

CASE STUDY

Yorkshire & Humber Academic Health Science Network

A Virtual College Case Study



YORKSHIRE & HUMBER
ACADEMIC HEALTH SCIENCE NETWORK

The background

Technology to aid Physical Health of those with Serious Mental Illness

Evidence shows that people with serious mental illness (SMI) die up to twenty years younger than the average population. In many instances, it appears that these individuals receive a lesser standard of health promotion and physical health care. In spite of national awareness and guidelines, early mortality rates have not improved.

Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust (BDCFT) initiated a project to improve the physical health of people with SMI. An initial audit was conducted looking at base line physical health measures used in primary care.

Results showed that the measures did not reflect the patients’ needs and that essential checks were not taking place.

To address this, the ‘Bradford Physical Health Review Template’ was developed by staff from BDCFT, primary care and software provider TPP.

Kate Dale (Mental and Physical Lead) explained: “The Bradford physical health review template systematically guides healthcare professionals through appropriate physical health checks to support the diagnosis of conditions currently causing premature death amongst patients with SMI.”

The ‘Bradford Physical Health Review Template’ is now available nationally on SystmOne and EMIS primary care software systems.

The challenge

Identifying the role learning technology can play

Following implementation of the template within the initial pilot region, the number of annual physical health checks carried out increased and the quality improved, resulting in significantly better quality outcomes for this client group. The template became part of routine care used by GPs and Practice Nurses across all 80 GP practices in the locality.

The success of the template and the shared care recommendations in preventing ill health in this high risk group and in promoting ‘parity of esteem’ resulted in significant national interest and recognition.

In 2015 the Yorkshire and Humber Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) became involved in supporting the further development of the template and its regional and national rollout. The AHSN assists in ensuring new, innovative products and services that have the potential to transform lives become part of routine clinical practice.

To provide added impetus to the use and roll out of the template, the AHSN issued a tender, inviting submissions for the development and delivery of an interactive 30-minute e-learning resource for primary care staff.

The module would need to include practical interactive demonstrations on a range of issues included in a routine health check using the ‘Bradford physical health review template’ including phlebotomy, ECG and baseline tests. The interactive aspects would also include practical video demos of key aspects of a physical health check.

Stephen Stericker, Head of Programmes at the AHSN explained: “We could see the opportunity to create a much more rapid roll out of the template if we could provide supporting online learning resources.”

The AHSN anticipated the measureable improvements as a result of the e-learning module to include:

- Primary care staff appropriately trained in how to use the Bradford physical health review template and complete physical health assessments for patients in their care
- Improved primary care staff attitudes towards mental / physical health
- An increased number of people with SMI receiving an annual health check
- Increased number of practices using the Bradford physical health review template
- Patients receiving correct physical health interventions in a timely manner

The solution

Working as an extension of the client's team

Virtual College has over a decade of experience in delivering online training to the healthcare sector, having provided training to every NHS Trust. This experience was invaluable in working on a project such as this.

In late September, Virtual College was informed that they had been successful in winning the AHSN tender. Virtual College’s ability to respond rapidly was essential as, with a deadline for completion of mid-December, time scales for delivery were tight.

A close working partnership was immediately developed between Virtual College and the AHSN with Kate Dale, the experienced mental health practitioner, providing subject matter expertise and Val Rhodes working on behalf of the AHSN as programme manager.

At the first in-depth meeting with Virtual College, all of the key stakeholders agreed the strategy and parameters including the aims of the project, where the content would come from and even some initial thoughts on designs.

Val Rhodes commented: “We had clarity around objectives, working methods and a shared commitment to stick to deadlines.

“This strong partnership relationship was established by Virtual College from the outset which facilitated a smooth and rapid creation process.”

Weekly conferenced project meetings helped to move the project forward rapidly and identify any changes in tack required.

Val continued: “Virtual College provided the flexibility to react to any changes required. Their experience meant they could easily grasp what we wanted and suggest what would work best.

“A caricature of Kate was used in the online course and when she had her hair cut, Virtual College even changed the caricature to reflect this!”

The online resource demonstrates the application of technology with a purpose. As its primary aim is to show people how to use the template, it is not a resource where a pass/fail methodology is appropriate.



The results

Delivering the goods

Delivered on budget and a week before the agreed deadline, Virtual College created a 30 minute online learning course hosted within its cloud-based learning management system, Enable, which would give free access for up to 1000 learners.

Kate commented: "Aimed at Primary Care staff in GP practices including doctors, nurses and support workers, it is providing a significant aid to the use of the physical health review template and will help encourage its nationwide use when assessing the physical health of people with severe mental health problems.

"The development process was really smooth. Virtual College were brilliant - they were totally on board, met all of the deadlines and there were never any issues or tensions.

"It was enjoyable and fun to work with the team at Virtual College who completed ahead of schedule so they could support a launch event at the Innovations Improvements Conference at the Royal Armouries."

The resources are already being marketed throughout the UK to over 220 Clinical Commissioning Groups.

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About Virtual College

Since 2006, we have provided training to every NHS Trust and now work with over 60 local safeguarding boards. Over this period, we have donated more than £200,000 to healthcare and safeguarding charities.

We are part of Virtual College, which has over 2.5 million learners and is growing at a rate of 1000 per day across public and private sectors.

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