



Progress
HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

NHS England and NHS Improvement



Digital First Primary Care Support Programme Evaluation

Executive Summary

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1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2020 NHS England south east region commissioned Redmoor Health to work with digital and primary care leads across six Integrated Care Systems (ICS). The commissioned delivery included a series of training webinars and the development of online resources to meet the digital online support needs of general practices during a period of increased pressure and demand. The offer was wide ranging and included:

- Digital training for front line GP Practice and PCN staff
- Support with online services via a production of a toolkit and webinars
- Support with digital marketing services via webinars and one to one sessions
- Support with business intelligence and analytics to better understand 'current provision' for further planning
- Support with improvement planning with webinars and one to one sessions, to improve digital services for practice and patient needs
- Support with engagement strategy to better manage patient expectations
- Identify skills gaps and training needs to support staff training in practice
- Inspecting holistic infrastructure to determine training needs
- Development of bespoke training packages for front line staff

The contract initially ran for a 3-month period before being extended for a further 3 months, between January – June 2021. Progress Health Partnerships were commissioned to conduct a rapid, retrospective, qualitative evaluation of the programme, to understand the early impacts on stakeholders and users. The main findings are summarized below presented in a detailed [full report](#)

2. FINDINGS

84% of stakeholders reported a high or very high need for the commissioned service.

Regional support

19 webinars were developed and delivered within the contract. These included sessions on: positive patient engagement; online consultation demand; Microsoft Teams; accessing online records; online toolkit; vaccine hesitancy; and patient communication and social media. **334 participants** attended the webinars, expressing a need to increase their confidence and knowledge in using digital technologies. Participants reported significant **impact on knowledge (8/10)** and **confidence (8/10)**. **68%** scored the training as highly meeting their needs.

88% of responders provided positive impact statements. The most frequently recurring related to:

- **Improved communications with patients** - *“It’s enabled me to communicate very effectively on social media with my patients”* (Medicines Manager)
- **Making better use of digital** - *“It’s helped me and the practice to move forward with confidence in making better use of digital”* (Digital Champion),
- **More efficient management of patient needs** *“I managed to implement a Virtual Group Clinic in my practice and we are ready to run Long Term Conditions part of QoF via virtual clinics”* (HCA).

Redmoor produced a range of digital support resources hosted on a dedicated south east regional [webpage](#), to encourage and support staff in adopting and embedding online services in their practices and to increase competence and confidence in practice. These resources included: how to guides; bite size videos and case studies, often linked to the webinar training sessions. At the end of June 2021, the website had received **532 unique visits**.

Local support

Redmoor were commissioned to work with the six individual ICS areas to offer hands-on support, above and beyond that regional offer. Out of the six ICS areas **5** requested and received significant support. The evaluation found that this support was particularly valued given the current demands and strains on the primary care system. Stakeholders reflect that without the regionally commissioned contract the local system would have had a significant gap in the rollout and utilisation of digital in primary care. *‘Redmoor being able*

to pick up and respond to our queries and issues. The real minute detail, where we just didn't have enough hands within our side. They were able to provide that real hands-on, sleeves rolled up type support. Redmoor have really plugged that gap and plugged it well' (Practice Manager)

Overall impact

80% of survey responders stated that the digital training and support provided with online services, had improved the regions digital first approach. Around **three-quarters** of stakeholders stated that additional contract provision, including business intelligence and analytics and improvement planning, had a positive impact.

It was reported that, alongside maintaining business as usual, practices also had to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and deliver a vaccination programme at a scale. Stakeholders felt that Redmoor Health understood these pressures and were really quick to orientate themselves into the region, lever and create a lot of contacts and quickly build quite deep support for a digital first approach across the system. Stakeholders were asked to rate the overall impact that the Redmoor support programme has had on digital primary care in the region and gave a very positive score of **7.4** out of 10. Critically, **88%** of participants would recommend Redmoor to colleagues *"They've been amazing. Fast, reliable, responsive, very knowledgeable and keen to help"*

Challenges

The evaluation reports many challenges that still exist within the regional digital first approach. Stakeholders reflected frustrations relating to the multiple digital systems operating within and across ICS areas and a lack of understanding in how these systems can be streamlined or in how to make best use of them. There are clear disparities between practices in their knowledge, experience and willingness to understand and embrace digital systems and further engagement sessions are required to bridge the gap. The remaining area of challenge was on the measuring and reporting of impact, moving from *'this is what we have done'* to *'this is the difference we have made'* and from reporting on *'these are the deficiencies within a system'* to *'this is how you address these deficiencies.'* There would be significant advantages in setting clear measurable objectives and the development of robust but pragmatic data collection systems.

The next 12-months

Discussions with stakeholders concluded with a look forward, to understand the emerging needs. It was consistently reported that there is *'value'* in retaining support at a regional level, in particular a need for a digital transformation piece of work, understanding what ICSs, CCGs, PCNs and practices are missing and what is needed to address gaps, with a clear map on how to get there. *"There's actually quite a lot of change requirements and support needs for practices, in terms of bringing them up in the maturity stakes, utilising the digital systems."* There was an agreement that ongoing support for practices is required as they move out of pandemic/vaccine response and back to *'business as usual.'* With more time to engage with a support offer around online consulting, and video consult regional webinars should continue.

Recommendations

1. If resource allows, a new contract offer should be explored with the regional and ICS areas and that options for the financial model are explored with the ICS areas
2. If resource allows, it is worth considering lengthening any contract to a minimum of 12-months and longer where possible
3. Consider mapping current service provision and gap analysis. An effective way to manage this would be to build on stakeholder discussions delivered through this evaluation and conduct a broader survey of need, followed by a workshop to finalise the deliverables of a future contract
4. The region continues to offer bespoke webinar training and that training resources are disseminated widely through the region.
5. Consider a detailed quality improvement piece of work around readiness for digital within primary care.
6. Consider building evaluation into the start of any new contract. This should start with a mapping of intended outcomes (logic model), the development of an evaluation framework and development of pragmatic data collection tools that should be applied consistently throughout the contract

"My personal experience of working with the Redmoor team was great. The team were responsive, knowledgeable and were able to work autonomously within the scope that they had been given during a very challenging time when CCG resource was stretched. Thank you for the support that you have provided" (Digital Transformation Manager)



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