Communities of Practice Leadership Development Programme 2021

What are Communities of Practice?

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are groups of people who share a passion or a concern for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Whether established organically or deliberately, CoPs tend to thrive on voluntarism, a passion for action and the ability to respond to local need. They are based on commitment and trust between peers.

Learning is social

Communities of Practice are about people pulling and working together

The principles of CoPs have been built on years of observation and research into how adults learn within a work environment. In practice, CoPs are the way in which people who care about something learn from and with one another. They are groups of people with a passion for practice who share a desire for improvement, see a problem that they cannot solve alone, or have a solution that will benefit others and are willing to share this knowledge.

A Passion for Practice

In contrast with more traditional improvement approaches that tend to be top-down driven and micro-metric managed, Communities of Practice are self-organising and self-managing.

Their members have a passion for a particular area of work and are motivated to become better practitioners, committed to helping one another be more effective in what they do. Energy and sustainability can be enhanced since people choose their area of focus and develop their own shared learning agenda and collaborative processes. CoPs create value for their members and stakeholders through sharing current practice and the development and free flow of new knowledge, practices and capabilities.

Placing Communities of Practice in the Health and Social Care Environment

Patient care is a systemic issue, one not contained within neat boundaries – and CoPs are ideally placed to address this problem.

In normal practice, as soon as you focus on one particular issue and apply methods to improve it, you realise it connects to more; the problem is that you may fix the local issue but not the global one. Solutions for this type of ‘wicked’ problem require Systems Thinking and ‘action as a system’.
By bringing people together in the spirit of collaboration rather than competition, in a forum that is non-hierarchical and crosses traditional professional and organisational boundaries, we can build stronger relationships and work together more effectively to improve patient care.

These groups of professionals are brought together by a convener/co-convener to voluntarily explore how to bring about change for the better, by focusing on patient care across health and social care organisations. The work of these self-selecting Communities will have a real impact on patient experience and outcomes.

Conveners have a passion for improving patient care but are often new to the concept of CoPs and are unsure of how best to ‘hold’ that space and to make this way of working ‘land’ in the health and social care environment. This unique leadership programme is designed specifically to address these challenges.

The Health Innovation Network, South London (HIN)

The HIN is the Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) for south London, one of fifteen AHSN’s across England. Our organisation connects academics, NHS commissioners and providers, local authorities, patient groups and industry, in order to accelerate the spread and adoption of innovation and best practice, using evidence-based research across large populations.

The Health Foundation

The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and healthcare for people in the UK. Our aim is a healthier population, supported by high-quality healthcare that can be equitably accessed. The Health Foundation learns what works to make people’s lives healthier and improve the healthcare system. From giving grants to those working at the front line to carrying out research and policy analysis, we shine a light on how to make successful change happen.

We believe that good health and healthcare are key to a flourishing society. Through sharing what we learn, collaborating with others and building people’s skills and knowledge, we aim to make a difference and contribute to a healthier population.

The HIN and The Health Foundation working in partnership

CoPs are not new in the NHS and our Communities of Practice Leadership Development Programme is intended to help many more thrive across multiple issues and institutions, creating a Community of Communities. This is a field of mutually supported cross-institution, cross-hierarchy and inter-professional learning that will dramatically improve patient care throughout the health and care landscape.

The HIN and the Health Foundation’s Q Network recognise the important role that CoPs can play in delivering patient-centred coordinated care. For the second time both organisations are working in partnership, to design and deliver an experiential learning
programme to provide all the building blocks for successful Community of Practice leadership.

We are keen to nurture new CoPs, empowering them to self-form, self-define and develop, and we are committed to supporting current and future conveners. As new improvement programmes are developed and grow, such as the Health Foundation’s Q Initiative, this programme can aid Communities to discover one another and link their practices to ensure synergies are created wherever possible.

Programme Approach

The programme is strongly based on practical experience and builds on successful CoPs currently hosted by the HIN and Q members.

The programme builds on the wealth of expertise and experience participants bring from their backgrounds in the health, social care and higher education sectors. Learning from each other is an integral part of the programme, with activities centred around knowledge exchange between participants, speakers and facilitators.

Modules are delivered in virtual workshop format, using an interactive approach. Sessions take a number of forms with a mixture of group work, exercises, participant presentations, discussion and speaker input. Speakers and facilitators are leaders from the health, social care and higher education sectors.

The modules will be supported by a series of reflective webinars that will enable participants to share knowledge and learn together about what will work / what will not work as they develop their own Communities of Practice.

Who is the programme for?

The programme is offered free of charge to participants from health, social care, public health and higher education organisations.

We are looking for health and care professionals who seek to develop collective leadership capability, who already have or are planning to establish a CoP where they can apply the learning from this programme.

To apply you must either be:

- a member of the Health Foundation’s Q initiative or
- leading or planning to lead a HIN supported CoP.

Priority will be given to applicants who are leading or aspire to lead a Community of Practice that spans across traditional professional and organisational boundaries.

You must have the support and commitment of your employing organisation and your line manager to release you for module attendance and CoP meetings. This will be a minimum of 10 days.
What will participants gain?

Are you considering starting a CoP with its focus on improving patient care? Are you already involved in one that is maturing?

Our programme is here to support you and can help in numerous ways including:

• Strategies for forming a new CoP
• Developing meeting facilitation skills and protocols
• Creating and clarifying your “domain”
• Populating your community and identifying stakeholders
• Opening access to a broader network of colleagues
• Identifying the potential value of your community
• Specific skill development (i.e., difficult conversations, reflective practices)

What will healthcare organisations gain?

• There is increasing recognition that the challenge of transforming health and social care services is as much a ‘knowledge’ as a financial challenge. A number of people believe that a CoP approach can provide a new paradigm for development work.
• Communities of Practice enable members to take collective responsibility for creating and capturing the knowledge they need, recognising that, given the proper structure, they are in the best position to do this.
• Members can address the tacit and dynamic aspects of knowledge creation and sharing, as well as the more explicit aspects supporting true learning in organisations.

Communities are not limited by formal structures - they create connections among people across organisational and geographic boundaries.

Participant Commitment

The programme will run over one year between September 2021 and September 2022.

The programme will consist of:

• Five one-day modules delivered as ten half-day virtual sessions 9-10 weeks apart
• Five virtual 1-hour co-consulting sessions to support and challenge each other.
• Four virtual drop-in coaching clinics to share learning and experiences with the other participants.
• Online portal for guidance.
• Networking and discussion group (also on-line).
• Experiential Learning: commitment to convene approximately three or four face-to-face community meetings over the course of the programme
• Celebration event September 2021 (in person/virtual)

Participants should plan for a time-commitment of at least ten days, to attend the five module days and extra time as needed to develop their own Community of Practice between modules.

They should have the full support of their employing organisation and their line manager.

Module topics and programme content

Planning and Launching Communities of Practice
• Collective purpose
• Membership
• Behaviours

Building Integrity and Maintaining Vitality
• Compassionate leadership
• Building trusting relationships
• Keeping conversations interesting and vibrant

Designing with others
• Experience-based Co-design
• Mobilising communities
• Overcoming challenges

Capturing and Managing Value Creation
• Value-based Leadership
• Creating multiple types of value
• Making value visible to others

Growing and Sustaining Communities of Practice
• Creating rhythm
• Sustainability
• Renewal
• Impact

Celebration Event

The celebration event is an opportunity for participants to showcase their learning and to invite members from their CoPs and their organisations to celebrate the completion of the programme.
Learning Outcomes

By the end of the programme, participants will be able to:

- Understand the implications for their leadership role in supporting CoPs to develop and thrive
- Identify the challenges and opportunities for cross-boundary partnerships and interprofessional working in a CoP
- Identify the potential for innovation in a changing context
- Analyse the factors to consider when supporting CoPs to ensure they meet individual members’ needs, the teams in which they work and the health and care environment as a whole

Key Dates*

Module 1: 23rd and 24th September 2021 (9.30-12.30pm)
Module 2: 25th and 26th November 2021 (9.30-12.30pm)
Module 3: 20th and 21st January 2022 (9.30-12.30pm)
Module 4: 5th and 6th May 2022 (9.30-12.30pm)
Module 5: 30th June and 1st July 5th and 6th May 2022 (9.30-12.30pm)
Celebration Event: 30th September 2022

There will be 5 additional 1-hour co-consulting sessions and 4 virtual 1-hour drop-in coaching clinics over the course of the year.

*These dates are subject to speaker availability and will be confirmed with participants prior to programme launch.

How to apply

Download the application form and guidelines from:

Community of Practice Leadership Development Programme
You must have the support and commitment of your employing organisation and your line manager to release you for module attendance and CoP meetings. This will be a minimum of 10 days.

The deadline for applications is 2nd July 2021.

The team

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CoP References and Further Reading

Etienne Wenger, partnering with others, has been the leading researcher and developer of Communities of Practice for decades. Some of his useful publications are:


Etienne’s website is a good resource for all things CoP:

www.wenger-trayner.com

If you would like to delve more deeply into the learning theory behind Communities of Practice, search the web for “Communities of Practice as Social Learning Systems” for relevant academic research.

The HIN Communities of Practice Network would not exist without the support and guidance of Myron Rogers and we extend our gratitude to him.

The HIN approach is underpinned by six maxims coined by Myron*.

1. People own what they help to create.
2. Real change happens in real work.
3. Those who do the work do the change.
4. Connect the system to more of itself.
5. Start anywhere but follow everywhere.
6. The process you use to get to the future is the future you get.

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