

# Case Study

## Facilitating online training and innovation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

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### BACKGROUND



David Thomas is the Assistant Director of Improvement at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) and leads the Aneurin Bevan Continuous Improvement (ABCI) team. The ABCI team comprises of 12-15 personnel who have a range of skills related to quality improvement, modelling and analytics.

David leads ABCI on behalf of the Health Board and facilitates a significant amount of training activity for the purpose of building the improvement capabilities and other capabilities within the organisation. They also run training to grow the ability of the Health Board to deliver its own quality improvement work, modelling and analytics work, and development of networks. Through bringing people together for training and coaching them to support their own improvement activity, David and the ABCI team hope to grow a network of improvers and modellers across the organisation. The team also run leadership training and have their own analytics and modelling academy which they run on an annual basis.

Historically, David and the ABCI team have run or supported large scale improvement programmes in the Health Board, the last of which concluded last year, but due to COVID-19, they are not currently running any large-scale improvement programmes.

### AIMS



At the beginning of the pandemic, the ABCI team carried out substantial reactive modelling and analytics work to support the Health Board with modelling around demand and capacity. Working with epidemiological data to anticipate what needs would likely translate into, the team went through multiple iterations of multiple models in support of the Health Board. The team also completed work around modelling workforce demand.

Regarding their training activities, David and the team realised very early on that their existing model of delivering training and supporting colleagues had become non-viable and required a new way forward. With the aim of keeping their programmes up and running, and to help navigate COVID-19 regulations, they first reviewed their programme content, shortening it to ensure it would translate well in an online capacity. Once this was completed, the team were left with sharp, punchy content and using Microsoft Teams, they took all courses online, as opposed to the pre-COVID-19 face-to-face classroom format they had in place.

Additionally, the team have also built several assets around core quality improvement skills and blog posts which are free for everyone to access on the Health Boards website. They also created a series of “unbreakable” Excel based tools with associated videos that allow users to build their own charts, play with data, answer questions, etc.

### CHALLENGES



The main challenge David and his team faced was related to the finicky nature of technology. Tools such as Excel, sometimes may present challenges due to the nature of the tool. Additionally, due to the nature of their environment, financial resources were limited, and David and his team found they were met with the challenge of creating spaces – specifically, online spaces - that people could use to access their content easily and efficiently, and to deploy it alongside (as a “bolt-on” to) an outdated Health Board website infrastructure. At present, they have settled for using Google Classrooms and the Health Board’s website.

David also noted that the remote nature of their office’s pandemic response made accessing people quite difficult in the early days of lockdown. Within the first few weeks, it took them quite a while to iron out the kinks of remote working and endeavoured to get together as a team, a few months in, to discuss their learnings.

## OUTCOMES

Looking back at the changes made during the pandemic, David notes that there have been some brilliant innovations made in the past 12 months that arguably, should have been put in place years ago.

Having been forced by the pandemic to innovate and change procedures that previously worked, David notes that they now have products that they wouldn't have previously had and he is confident that the wider team will continue to benefit from them greatly over the foreseeable future.

While the pandemic has been disruptive, David notes that the flexibility that it brought about in his team has been incredibly positive and will serve as a stepping stone for future innovations. Additionally, he believes that there has been a change of mindset, when it comes to innovation with people being more willing to proactively break habits or common behaviours to facilitate change.

When tackling the topic of taking their training programmes online, David notes that change was inevitable. Through moving their work online, they've been able to: continue to train people; provide useful resources; help people to do quality improvement work; and think about quality improvement in ways that otherwise would not have happened.

## NEXT STEPS

Over the coming months, David and his team will continue to complete additional technical resources focusing on some complex areas. They will also be focusing on building out their network and providing a virtual hub, that can act as a focus point for interaction and conversation between users.

Additionally, the team will continue to allocate resources towards more sophisticated, complex, and longer-term training packages such as their Analytics and Modelling academy (to be hosted within Cardiff University's online learning environment) and their new flagship QE programme.

The team will be looking forward to more Health Boards using the freely available resources they have developed, as well as to finding viable ways to share the more complex and higher end programmes created.

*"We've now got a really good product with all . . . the technical kinks ironed out. The team are really, incredibly proficient in delivering and now it's very smooth and they've got to the point of proficiency where they can chop and change roles as well.*

*So, you know, we can kind of rotate people around and it's very slick and as I say, is getting good reviews and good traction."*

*David Thomas*

