice by sharing, reviewing and reflecting on their learning.

The programme started in January 2017 and ended in January 2018 with the participants' project outputs and learning being shared and implemented within the wider health and care commissioning community.

## Participant Quotes



**For the first time I have been able to undertake a course that has given me the theoretical learning across the entire commissioning cycle.”**



**My understanding of the use of Quality Improvement methodologies has significantly increased. I now love a much more structured approach when commissioning new services.”**

Due to the success of this programme the initiative continues to grow with the launch of a new programme in March 2018. This has been achieved as a result of a collaborative partnership between Innovation Agency, in partnership with Connected Health Cities (CHC), and CETAD Lancaster University. The new programme aims at extending evidence based digital approaches to support health and care service development and commissioning with a focus on data analytics, digital technologies, research synthesis, evaluation and governance.

## Key Outcomes

Positive results from the overall programme allowed for learning from work-based projects to meet participants' development needs in their specific commissioning areas, which also delivered benefits for their host organisation. Project outcomes are recorded in more detail in Appendix 1.

An overview of the projects completed and presented:

- Innovative Community Chronic Pain management Service Redesign Pilot “iHELP” (integrated, Holistic, Empowering, Learning, Programme)
- Implementation of pathway for suspected upper gastrointestinal cancers
- Direct Payments – To review the current Direct Payment process for Adult Social Care within Lancashire to identify service improvements, savings and efficiencies.
- Increasing the detection and diagnosis of Hypertension – finding the unknown 45,000 Hypertensives across Wirral
- Pennine Lancashire – The emerging change management system and its delivery of RightCare
- Introduction of End of Life Care Plan for use in the community.
- Using a critical appraisal of best practice of integrated health and social care to improve the performance of Better Care Fund schemes in Cheshire East
- Development of the re-ablement service in Lancashire
- Integrated Diabetes model
- Improving patient experience between Hospital Urgent Care and Accident and Emergency
- Improving Access to GP Services in Wirral during weekday evenings and at the weekend

### Positive Personal Outcomes from participants



**I now feel much more confident in selecting the most appropriate tool to use in different situations. This will have a definite benefit in my future commissioning projects, allowing a more defined way of considering problems.”**

*Dr G. Wallis*



**Establishing a community of practice has supported me through the process and has been invaluable.”**

*Dr S. Stokes*



**The course has added credibility to me as a commissioner. The tools and techniques are invaluable.”**

*E. Leigh*



**I learnt practical tools and approaches based on established models to support the progression of a project within the organisation.”**

*N. Holt*



**The course has made me a confident, innovative leader to champion evidence based commissioning, not only in the CCG but in all areas of work interfaces.”**

*Dr V. Mittal*

Participants, including one now based in Singapore who joined in via Skype, presented their work-based improvement projects, results and outcomes to Senior CCG Managers, Members of Innovation Agency Management Team and CETAD representatives at the Innovation Centre at Daresbury, and received the following feedback:

'It has been very rewarding to have been involved in the work of the Evidence Champions, the programme was originally set up to provide clinical and local authority commissioners with a structured educational framework that supports them to effectively use evidence to ensure best practice in the commissioning cycle. From my perspective, the programme has done more than that. The champions have also learned about improvement science and how to use a methodical approach to managing commissioning projects that will bring about change in outcomes, experience of care and better resource usage. An original ambition for this programme was to increase awareness of evidence-based commissioning practice so that it impacts upon the wider culture in our health and care systems, I believe that we are doing that by continuing to grow our Evidence Champions as a community of practice; transferring learning from this work within organisations and beyond'.

*Juliette Kumar Associate Director for Improvement & Education, Innovation Agency*

'The day provided an excellent showcase for the projects which addressed a wide range of issues in health and social care. It was clear that the course participants had gained useful insights and tools to take with them into the workplace and future roles'

*Elaine Johnstone, Senior Director, NHS Midlands & Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit*

'I found the presentations really informative. To see how each project aligned to individual roles and organisational priorities as well as highlighting the similarities was most interesting. I hope to see the findings shared wider to help further facilitate the roll out of best practice which I witnessed from the project presentations'

*Karen Sharrocks, Head of Strategy & Corporate Services, Chorley, South Ribble & Greater Preston CCG*

'Being here today, listening to the quality improvement projects undertaken and the impact they have made already has been truly remarkable. Hearing the presentations from our initial alumni on the Clinical Commissioning Evidence Champions programme was truly inspirational. It was an honour and a privilege to be present to see and hear how well everyone has progressed through their programme of learning: some remarkable personal learning journeys and excellent, relevant improvement projects are clearly evident.'

*Greta Grindell, on behalf of Director of Collaborative Partnerships / Director of Client Programmes, CETAD*

## Background

### Innovation Agency

The Innovation Agency is one of 15 Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) across England, established by NHS England in 2013 to spread innovation at pace and scale – improving health and generating economic growth. Innovation Agency is based at Sci-Tech Daresbury and covers Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and South Cumbria, with around 4.1 million residents. The footprint includes 22 NHS providers, 19 CCGs, nine universities and a large number of life science industry partners and small to medium size businesses (SMEs). The core purpose is to spread innovation, improve health and generate economic growth, by supporting health and care system transformation; providing support to SMEs with products to benefit health care; delivering a programme of patient safety improvement; driving the adoption of digital innovations; and collaborating with the national AHSN Network.

### CETAD

Established in 1990, CETAD operates as a successful Work Based Learning Centre, with expertise in work-based learning, leadership, organisational change, innovation and improvement. The centre is located within the Management School at Lancaster University. With a sound knowledge of the NHS improvement agenda and HEE expectations for workforce and organisation development, the Centre is able to support both individual and organisational development through a broad range of CPD modules, accredited programmes and innovation and improvement initiatives. CETAD's Work Based Learning approach ensures programmes of learning are practical, relevant and focussed on applying learning into workplace practice. Staff are experienced in working with employees at different levels across the NHS, with sound knowledge and understanding of the challenges and issues facing professionals in the context of their roles.

Innovation Agency was driven to set up the initiative after learning from experiences of GP clinical fellows in the West of England AHSN, as well as from work with NHS England in developing a commissioning tool. This was because there was little evidence of the systematic use of research in the commissioning cycle. Furthermore, Commissioners received little or no formal training in the sourcing and assimilating of evidence for use in their commissioning practice. It was hypothesised that by improving the use of evidence in commissioning practice it would increase the likelihood of better outcomes for service users. Innovation Agency sought to work with CETAD to develop a course aimed at Commissioners of health and care services. It also wanted to bring into active use the commissioning tool, and build a community of practice for knowledge transfer of evidence based commissioning across the North West Coast.

### Key Aims

- Develop knowledge and skills for evidence based approaches to commissioning
- Establish a culture committed to clinical evidence based practice in the commissioning process
- Facilitate application of learning into real workplace practices
- Create a community of Evidence Based champions across the North West Coast

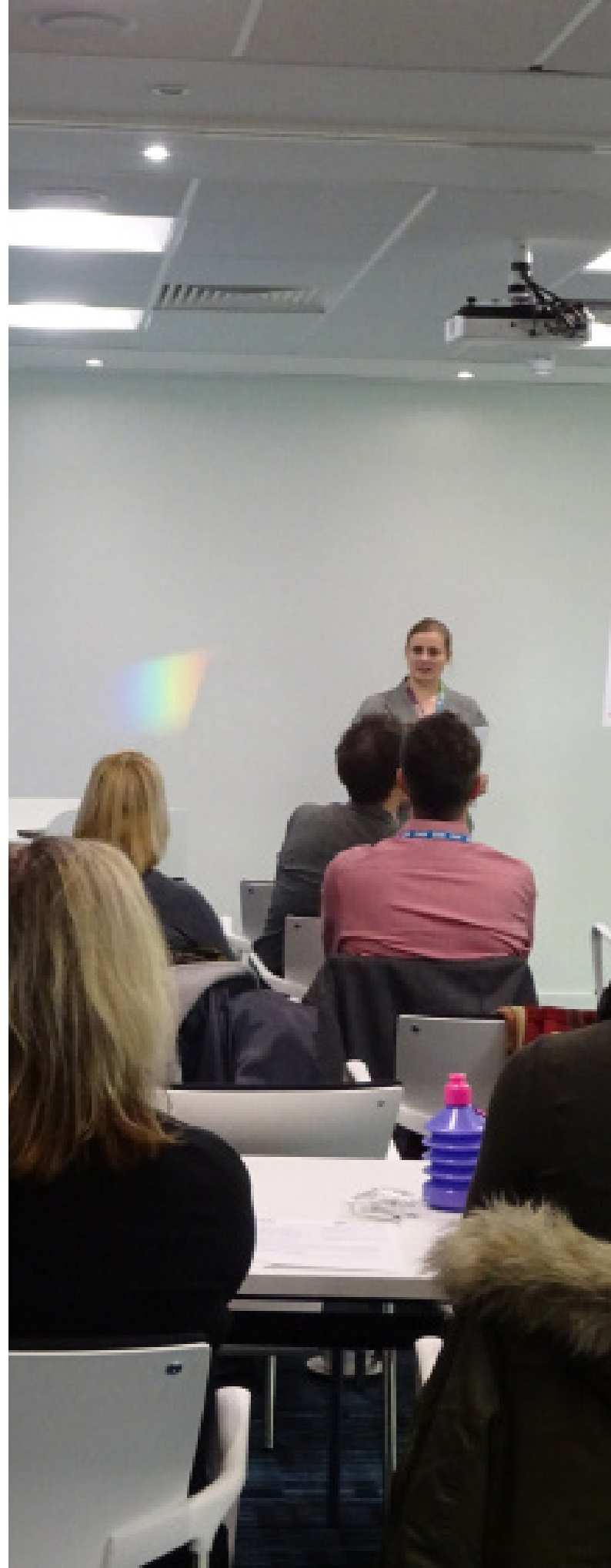
## Key Stages of Set-up

When setting up and running this project Jan Metcalfe, Director of Collaborative Partnerships at CETAD, liaised closely with Innovation Agency's Head of Programmes, Julia Reynolds, and Director for Improvement & Education Manager, Juliette Kumar. The emphasis was on collaborative working between Innovation Agency and CETAD to deliver an innovative, bespoke programme for the CCG.

CETAD staff aimed to deliver the post graduate element of the programme and Innovation Agency would support with input from associated CCG members for specific evidence based support workshops. The draft programme, created in consultation with the key members of the team, was submitted and approved by Innovation Agency.

After a competitive interview process, 13 successful candidates, a mix of doctors, consultants, commissioning managers and allied health professionals started the programme in January 2017. 12 people successfully completed including one who had relocated to Singapore and was able to complete her project and present her project work through use of today's technology of Skype and Zoom.

In consultation with CETAD, Innovation Agency Director for Improvement & Education, set the criteria for evaluating the impact of the programme at key stages of delivery and completion. This was to monitor the individual learning development, the outcomes of participant learning activities, the impact of work-based learning activities on improving evidence based commissioning in practice and the impact of the projects within the wider agenda.



## How it Works

Candidates had to demonstrate their commitment to evidence based innovative initiatives, improvement projects and personal development as part of the course selection process. The successful candidates enrolled onto a bespoke Postgraduate Programme in Professional Practice (Evidence Based Commissioning). The programme sessions were delivered at the Innovation Agency Centre, Daresbury.

A designated CETAD tutor delivered underpinning perspectives on developing as a Professional Practitioner, developing oneself as a learner through evidence based commissioning models and frameworks and recognising the importance of culture, values and behaviours: whilst engaging and influencing others for change within their organisation. Both Innovation Agency and CETAD staff supported the wider aspects of evaluation in terms of measuring outcomes and impact together with delivery of planning and undertaking effective work based project management.

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As all the participants were deemed eligible and recognised as committed to developing their practice around evidence based clinical commissioning, their programme was fully funded through the Innovation Agency. In-kind contributions, in terms of time and expertise, were provided by internal development specialists and project sponsors. Academic fees and sessional backfill for GPs and GP trainees was made available for applicants in the North West Coast, including Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and South Cumbria.

## Key Challenges

### The key challenges identified by participants included:

#### Project challenges

- Managing multiple providers
- Keeping to timelines
- Impact of interdependencies
- Delays in decision making due to governance process of different organisations
- Leadership – lack of legitimacy across external organisations
- Several parties being involved, with competing interests, which proved to be a challenge

All the challenges really stemmed from the first problem identified, which is working with multiple providers. Each organisation has their own priorities and agendas. A lack of familiarity with the processes and knowledge of individuals which have decision making authority sometimes hampered progress and led to some projects not keeping to timelines.

Key to this is that it is important that assurance is gained at the outset about what is achievable and that providers are held to account over this. This was addressed as appropriate and a learning point for taking forward to the next programme.

Keeping programme participants on board working on a post graduate qualification and a work-based project when their everyday jobs are already very demanding.

*Through action-learning set (ALS) participation, coaching, informal feedback to university tutors and formal feedback via the evaluation process, the pressures and strains participants were working under were always under taken into consideration.*

*Where appropriate, individual coaching support for work-based projects was provided, and personal and professional support to individual participants when needed were accommodated for example one participant had a hearing impairment and a Note Taker attended sessions to support students' needs.*

The fact that not all participants had protected time to carry out projects and assessment work meant participants had to juggle all the competing demands on their time.

*Innovation Agency supported additional independent ALS sessions set up by the group by providing administration support to organise such as room bookings and supported with additional resources as required for specialist evidence-based commissioning reference contacts. This was in addition to the scheduled university sessions and action-learning sets.*

Internal processes created barriers that almost blocked some projects, such as access to good quality data, access to resources or even access to rooms to try out a new service.

*Innovation Agency and CETAD staff, where appropriate, communicated with sponsors who were supportive and helped to alleviate barriers.*

Initial access and familiarisation for participants on the use of the University Moodle resource site was challenging for some.

*Support was provided by CETAD administration staff to accommodate issues arising. Additional support/training was given to induct participants on the use of the site.*



## Key Learning

### Lessons learnt by programme participants:

- The importance of how application of approaches can support improved working with health delivery partners
- To always consider whether all areas of the commissioning cycle are truly evidence based
- How organisation culture impacts on innovation and change; identifying barriers and considering different approaches is key
- Whilst wishing to work in a collaborative nature, it is important that assurances are gained at the outset about what is achievable and that providers are held to account over this
- Appreciating that developing and using leadership skills can make an impact, especially to ensure sound, positive team working
- Using structures to approach problems allows broader thinking about problems, as well as bringing the team on board with their own ideas. This ensures a culture in which change and improvement can flourish

### Lessons learnt by CETAD:

- To continually evaluate new programmes throughout and adapt timescale and content of programmes and learning to meet the need of participants in very demanding job roles
- Ensure that resources are readily accessible to all from the outset
- Effective collaboration with employers with committed participation on both sides and good communication ensures flexible, adaptive working practices that meet the needs of course participants and their organisations
- Supporting facilitation staff and keeping them informed of procedures and processes ensures for consistent, robust yet fair assessments for participants



## Sustainability

The range of projects undertaken within different professional specialisms and locations, shows how learning from the programme has been embedded in everyday practice in different areas of the CCGs and local authorities.

Some of the projects undertaken by participants have been identified for review and evaluation in 3 to 6 months' time, the aim being to monitor the impact and success of their work.

A new cohort of the partnership programme will commence in March 2018, in conjunction with Innovation Agency, Connected Health Cities (CHC) and CETAD. Participants have already volunteered to help undertake this evaluation and hope to sustain the momentum of the programme by attending the next cohort as guest speakers and sharing their learning with participants.

An individual case will also be reviewed. One of the work-based service-improvement projects will be captured as a case study to showcase how learning has already been embedded into practice, and will continue to be embedded into practice, within the CCG or Local Authority.

## Supporting Material

Video of participants giving reflective views of programme  
<https://youtu.be/fMXD5fRSxjw>

### Relevant websites

Innovation Agency:  
<http://www.innovationagencynwc.nhs.uk/about>

CETAD:  
[www.lancaster.ac.uk/lums/cetad](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/lums/cetad)

## Appendix

Appendix 1 – Work-based Projects

## Next Steps

- Participants are to disseminate their learning through presentations, meetings and sharing good practice with other CCG members e.g. by displaying their posters at the Innovation Show on May 2nd 2018
- Review opportunities for projects to be submitted to the International Forum for Quality and Safety in Health Care annual conference  
<http://internationalforum.bmj.com/>
- Set up a system to follow up case studies of the work-based projects i.e. the projects did not end when the programme finished, they continue to develop and be driven by participants.
- A further similar programme is underway: Innovation Agency, in conjunction with CHC and CETAD are launching an extending evidence based programme with a focus on digital approaches to support health service development and commissioning on data analysis, research synthesis, evaluation and governance. Current participants have been invited to support the new cohort and share their learning experiences.
- Participants will be Improvement Champions and will contribute to ongoing service and quality initiatives through Innovation Agency.
- The established relationship forged between CETAD and Innovation Agency from this programme opens up opportunities for further innovative projects.

For more information contact:  
Greta Grindell (Client Programme Lead)  
or Gill Codd (Centre Co-Ordinator)  
[g.grindell@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:g.grindell@lancaster.ac.uk)  
01524 593 318  
[g.codd@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:g.codd@lancaster.ac.uk)  
01524 593264

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