Case study name: West Midlands Health Informatics Network (WIN)

Start and end dates of work covered by case study: 2014 - present

Overview summary

WMAHSN identified the need for a peer support network for clinicians, managers, patients, developers and academics working or interested in health informatics. In early 2014, the WMAHSN Board approved the establishment of the West Midlands Health Informatics Network (WIN), and commissioned the Institute of Digital Health (IDH) at the University of Warwick to manage and co-ordinate the network.

WIN collates relevant information and provides guidance on health informatics solutions for the benefit of stakeholders in the health and care arena. It facilitates discussion forums through social media, a website, workshops and conferences to discuss and disseminate what members have learnt around priority areas in health informatics. WIN also supports educational initiatives that will enhance health informatics knowledge and research programmes that will transform the delivery of health and care services.

Challenge identified and actions taken

WIN has enjoyed early success in recruiting membership of clinicians and academics following the development of the network, growth decreased considerably. In order to address this, the following steps were taken to ensure that the reach of WIN extended beyond those initially deemed relevant:

- Widened geographic reach to include and individuals/organisations that may wish to do business within the West Midlands
- Increased industry engagement to include different forms of health provision
- Increased local authority engagement to address aspects of integrated health and care
- Development of public sector, industry and academic databases for targeted communications
- Updated Advisory Group terms of reference to incorporate multi-stakeholder representation, to feed the WMAHSN digital innovation pipeline, and to inform the AHSN digital strategy
- Formalised policies and processes, with professional marketing materials.

Impacts / outcomes

- A continually growing membership, rising to 644 members as of December 2015
- A dedicated website with active online discussion forums and events
- Active engagement from the informatics community across healthcare, academia, industry and patient organisations

- A health informatics educational needs assessment has been undertaken
- An elected advisory group now established
- Access to a pool of experts who can review and advise on proposed digital innovations, and their wider adoption across the region
- Significant reputational benefits to WMAHSN by successful, well-attended regional events and presentation at national events, including EHI Live
- Over 250 attendances at WIN events in 2014/15: WIN National Conference in December 2014 with 81 delegates, WIN industry event in January 2015 with 78 delegates, 95-100 attendees at the November 2015 event and more than 100 delegates at the WIN Annual Conference in January 2016
- Raised profile through membership and social media presence (Twitter, LinkedIn).

Supporting quote for stakeholder / programme lead

Professor Theodoros N. Arvanitis, Head of Research, Institute of Digital Healthcare, WMG, University of Warwick and Co-Director of the Digital Theme, West Midlands Academic Health Science Network: "The West Midlands Health Informatics Network (WIN) is passionate about health service improvement, education and research in the health informatics domain. Our aim is to support the NHS and affiliated healthcare organisations in adopting information technology solutions in order to provide effective, efficient and high quality healthcare for patients/carers. We do this by connecting health informatics experts, professionals and enthusiasts across geographical, organisational and professional boundaries to work towards the goal of achieving in West Midlands and beyond. This is an independent network, with a culture of reciprocity, mutual respect, sharing good practice, support, equal access and shared responsibility."

Which national clinical or policy priorities does this example address?

Harnessing the Information Revolution

Plans for the future
- New website to allow members to access knowledge and expertise within the network.
- Consideration of implications of digital health / justice
- Member access to the Meridian online innovation exchange to accelerate the identification and adoption of beneficial innovations
- Increased networking activities to promote best practice and innovation.

Tips for adoption
- The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in designing, promoting and supporting the network is critical, and in the West Midlands the AHSN, as an 'honest broker', has proved a key catalyst
- Other regions wishing to implement a similar network would be advised to seek the support of their regional AHSN.

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