



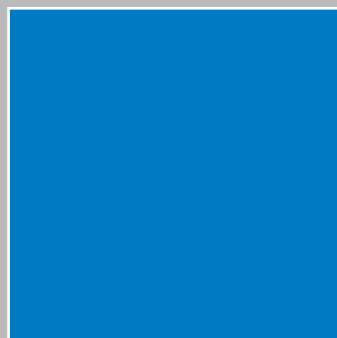
Modernisation Agency

Spread and sustainability of service improvement: Factors identified by staff leading modernisation programmes

Research into Practice

Report No.4: Overview of early research findings

February 2003



Spread and sustainability of service improvement: Factors identified by staff involved in modernisation programmes

Implementation of the NHS modernisation agenda is proceeding rapidly and significant progress has been made. Capturing and sharing the learning from organisational change is an important part of this process. The Research into Practice team is working to identify factors that influence the spread and sustainability of service improvement.

Research design

The study explored the factors influencing spread and sustainability with 34 clinical and managerial staff leading two national modernisation programmes.

The National Booking Programme, launched in 1998 with 24 pilot sites, has now moved into its fourth wave "Moving to Mainstream" and involves all health communities. It aims to make it possible for patients to choose and pre-book the dates of their healthcare appointments. The Cancer Services Collaborative (CSC) was launched in 1999 with the aim of improving the way in which cancer services are provided. Since April 2001 all 34 cancer networks in England have been taking part in the CSC programme.

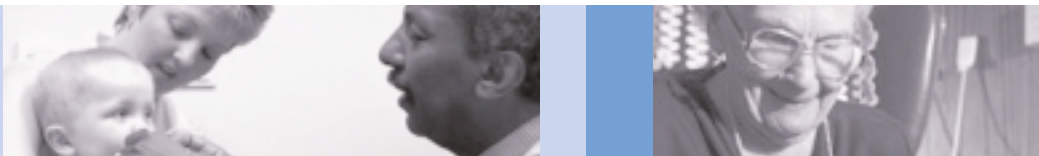
Identifying factors relating to spread and sustainability

The early findings (*) were analysed together using simple force-field and concept mapping techniques with the aim of identifying factors relating to spread, sustainability and the relationships between these processes.

These findings indicate that spread and sustainability are separate but related issues and the majority of influencing factors identified were broadly similar for both.

The findings have also highlighted that the terms 'spread' and 'sustainability' are interpreted and used in different ways by different people.

* Further details of this research are provided in Summary Reports 1, 2 & 3 found at www.modern.nhs.uk/redesign, under 'Research into Practice'.



These are the main factors identified by the participants as contributing to the successful spread and /or sustainability of service improvement:

Positive organisational characteristics

- Informal atmosphere, non-hierarchical structure, participative rather than dictatorial management and lack of entrenched working practices
- Mature organisation with a history of successful change
- Adequate infrastructure and resources to support changes (e.g. IT systems)
- Readiness for change

Human dimensions

- Clear and credible leadership, providing support and ensuring continuing priority of service improvement
- Support and involvement of consultants
- Multi-disciplinary teams working co-operatively (rather than competitively) with common goals and priorities
- The existence of influencers who will encourage spread, sustainability or both
- Specific roles and relationships can be key to successful service improvement (varying between organisations and programmes)
- Effective 'modernisation'/'transformation' teams who drive changes, help to integrate initiatives and provide guidance and support

Nature of the service improvement programme

- Staff interest and involvement is influenced by how the programme has been launched and marketed (as perceptions and understanding are affected)
- Demonstrating the benefits and advantages arising from the programme encourages both spread and sustainability (benefits to staff and their working practice as well as to patients)
- National programmes can bring incentives such as additional resources and support (facilitating spread)

Process of change

- Coherence of national programmes with organisational needs and priorities
- Early engagement of all staff, especially clinicians
- Overcoming scepticism and resistance among key individuals, whether clinical, managerial or administrative
- Dedicated time for those involved to meet, plan, develop and undertake improvement activities
- Fast pace of implementation may increase spread but can prevent sustainability
- Phased implementation can aid spread (especially through 'quick wins'), but 'wave' / 'phase' structure and funding can hamper sustainability

Embedding new practice

- Sufficient time for new practice to become fully integrated as the 'norm'
- Incorporating new practice into an organisation's 'core' business and priorities, through business plans, objectives, job descriptions, policies and procedures helps sustain improvements
- Integration and coherence with other modernisation programmes and projects
- Sense of 'ownership' (important for sustainability) facilitated by staff involvement at all levels, all disciplines and in all stages of the change
- Programme regarded as priority for all involved and does not conflict with other priorities or interests

Reinforcing the improvements: maintaining momentum

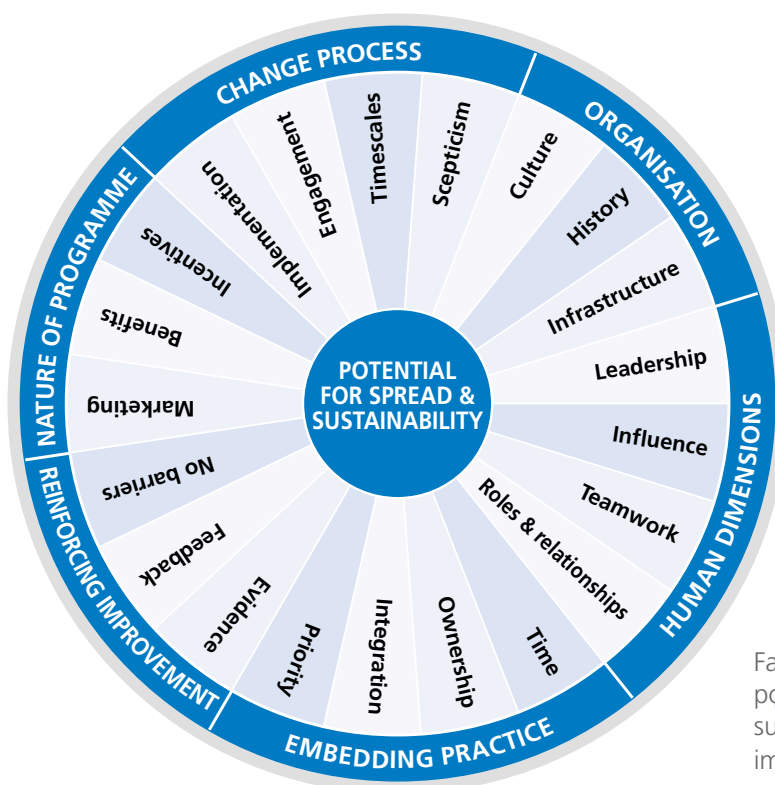
- Recognition of effort and achievements as well as encouragement and support contribute to sustaining improvements
- Evidence of effectiveness and benefits of programme sought and fed back to participants
- Continuing high priority of programme to senior management
- Barriers to sustainability identified and prevented (i.e. changes to organisation, external pressures, competing demands, short term contracts or funding)

Complexity of relationships between factors influencing spread and sustainability:

A large number and wide variety of factors have been identified and it is apparent that these are inter-related. The findings also highlight that spread and sustainability cannot be adequately described in discrete stages.

At this point in the research neither priority nor significance can be attributed to these factors, as any and all could be

important and this will depend upon the individual situation. It is, however, apparent that service improvement will be spread and sustained if a number of factors are in place. Perhaps more importantly there may be certain 'critical' factors which, if absent, will hinder spread and sustainability, as the following 'wheel' diagram illustrates:



Factors influencing the potential for spread and sustainability of service improvement

The influencing factors are represented by spokes

- If all factors are present (= strong wheel) the potential for spread and sustaining change is strong
- If too many factors are missing this may prevent spread and sustained practice (wheel buckles and does not turn)
- There may be a critical number of factors needed (to ensure wheel maintains shape and turns smoothly). Some factors could be missing, but this may not hinder progress (spokes incomplete but wheel will still function)
- There may be specific factors that are essential for success (certain spokes) that if missing would prevent progress

SUSTAINABILITY

SPREAD

Continuing research

The Research into Practice team continues to study these factors in depth through primary research, exploring how these inter-relate and the significance of individual factors.

It is anticipated that future reports will focus on specific themes providing further insight and practical considerations for those involved in service improvement.

Research into Practice NHS Modernisation Agency

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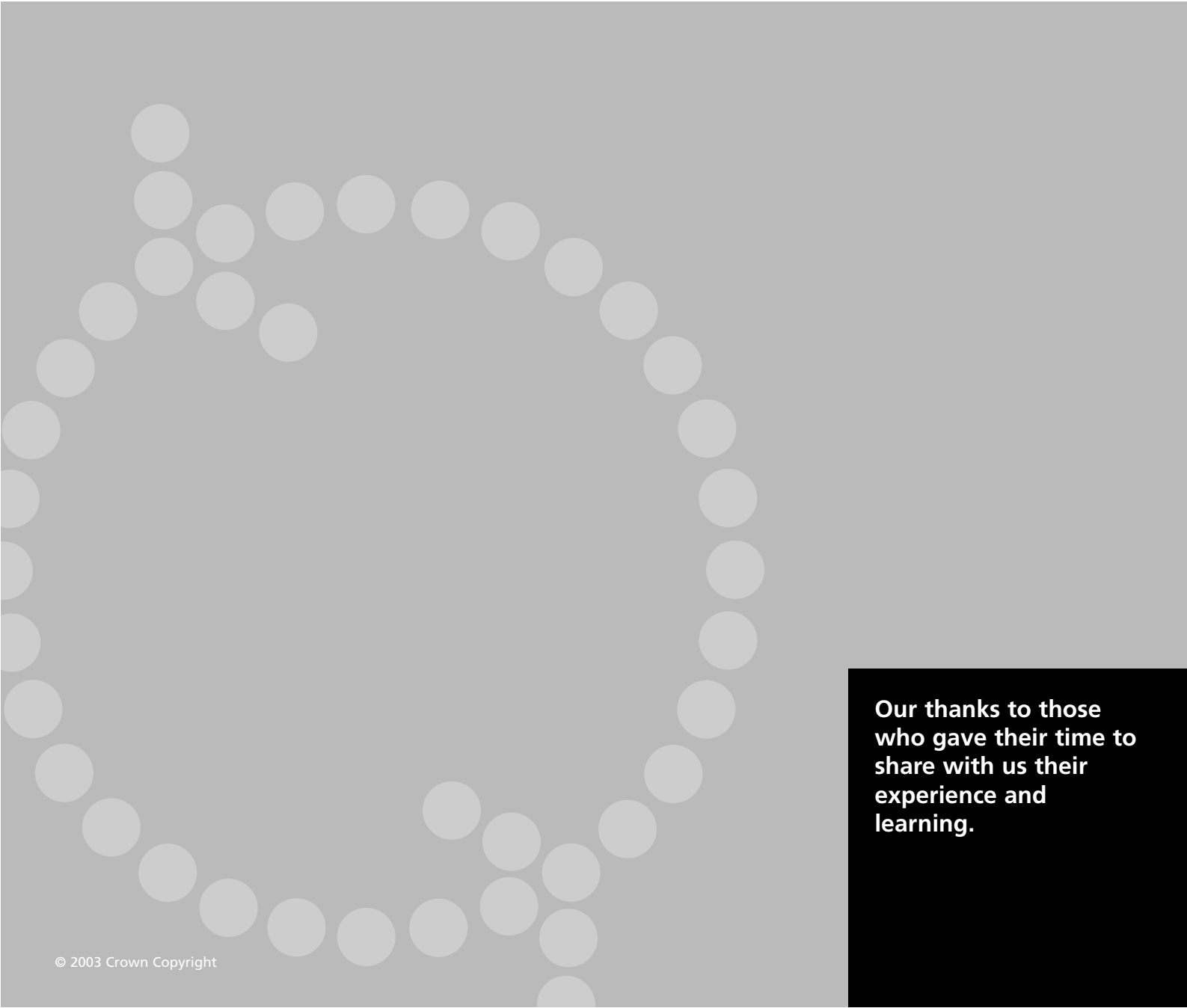
More about Research into Practice

This report is the fourth in a series produced by the Research into Practice team. The team was established in 2001 as part of the Modernisation Agency, in order to capture and share the learning gained through service improvement activities.

The team has an academic partnership with Leicester Business School at De Montfort University.

The research aim is to identify factors that influence spread and sustainability of new practices across the NHS. Research outputs include the production of actionable knowledge such as tools and models, that are of direct use to staff involved in NHS modernisation.

Further details of this research are provided in Summary Reports found at www.modern.nhs.uk/redesign (under Research into Practice).



**Our thanks to those
who gave their time to
share with us their
experience and
learning.**