Designing a health information coaching tool – a collaborative approach

Royal College of
Occupational
Therapists

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Introduction

Helen, Occupational Therapist at Townships 2 Primary Care Network Sheffield, shared reflections on a four year journey leading a multi-disciplinary team to develop a resource booklet and website. The projects aim was to support people in an intermediate care bedded rehabilitation unit to reflect on their own health and support the team to provide additional health advice/signpost onto community support and services. Helens move into primary care provided the opportunity to develop an online web-based version.

The website **Time to think about me (TTM)©** has information recommended by health and social care professionals about national and local support, services and community groups. It's aimed at anyone interested in ageing well, it has more than 40 downloadable pages to support a health coaching approach. These pages can be printed or photocopied without charge.

The main areas of improvement are the interventions required to prevent and manage frailty across the continuum of care, workforce development, preventative and public health and digital tools and accessibility. At the time of writing TTAM© is accessible to primary health care professionals in the Townships 2 Primary Care Network and is being reviewed prior to a wider launch where it can be tested further and evaluated.

The idea

Working with patients during their rehabilitation, Helen identified a need to encourage patients who could self-manage their care on discharge home to reflect on their own health and the possible 'crisis' that had brought them into hospital. Developing a booklet to support patients in identifying some of their own needs could enable rehabilitation teams to provide information, support and signposting to community and other services. Advice which could be individually tailored to individuals and their family where appropriate was thought to be easily accessible in booklet form for both patients and multi-disciplinary team members. This could have the potential to help people 'remain healthy after they got home' and streamline advice to patients by personalising the booklet.

Far left: Helen Blomfield and colleagues from the Personalised Care Team in Township 2 Primary Care Network, Sheffield.

Key advice shared from project learning

- Choose your communication style and content depending on your audience.

- Co-produce and start with group rules. Include no hierarchy in the group, be inclusive.

- Give credit to the whole team.

- Make sure everyone has a chance to share their ideas, not just the extraverts in the room.

- Build trust, this is easier face to face.

- Make innovation exciting and fun.

- And keep going – if you hit a barrier put it on the back burner and think about asking for help and find some allies.

References:

1. Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Sheffield Microsystems Coaching Academy, The Health Foundation Sheffield Microsystems Coaching Academy (health.org.uk) (accessed 09/05/2023)

2. NHS England Enhanced Health in Care Homes Framework 2020 www.england.nhs.uk/publication/enhanced-health-in-care-homes-framework (accessed 09/05/2023)

The approach

The project began in 2018 when Helen worked on an intermediate care bedded facility in community at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Helen applied to the Sheffield Microsystem Coaching Academy (MCA)[1], to gain the support of one of their coaches and the idea was successful in gaining the guidance of the national team – Allied Health Professionals for Public Health (@AHPs4PH).

Helen was given an hour every fortnight for five months working with a team of multi-disciplinary colleagues recruited by Helen to participate in the project and a coach working with the team to set their agenda and move things forward efficiently. The team was non-hierarchical and members were able to contribute equally. The booklet included information about staff and their roles within the team, visiting hours and a reflective page to work through with patients to help them identify what information they would like to know. Funding for illustrations throughout was secured from the hospital charity.

While the booklet was being used in Sheffield's Intermediate Care bedded units Helen continued to look for support and expertise in developing further pages. There were times when the development was put on hold due to work pressures, lack of available funding and for testing new ideas in different environments. Moving the booklet to a website where it could potentially be used by community rehabilitation teams on digital devices and other groups such as fall prevention groups, was difficult to realise initially due to the process of governance and complexity of designing the website for national and local use. For Helen, NHS Horizons 'School for Change Agents' provided valuable learning to understand some of the difficulties that were being experienced in moving the project forward.

However, when Helen moved to a new role in primary care in 2021 as a Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner there was a renewed focus on health inequalities, "trying to get people to manage their own health" and emphasis on health coaching. There were then funding opportunities available to design further pages to be used by the additional roles in Primary Care.

While mentoring several occupational therapy students on leadership placement from Sheffield Hallam University, their placement projects helped deliver on The Enhanced Health in Care Homes Framework.[2] They tested new pages of the booklet in Care Homes and these pages will make up a resident held document used across all homes in the Primary Care Network.

Five new pages looking at the social determinants of health, including housing and information on the nearest foodbanks have been developed. Funding for these came from Helen's employing primary care network. New pages on memory have also been added by a network of OTs working in different clinical settings across Sheffield, who have a desire to increase meaningful activity for people living with dementia. The website currently has a postcode search function meaning it could be adopted by other locality areas and populated with relevant local information.

Helen reflected that the project grew 'organically' – saying

"I would come into work having had an idea at home, having read something or listened to a podcast. I then sketched out ideas for pages, lots of different ideas, I used wallpaper lining. This was the starting point – then people would say "Well I don't like that or I think we should include this" – so it just got the creative juices flowing really. The funded illustrator then turned my very poor sketches into engaging pages".

"I think sometimes when you innovate it's kind of chaotic and scary at the start, the most important thing is to gain the trust of the team, so everyone shares their ideas".

Helen

Key learning

Helen's reflections on the most challenging aspects of the project include, understanding IT issues, gaining funding for the website platform and obtaining the website safety certificate.

Learning so far

- This has been four years' work with many people's ideas and input, it's important to credit everyone involved.
- Grit and determination to keep going.
- It's ok for project to go on 'back burner' for a while when solutions not forthcoming. Find allies, ask for help.
- Not everyone understands the full project vision and you need to tailor what you share to engage each audience.
- Sometimes you need to take a risk, ask for forgiveness if mistakes are made.
- Be brave, push the boundaries but always be polite.

The things that really helped to move the project forward

- Small amounts of funding from Hospital Charity to employ the skills of an illustrator.
- A move into primary care where they understand the need to support people to age well and for a preventative/anticipatory approach.
- Any new initiative within the NHS requires an understanding of change management theory. My own development as a leader was shaped by completing NHS Horizons free online course 'School for change agents'.
- A Leadership Fellowship 'Future leaders programme' with NHS England (formerly Health Education England) allowed me to design and deliver a training programme so teams across Sheffield could understand how to use the booklet as a health coaching tool.

> " The important thing to say about innovation, is that it's great when you pull it off, but you must have real grit to keep going. Sometimes the project had o be put aside, on the back burner, because I had hit a barrier. Then I've come back to it, somebody else suggests something, it's helpful and the project moves forward again''.
>
> **Helen**

Key changes and impacts to date

The website can be used by anyone, patients, carers and professionals. When time is short health professionals need to provide information to signpost to other supportive services quickly and the website provides an instant solution to support people to manage their own health and connect with their local community.

The website has been added to primary care team posters to signpost to further advice, support, and community services. It is currently being trialled by the Care Home Team in Townships 2 Primary Care Network, Sheffield. Every Care Home resident is provided with core pages and then the team print out additional pages guided by their holistic personalised care plan. Helen anticipates further developmental benefits including pages available for downloading by the newly formed 'Personalised Care Team', social prescribers, OTs, community workers and many more professionals.

Next steps

Helen is currently funded one day a week on a 'Primary Care Aspiring Leaders Fellowship' with South Yorkshire and Doncaster Primary Care Training Hub. This provides the opportunity over the next six months to promote, spread and measure the impact of the project.

Contact the innovation hub for more information

If you would like further information about this case study or project, please contact the RCOT innovation hub team at **innovationhub@rcot.co.uk**. We respectively request that you do not contact Helen or her team individually as we are collating correspondence on their behalf.

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