

Innovation Hub pilot

Thematic analysis of improvement journeys report

Introduction

Innovation Hub pilot project reflective question 2: What are the current service challenges and how are members trying to improve these?

Piloting an online improvement journey submission tool, our Innovation Hub collected data from members around problems facing services, projects that are implementing a change to improve service outcomes, any barriers and enablers to their projects and the impact of the change on service outcomes. In this report we've summarised the key themes arising from thematic analysis of the qualitative questions responses submitted during the pilot phase (28/11/2022 to 31/03/2023). Our analysis includes 26 completed and submitted improvement journeys.

Methodology

The Innovation Hub online improvement journey tool is a semi structured information gathering questionnaire where the questions are based on change methodology. We piloted this as a new method of collecting service data from members. Five reflective questions were developed in addition to three quantitative data capture ones. The reflective questions can be seen in the table below. Thematic analysis of the responses to these questions was conducted by Julia Roscoe – Research & Innovation Officer using the Braun & Clarke (2022) approach. The resulting themes were also peer reviewed by Suzy England –Service Innovation Manager.

Question number	Improvement journey question
2	Please give a short description of your improvement idea/project.
4	Please tell us what you have learnt so far in your improvement journey?
5	What advice/learning would you give to other occupational therapists (OTs) who are developing similar ideas?
6	Please tell us what you think the benefit will be to people who access your services?
7	What did you find most challenging?
8	What do you think helped to move your project/idea forward?
10	Please add any further comments or information?

Results

The results of our analysis identified seven key themes which can be seen in the table on page 2. Some overlap was seen between the themes, and each is described more fully in this results section.

Analysis of question 2, where members gave a short description of their improvement idea/project, found that most improvement journeys submitted were around making improvements to care and improving service delivery for an identified group of people. These focused on improving access to care, efficiency of services and improving patient flow through services by looking to reduce waiting

times, improving effectiveness of treatment, and improving the quality of care or service received. Some improvement ideas were strategically driven, for example by an OT's organisation and/or manager, and others were new ideas for projects or ideas for change. Several submitted improvement journeys were around supporting occupational therapy students and newly qualified OTs with additional learning and aspects of their role. There was much overlap in responses to question 2 describing your improvement idea/project and question 6 regarding the benefits to people who access services. The small number of responses to question 10, added further links to project reports, information, or posters and two requests for advice.

Question number	Key themes
6	1. Improving the quality and cost effectiveness of care with equitable and timely access to services
4, 5, 7 & 8	2. The value of good communication skills and effective communication 3. The importance of collaborative and multidisciplinary working 4. The benefits of a structured approach to project and problem solving 5. Improvement projects require time and new ways of working 6. Implementing change in organisations can be complex 7. The importance of meaningful data collection and evaluation of projects.

1. Improving the quality and cost effectiveness of care with equitable and timely access to services.

Building on the descriptive information from question 2, most improvement journeys submitted were focused on improving care and quality of life for people who access services and were around promoting earlier intervention, reducing risks, providing timely access to services and/or treatment, improving cost effectiveness in the service offered and reducing length of hospital stay. For improvement journeys that focused on improving health and wellbeing for people who access services, this was by providing access to information about available services and treatment, improvements in promoting and supporting self-management for people who accessed services and improving communication with families and carers to build understanding of their relative's care and available services.

Improvement journey ID number	Quotations from improvement journey submissions
IJ011	"Improvement is part of everyone's job and its valuable to develop these (quality improvement) skills during post-qualifying professional development."
IJ012	"Staff need to feel confident, competent, and empowered to deliver the change needed."
IJ017	"There is power in building relationships and bringing people together to improve the wellbeing of the population."

2. The value of good communication skills and effective communication.

The value of good communication skills and effective communication was a strong theme found in the learning shared in the improvement journey submissions. While communication was not specified as verbal or non-verbal this theme included learning shared on the importance of effective communication with key stakeholders and team members involved in the projects, working together as a team to problem solve, and the importance of tailoring information messages about the project to different audiences to encourage 'buy in'. Also communicating with patients, carers, and service users about the change. Concurrent with this was the sub theme that communicating change to others can be hard and identifying and managing key stakeholders through good communication throughout a project is key to 'bringing everybody on board' and 'maintaining momentum.'

Improvement journey ID number	Quotations from improvement journey submissions
IJ001	"Work out who the key people are that you need to be onboard with the idea and pitch your idea with their key priorities in mind e.g., finance, staffing etc."
IJ002	"Communicating change is hard, some staff don't like change, idea of it being 'an experiment'."
IJ006	"Not everyone can understand the full project vision, pitch what you share to your audience. Choose your communication style and content depending on your audience."
IJ024	"Talk to as many people as possible, build relationships for support."
IJ026	"Speaking to other therapists about the idea and feedback received enabled development" of the project.

3. The importance of collaborative and multidisciplinary working.

From the improvement of journey analysis, collaborative working across and within teams emerged as a strong theme. Most of the improvement journeys where projects were already being implemented or evaluated identified that 'change is hard by yourself' and 'involving people' in your idea and change is important. Sub themes included the value of 'networking to learn from others and share ideas, and the importance of staff working together to feel competent and empowered to deliver change. Collaborative and multi-disciplinary working was identified in many improvement journeys as key to 'getting support and the right people on board,' building, and motivating a team with a 'shared vision,' promoting project ownership, sharing feedback on the project, and identifying key people and leaders to 'help drive the project forwards.'

Improvement journey ID number	Quotations from improvement journey submissions
IJ005	"Motivate people with your vision."
IJ007	"Collaborative working with other OTs in same area," helped to move the project forward.

IJ008	"Staff engagement at the earliest opportunity is crucial in accepting change, managing anxiety and stress and ensuring staff are supported through the process."
IJ009	"The importance of engaging all members of a team when leading innovative service development to bring about and prioritise change cannot be understated. Sharing a vision and providing the necessary background rationale, policy and ambitions was key to being able to progress with this project with all team members sharing the responsibility with a sense of ownership for their part in the bigger picture."
IJ0012	"Empowering staff to continually challenge conventional ideas around patient care and discharge" helped to move the project forward.
IJ014	"Collaboration with others and partnership with IT," helped to move the project forward.

4. The benefits of a structured approach to project and problem solving.

This theme emerged from many of the improvement journeys and overlaps with the communication and collaborative working themes. The benefits of a structured approach were identified by OTs as helping to identify and explore the nature of a problem first, 'enabled gathering of appropriate information' and piloting the approach to problem solve and develop ideas further. One OT highlighted how a structured approach helped to 'maintain momentum and keep people on board for the project duration.'

Improvement journey ID number	Quotations from improvement journey submissions
IJ009	"Ambition and vision of service leads supported by policy drivers" helped to move the project forward.
IJ012	"Strong, consistent message from the service manager and the clinical managers within the team and from within the team as a whole," helped to move the project forward.
IJ014	Advice for other OTs - "take it slow, do a lot of preliminary information gathering."
IJ019	"Understand what's been tried before, don't reinvent the wheel and research your area of interest."
IJ022	"Process a map of what you have and identify what you want to change. Embed change before moving on to each stage."

5. Improvement projects require time and new ways of working.

Reflecting on what they had learnt and advice they'd give to other OTs, the time taken to plan, implement and evaluate a project in practice was a key theme, taking much longer than originally anticipated in each case. This theme was found to overlap with theme 1 & 4. The advice given was to 'take time properly to plan,' and that often, competing demands and workload pressures had an impact on a project duration.

A few improvement journeys were submitted from OTs who were new in a role which had been established to deliver changes in services or develop new services. Some identified that time is a important factor to build into planning when trying to understand the scale of a problem or change required. Advice given when looking at new ways of working in a project included, 'don't overburden yourself or your team,' 'use technology to help' 'be flexible in your approach,' 'define roles within the team' and 'accept its going to be challenging!.'

Improvement journey ID number	Quotations from improvement journey submissions
IJ001	"The whole project planning through to evaluation and sustain and spread takes time."
IJ003	"Invest in time to properly plan and invest in time for leadership for any pilot."
IJ008	"Change process is timely and therefore patience is essential." One of the main challenges was "adjusting to new ways of working which was difficult to envisage."
IJ012	"We have moved away from the traditional monthly team meeting and now have an all-team meeting once a week for half an hour on Teams."

6. Implementing change in organisations can be complex.

Building on the themes already outlined, the improvement journey analysis highlighted that implementing change in organisations can be complex. The sub themes identified the potential of organisational cultures to have an impact on facilitating or creating barriers to change, with differing priorities across teams, organisational hierarchy and data systems which are not linked being impactful on project progression, delivery and evaluation. Advice given was around identifying and positively influencing key stakeholders, communicating effectively at different levels within an organisation and working collaboratively to overcome any barriers, problem solve and maintain project momentum. A structured approach and allowing more time were highlighted as important advice to help navigate complex change.

Improvement journey ID number	Quotations from improvement journey submissions
IJ002	"Acknowledgement from managers and staff that the current system wasn't working - promoted buy in from staff."
IJ006	"It can be tricky and hard to please everyone."
IJ012	"Not everything will work first time. It's important to be available to reflect, and communicate back to staff what was tried, what did or didn't work and how those learnings will be implemented going forward."
IJ013	"Make sure there is equal impetus and involvement from those with the decision-making power and responsibility for this area of work within the key stakeholder organisations and teams/roles."

7.The importance of meaningful data collection and evaluation of projects.

The thematic analysis highlighted the importance of meaningful data collection and evaluation of projects as key in 'being able to prove the projects value and outcomes'. A few OTs suggested that management tools were helpful to support planning of a project and demonstrate a staged process of implementation and evaluation.

Improvement journey ID number	Quotations from improvement journey submissions
IJ001	"Get your data collection right and be consistent."
IJ003	"Evaluate using meaningful, outcome measures (ideally occupational based) - Invest in presenting your service and outcomes in a meaningful eye-catching way - Learn about promotion."
IJ008	"Development of database systems to identify qualitative and quantitative data has continued to support improvements and changes".
IJ023	"Agility is required when measuring progress. e.g., it's not possible to forecast everything in advance; how success is quantified may adapt/change over time."

Conclusion

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data from the 26 improvement journeys, found that the current service challenges these members were facing focused around improving the quality and cost effectiveness of care and equitable and timely access to services. The data submitted helps us to understand some of the challenges members have experienced during their improvement journeys and highlights the consistent themes from their learning and advice given for other OTs. For example, the analysis found that there can be complex challenges within organisations when implementing change, engaging stakeholders and 'sharing your vision' and need for change.

The themes from the advice you would give to other OTs overlapped with the responses to questions about what was found to be most challenging and what helped to move your project forward. These identified the value of good and effective communication, working collaboratively and building multidisciplinary teams to plan and deliver change, (including identifying key stakeholders to support change), and the benefits of a structured approach to project planning as core themes. From the improvement journeys where OTs were already implementing and/or evaluating improvements to care and/or services, the analysis found that improvement projects require time and new ways of working, and the importance of meaningful data collection and ongoing evaluation of projects supported by data were key themes.

References

Braun V & Clarke V (2022) Thematic Analysis – a practical guide. Sage press, London.