



Knowledge and Library Services (KLS)

Impact stories

Title: A KLS literature search identified solutions in peer challenge to support the development of a Region to Region (R2R) Peer Challenge Process

User testimonial: *"Peer review is a very common term being used in published articles and the narrative and initial screening from the KLS team identified relevant literature and made the literature review significantly easier"* **Sammer Tang, Regional Lead for Quality (South)**

Challenge:

The R2R Peer Challenge was proposed in 2016 with an objective of establishing a systematic way of raising standards, by identifying and sharing good practice, areas of development and improvement. There were diverging opinions within the Peer Challenge working group on the definition of peer challenge, processes, how we could best carry out peer challenge, including the areas/ topics to be covered, the formation of the peer challenge team and the feedback process.

Solution:

Following the first R2R Peer Challenge, it was decided that we would ask members of the Knowledge and Library Services (KLS) to assist us to conduct a literature search on peer challenge. A feedback form was developed and completed by all participants involved in the first R2R Peer Challenge to review their experience in the process including the perceived strengths & weakness and any changes that they would like to see in the future peer challenges. All feedback was collated, analysed and summarised using thematic analysis technique. The results were compared with the literature gathered from the literature search from colleagues from the KLS team.

Impact:

We were able to compare and contrast the feedback we collated to the existing literature around peer challenge. Lessons learnt were identified and summarised in a poster we produced for the PHE Quality Improvement Conference in 2018, see image below.

The R2R Peer Challenge Process was updated and a round of peer challenge was conducted in March 2018.

Feedback on the Region to Region Peer Challenge process for 2016-17

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INTRODUCTION

Peer challenge is an independent assessment of quality by experts in the field. Peer review methods are employed to maintain standards, improve performance and provide credibility.

The purpose of Regional Peer Challenge is to establishing a systematic way of raising standards, identifying and sharing good practice and, equally, areas of development and improvement. It is based on mutual respect, where professionals critically appraise, systematically assess, monitor, determine strengths and weaknesses and review the quality of their practice.

The Regional Peer Challenge meetings were carried out in all four PHE regions in Q3 and Q4 2016-17. They were intended to review the four key functions of each regional team: Quality assurance and improvement; NHS England relationship; Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR) and Public Health Consultant Appraisal and Revalidation.

The Peer Challenge Team was made up of a cross section of Regional staff, led by a Regional Director. The deputy Chief Operating Officer acted as an independent chair for three of the peer challenge visits.

Each regional peer challenge meeting lasted between 2 - 3 hours with verbal feedback at the end of the meeting from the chair of the challenge team. Written reports (including recommendations) were made available within two weeks following each visit.

METHODS

Following the peer challenge events, a feedback form (Figure 1) was developed to capture feedback from all participants involved in the peer challenge process.

The peer challenge feedback form was circulated to all Regional Leads for Quality in July 2017. It was intended to be completed by the Regional Leads for Quality on behalf of the region, several individuals involved in the peer challenge process completed the form providing individual feedback.

All the feedback was captured and analysed using thematic analysis principles and reported according to their relevance on different part of the peer challenge process

Figure 1: Peer challenge feedback form

RESULTS

Purpose of the peer challenge and its objectives

- Feedback indicated there was a 'lack of clarity of the purpose of the peer challenge process and it is unclear what intended outcomes were'. This was discussed among the Regional Leads for Quality during the review process and there were diverging views on whether the peer challenge is a quality assurance or quality improvement.
- It is worth noting that the NHS often has a 'quality assurance' approach to peer challenge as part of a service accreditation process (McCormick, 2012) while the Local Government Association (LGA) supports a more 'quality improvement' approach (LGA, 2017).
- Peer challenge was listed as a process to support the PHE regional team as part of its wider assurance role in the service delivery of their local centres.

Area / topics to be covered

- Peer challenge feedback specified that the scope of the peer challenge in 2016-17 was too wide and did not allow in-depth discussion. It was suggested that the peer challenge 2017-18 should be a more focused process and based on no more than two areas.
- Depending on the approach, it is suggested the Regional Reflective Practice group will agree and mandate one common topic area for review (for assurance purposes) and the host team will indicate an area they would like the challenge team input for improvement.

Formation of Challenge Team

- Depending on the topic choice, a suggestion for inclusion of a topic experts from each region should be involved in all visits; this would ensure the provision of a wide view and would facilitate shared learning between regions. However, this approach may lead to the exclusion of other team members from the peer challenge process.
- The Deputy Chief Operating Officer acted as an independent chair for three of the regional visits in 2016-17. It was well received and brought consistency to the visits. It was proposed that this practice should continue. The advantage of the independent chair being consistency, ensuring inclusion of all voices, focus on the issue(s) at hand and good timekeeping (Aveling et al., 2012)
- Suggestions were made to invite input from PHE experts from the national team and Centre Directors to join the peer challenge panel. Although the benefits to this enhanced panel were considered, the regions agreed that this would not be a 'true' peer challenge process to meet the initial Region to region peer challenge objectives.

Feedback process

- Participants indicated that they valued the verbal feedback at the end of each challenge visit. It is recommended this process to be continued in 2017-18.
- It was also indicated that host team would like to receive a more in-depth, structured written feedback (similar to the EPRR peer challenge process).

Table 1. Areas of good practice and areas for further development

DISCUSSION

The feedback was reviewed and discussed at the September 2017 Regional Reflective Practice meeting. The overall feedback suggested that the peer challenge process was well received, achieving the intended outcomes of sharing good practice, learning from peers and reflecting on region specific set up and ways of working.

It was agreed that quality assurance and quality improvement can be done simultaneously in peer challenges. This is aligned with the experience of McKay et al., (2009) & Rivas et al. (2012) which showed that it is possible for peer challenge to be used for both quality assurance and quality improvement simultaneously.

Literatures suggested that peer challenge is found to be of greater value when used for formative rather than summative purposes (Davys et al., 2008). It is because the summative approach may lead to anxiety as participants wanted to 'put on a good show' (Rolland et al., 2010) while the formative approach was viewed as an opportunity to improve services by implementing some of the suggested changes or through exploring alternative approach (Slavova-Azmanova et al., 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

- The peer challenge process was able to achieve the intended outcomes of sharing good practice and learning from peers and reflecting on own set up as well as ways of working.
- The purposes of the peer challenge, it was agreed that quality assurance and quality improvement can be done simultaneously in peer challenges.
- No more than 2 key topics should be selected to allow time for more in-depth discussion within the time and resource limitations.
- Formation of the peer challenge panel is important to the process and the inclusion of "topic experts" should be considered. However, priority should be given to encourage all team members to be involved in key stages (presentation and feedback) of the peer challenge process.
- The feedback process following peer challenge is a vital and valued component of the peer challenge process.

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Success factors/ Lessons:

The literature search from colleagues in KLS supported us to develop a better understanding of the feedback we collated after the peer challenge. In addition, we were able to identify some solutions from existing literature in peer challenge to support the development of our R2R peer challenge process.

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