

INNOVATION - M1

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NHS ENGLAND & NHS IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL



THE INNOVATORS

We work in the National Intensive Support Team within NHSE/I focused on supporting the most challenged organisations and systems to improve in all aspects of quality and performance. We are a multidisciplinary team comprising experts in the fields of finance, quality, workforce, analytics and improvement. Our ongoing working group also includes members from provider Trusts, commissioners and HFMA.

THE PROBLEM

Finance teams (at National/ System and local level) **need to** find better ways to identify the drivers of financial improvement and deterioration **because otherwise** there is a risk that management focus will be mis-directed and resource unnecessarily wasted.

THE CHALLENGES

- What's the best way to present financial data to easily identify variation over time (both good and bad) which informs appropriate management action?
- **How can we** best understand the drivers of costs **so that** improvement efforts can be most effectively targeted?
- What is the best approach to enable an understanding of the challenges and implications for quality, workforce and performance when making financial decisions?
- The NHS is continually striving to improve efficiency. Could there be a different and innovative way to approach this challenge?

THE INNOVATION

We work in the National Intensive Support Team within NHS England and Improvement and our work focuses on supporting the most challenged organisations and systems to improve in all aspects of quality and performance. We are a multidisciplinary team comprising experts in the fields of finance, quality, workforce, analytics and improvement and have strong links with colleagues working in a range of local NHS organisations.

Over recent years a new approach – Making Data Count – (which focusses on the benefits of statistical process control or SPC) has been implemented by an increasing number of Trusts to monitor a range of measures for quality, performance and workforce. This approach is evidence based and proven to support more effective decision making. This approach had not been applied in the field of finance, however our hunch was that this approach could also help answer key questions related to financial performance. A number of organisations that we worked closely with took the initiative to start applying SPC to financial data. They reported that they have gained new insight as a result of taking a different approach.

We therefore organised a kick-off workshop in January 2021 where we provided an overview of SPC and early adopter Trusts presented their initial work. There were 160 participants at the workshop and there was a huge appetite to take this work forward. We therefore established a smaller working group to take this work forward to allow participants to test and review the concept with their own data and share their learning with the group. Members of the group come from the National Intensive Support Team, provider Trusts, commissioners and HFMA. Participants have been provided with training, resources and tools and have been encouraged to test out the use of SPC with their local data sets.

Our collaborative approach has been non-prescriptive in terms of which areas SPC is applied to – this has resulted in a wide range of approaches taken by different organisations. Participants have chosen to use SPC to help with their current challenges e.g., using it in winter to understand the impact of covid and then carrying it on between waves to use it for other applications. In turn, this has accelerated our understanding of the applicability of SPC to finance data and which areas it does/does not add value.

The valuable learning from the group has already provided us with strong evidence that SPC does indeed add value in the field of finance. It enables a clearer picture of when financial performance is changing (both good and bad) and supports a better understanding of the drivers of cost. In addition, Trusts have reported that the use of SPC for financial data has facilitated broader discussions locally which consider the links between quality, workforce and performance.

Discussions are now underway at a national level to consider how this new knowledge should inform national analysis and approaches.

THE LESSONS LEARNT

- Initially we were nervous about whether this approach would work for finance and this delayed us gaining new and important knowledge. We should have been braver!
- We learnt to more easily identify differences in the financial performance of organisations both over time and between organisations through presenting a range of financial data in SPC format. We learnt to more facilitate broader conversations between finance, quality, workforce and performance colleagues through presenting finance data as SPC charts.
- We learnt that non finance experts (including lay members on boards) gain a greater understanding of financial issues through finance data being presented as SPC charts. We learnt to collaborate more effectively with a wide range of colleagues from across the country through the use of meetings held via MS Teams.

THE OUTPUTS

Learning points about when SPC works for finance and when it doesn't. Evidence of SPC being used from board to ward to understand the drivers of cost within an organisation. Examples of the effective triangulation of different data sets to understand more about the whole picture. A network of like minded individuals who are learning together. A diagnostic data pack which provides a comprehensive picture of the financial position for a provider Trust.

THE OUTCOMES

- Identification of patterns previously unidentified in data sets
- A better understanding of the drivers of cost
- Reduction in silo working – finance becoming more mainstream
- Feedback from customers of financial information indicating a much better understanding of the financial position. Many individuals have been inspired and excited to try and a new approach which has then provided new knowledge
- Helped our national team to develop and come together by doing something differently – finance people taking interest in SPC

THE QUICK WINS

- Attend an introduction to Making Data Count training session (for details email nhsi.improvementanalyticsteam@nhs.net)
- Agree an area to focus on. Download the NHSEI SPC chart tools and populate them with your data. Join the Making Data Count finance working group (to join email nhsi.improvementanalyticsteam@nhs.net)
- Join the futures site to connect with other people doing this work Making Data Count- FutureNHS Collaboration Platform



THE REVIEWERS SAID



THIS SOUNDS A FANTASTIC DEVELOPMENT AND APPEARS TO BE BEING IMPLEMENTED INTO MORE TRUSTS WITH SOUND RESULTS - WELL DONE!



IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF TRUSTS DATA' WHICH LEADS TO IMPROVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING



ALLOWS FOR A WIDER DISCUSSION ABOUT STANDARDISED FINANCIAL REPORTING BY ORGANISATIONS, ALLOWING FOR SHARING OF BEST PRACTICE



WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

If you recognise the problem stated and have implemented your own innovation to overcome it please submit this innovation to the programme and give others more examples to learn from.

SUBMIT INNOVATION

If you recognise the problem stated and would like to know more details about this innovation in particular, we will be hosting showcase and workshop sessions throughout the year, so all interested staff can gain ideas and inspiration from innovators in a manageable one-to-many format.

REGISTER INTEREST

If you have a problem but don't currently know of a solution to it, then please submit it here and in 2022 the Forum intends to crowdsource solutions to problems that don't currently have known innovations.

SUBMIT PROBLEM

If you would like to learn more about about the innovation programme please click below for more details

LEARN MORE

IN SEPTEMBER 2021 THE FORUM LAUNCHED...

- A national Innovation Programme for NHS Finance staff to submit their innovations for peer review. Successful innovations will be published and accessible to all on the One NHS Finance website
- A 'Software Skills For Finance Staff' event series taught by NHS Finance for NHS Finance including MS Excel, PowerBI, SQL etc.
- An 'Art of the Possible' briefing which explains two new technologies AI & Blockchain and discusses the opportunity for NHS Finance
- An Automation Group to review and improve the efficiency of existing national processes and returns

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

- Submit your innovations for peer review
- Sign up to be an innovation peer reviewer
- Read Art of the Possible
- Sign up for Software Skills for Finance
- Register your interest in automation and all things innovative

Innovation Programme



Software Skills



Automation sign up



Be a peer reviewer



Art of the Possible



FURTHER INFORMATION

Website: [FinanceInnovation.nhs.uk](https://financeinnovation.nhs.uk)

Email: finance.innovation@nhs.net

LinkedIn: [One NHS Finance](#)

Twitter: [@OneNHSFinance](#)



One NHS Finance brings together the Future-Focused Finance, National Finance Academy, and the Finance Innovation Forum programmes and networks to make sure that everyone working in NHS Finance has access to skills, knowledge, methods, and opportunities to influence and enhance patient services.



Identifying and developing innovative ways of working and new areas of improvement.