

OLDHAM CCG AND TRUSTECH SPEARHEAD HEALTHCARE CHALLENGE

Oldham has helmed creative partnerships across the full spectrum of the public sector in its drive to find original and cost-saving solutions. Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group is no exception, and this year joined forces with TRUSTECH, the longest running NHS Innovation Hub in the country, to launch a unique Dragons' Den style initiative to help identify healthcare innovations.



Denis Gizzi

As Oldham celebrates its status as the first CCG in the country to adopt this method, the innovations that were successful in the Den now begin the evaluation phase in a live NHS setting; this ultimately determines which innovations may be commissioned.

NHS Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group (Oldham CCG) is ahead of all CCGs in the innovation adoption lifecycle. At the forefront of discovering new and better ways of working, it boasts an enviable history of introducing new technologies and services to improve patient care.

"The adoption of new innovations that have a positive impact on patients' health, whilst remaining cost effective, are key to the longevity, viability, and ultimately the success of our services. Innovation is high on our agenda, and to ensure we exploit all angles, we engaged a specialist organisation to keep us on track and explore new avenues," explains Denis Gizzi, managing director at Oldham CCG.

NHS innovation experts, TRUSTECH, provide an indispensable and enviable link between NHS organisations and industry; Oldham CCG was confident that



its multidisciplinary team would reveal new ideas that would otherwise have been off the CCG's radar. "TRUSTECH is at the centre of all facets of healthcare innovation; it works exclusively in this area, and knows it inside out. They devised, managed and delivered an exciting and forward-thinking programme," recalls Denis.

A Dragon's Den style initiative to identify and evaluate innovations was proposed; a process that had not yet been transferred to the sector as Denis confirms, "Dragons' Den is a well-known format in the commercial world, popularised by television. However, until this point, a CCG had never embraced it before, so the buzz surrounding this initiative was phenomenal."

The challenge

Innovation is a discipline shrouded with complexities for most CCGs. Perhaps the biggest issue is access; the majority of healthcare entrepreneurs are simply out of reach, largely because it's notoriously complex and time consuming for small and medium-sized organisations to break into the NHS. These barriers create a void where CCGs are unaware of evolving, ground-breaking, cutting-edge ideas.

Innovation expertise is also an issue; the right advice and guidance can determine a successful outcome. Equally a lack of time, a prevalent scenario, constrains the identification and adoption of new ideas. Constraints which rang true at Oldham as Denis describes, "Evaluating healthcare innovations is complex, and time-consuming, and we needed to ensure these challenges would not hold Oldham back; TRUSTECH offered the best and most effective solution, and through managing the programme on our behalf, also kept focus on our objectives. This level of insight, skill and experience is critical."

The NHS is also under immense scrutiny and pressure from government to reduce spend and improve efficiencies; a further

driver behind the urge for CCGs to seek the best cost savings and solutions.

The solution

A tailor-made Dragons' Den programme comprised of several phases. Initially, more than 80 medical technology companies answered the call for innovations; a response far greater than projected or expected.

Priority was granted to innovations not currently in use, and which met Oldham's triple aims: to improve the health of its population; to improve the care received and their experience of it; and to deliver the best value for money by using resources effectively.

Companies with technologies deemed to have the greatest potential, exhibited and demonstrated their innovations to key NHS stakeholders and decision makers at a marketplace event. "Standards were exceptional. The marketplace event revealed many pioneering ideas," Denis explains.

Following a rigorous assessment process, shortlisted applicants pitched their ideas to a panel of dragons; members of Oldham CCG's management executive team, governing body members and other key stakeholders from the healthcare community.

The Den itself was nerve-wracking and tense, with an air of anticipation, as Denis reveals, "After the pitches, our Dragons fired questions to the applicants to assess the benefits of each innovation in terms of sustainability, measurability, cost-effectiveness and the impact on patients. As the process involved comparing very different technologies, a scoring and weighting system was developed. Then votes were recorded electronically and beamed in real time onto a large screen."

Due diligence was ongoing and was undertaken to check areas such as: finance, regulatory compliance and permissions. A risk register was also developed to reveal any uncertainties for each innovation.



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Denis continues, “Candidates who successfully cracked the Den will be offered a funded evaluation of their innovations in a relevant patient environment. What’s unique about these ideas is that they all exhibit significant potential to improve health and patient experience, create value for money, and reduce the burden on our healthcare system.”

The six innovations:

d-Nav Insulin Guidance Service, Hygieia Medical Ltd – provides people with diabetes a more effective way to manage their insulin

Fall-Safe Assist, Hip Impact Protection Ltd – utilises high-tech materials which are thin, soft and pliable to touch, yet firm-up to dissipate force upon impact, helping to reduce fractures due to a fall

Patient Monitor, Message Dynamics Ltd – a service that utilises a patient’s existing landline or mobile to collect data about their symptoms and physiology

Noctura 400 Sleep Mask, PolyPhotonix Medical – mask that helps to reduce the risk of retinal disease in diabetic patients

Personal Care Record, Personal Care Record Company – empowers patients to take greater control over their treatment and monitoring of their conditions

Proteus Discover, Proteus Digital Health UK Ltd – poppy seed sized technology combines an ingestible sensor with a wearable patch to measure medication adherence and physiological response to therapy

Benefits

The benchmark for best practice is set, and Oldham’s implementation of the Dragons’ Den initiative paves the way for other CCGs, aiding further progress across the entire NHS.

A project of this type eliminates the difficulty of trying to engage with smaller sized companies, as Denis acknowledges, “It has opened the doors for us to engage with companies of any size. No longer dominated by the larger players; individual entrepreneurs along with small start-ups and medium-sized companies, UK and internationally, now have an opportunity to demonstrate innovations in front of key decision makers.”

For the individuals and organisations behind the ideas, whether or not they made it through to the final pitch, this process has provided an invaluable opportunity to take their first step into the NHS. “It’s

an unrivalled opportunity to compete for a funded evaluation of their innovations in an NHS setting, effectively a platform to showcase ideas.”

Denis continues, “Looking back at the marketplace event, the ability to obtain a comparison of technologies which touch different pathways, was invaluable. Perhaps the most compelling benefit, and one of the reasons the Dragons’ Den has been so relevant for everyone, is that the technologies or services have the potential to significantly benefit healthcare delivery, not just within Oldham, but the wider NHS.”

Way forward

With a track record of sharing insights and learning, and the accolade of the first CCG to implement a Dragons’ Den style programme to evaluate innovations, Oldham CCG quite rightly deserves its leading status.

The six innovations successful in the Den, now begins the evaluation phase. Clinical Directors from Oldham are assigned to each innovation, and to ensure results are statistically significant, a bio-statistician is also on board; all of whom are working closely with TRUSTECH. In parallel, a cost-consequence modelling exercise will also run, to establish the impact of implementing the innovations, this phase

ultimately determines which products may be commissioned by Oldham CCG, and will be subject to procurement.

Denis concludes, “Dragons’ Den has been instrumental in helping us develop and maintain our innovative spirit. TRUSTECH has provided a bridge between innovators often not on the radar, and the NHS, to help accelerate the speed at which innovations are adopted. What’s particularly appealing is that the adaptability and flexibility of this approach means that it can be adopted by any CCG, and is therefore increasingly likely to be present in the future of clinical commissioning.”

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