

Knowledge Management Strategy 2008 – 2011
Updated May 2009

Who is this Strategy for?

This strategy is for everyone working as part of NHS West Midlands Regional Development Centre ('**WMRDC**'), and will be of interest to our colleagues within NHS West Midlands, other working partners, clients, commissioners and stakeholders.

What do we want to do with Knowledge? Our vision

Most of us already recognise that there will be benefits to more effective Knowledge Management (KM), but they can sometimes be difficult to capture.

As the WMRDC, Knowledge is our Business and our improved KM programme will make us more effective and allow us better to demonstrate our value. It will give us confidence that we are really getting great value from our knowledge, by;

- Capturing, storing and sharing knowledge more effectively;
- Not repeatedly 're-inventing the wheel';
- Collaborating naturally;
- 'Knowing what we know' and who knows what
 - ➔ Improving expert location within WMRDC and beyond;
- Being happy with our systems;
- Reducing isolation and improving integration within our Team;
- Improving co-operation with our regional stakeholders and other NHS RDCs;
- Continually improving and measuring our progress; and
- Maintaining our systems for doing all of the above

What do we all need to do?

- Every one of us at WMRDC needs to take responsibility for contributing to the effort required to change our working culture, by;
 - sharing information about our work, good and not-so-good practice and experience,
 - maximising the use of shared knowledge and information stores and sources, keeping these current, and
 - generally promoting a culture of knowledge-sharing, being ready and unafraid to ask questions, promote enquiry, curiosity and learning.
- As we all need to be better knowledge managers, we must all be supported with training and ongoing assistance with knowledge-related skills and competences appropriate to our roles.

- ☑ We need our subject **experts** to take charge of the knowledge that WMRDC holds for their subjects. That includes
 - having ownership and ultimate quality control over the subject knowledge that we store and share, and over what new knowledge is added; and
 - being known as the central person in the community of interested people for each specialist subject.
- ☑ We need to provide for our experts the tools, training, and other support that enables them to carry out those roles. That includes
 - as the KM Working Group; assessing and meeting their needs e.g. on approaches to take to KM, technical tools and supporting processes, and
 - as line managers and generally within our working culture; to allow each other dedicated time for maintaining those networks and 'bases' of knowledge, including e.g. creating and sharing our own learning from experience, so that we are better at avoiding repeating mistakes and re-invention.

What do we need across the organisation to make this strategy work?

The key organisational components to improving our KM are:

- KM education for the whole team
- Senior Management buy-in and engagement
- Identifying our Key Knowledge Areas and knowledge assets
- A shared KM vision and a strategy that is linked to our business objectives
- A knowledge-sharing culture
- Natural and flourishing knowledge-led communities
- Robust processes for 'harvesting' and 'levering' knowledge
- Effective and user-friendly tools and systems
- Rewards and recognition for 'good KM'
- Training our people in key 'Knowledge Worker' skills and supporting them by defining and managing competence levels
- Measuring our KM performance and the business benefits that KM brings.

Our People: a cultural shift

We recognise that tools and technology are not important in their own right; they are a means to an end. And systems are important only in so far as they help us to improve how we do business. What we mean by seriously improving organisational KM is about our people; it amounts to a cultural shift, 'winning hearts and minds', enabling and tirelessly encouraging sharing and learning, and always demonstrating their benefits.

Our Priorities for 2009-2010

We have identified the following as key areas for concentrating our efforts and resources during the current year:

- Providing practical support to project teams within WMRDC on capturing, sharing and storing key knowledge throughout the life of their projects and beyond;
- Communicating better what we do; sharing our achievements, making clearer to commissioners and others where our strengths lie and where we provide value for money;
- Organisational development in the form of continued training, guidance and other support, and continuing to focus our team members on the personal, as well as organisational, benefits of improved knowledge management;

- Finding ways to recognise and reward good knowledge-sharing behaviour and supporting individuals to fulfil the responsibilities inherent in the 'Knowledge Roles' that we developed during 2008-09.
- Making better use of project 'knowledge outcomes' in maintaining our organisational knowledge assets;
- Making clearer and stronger links between our KM aims and our overall organisational objectives.

Obstacles and Risks

Perceived restrictions on colleagues' time is likely to be the chief obstacle to making sufficient progress in implementing this strategy. Some of the team might feel unable or perhaps unwilling to invest time in the processes involved, and we stress that it is crucial for this reason – once the expectations and anticipated benefits of investing time are made clear to them – that **individuals are fully supported and encouraged by their line managers** to play their part in bringing about these improvements. Otherwise, many of our KM initiatives run the risk of failure.

Working through the Team and Measuring Our Success

We have identified levels of Knowledge Worker skills that are commensurate with newly created Knowledge Roles within the team, and have aligned these skill levels with each post's profile within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF). This ties KM skills and competencies to each team member's personal development.

WMRDC is focusing this year on providing benefits to Health and Social Care services through completion of specifically commissioned projects (rather than open-ended support programmes). As we work through the Team we will identify networks, processes and systems for each project area and work with those teams and individuals to enhance their KM effectiveness.

We are making periodical assessments with the whole team of how effective are our KM services and where our priorities need to be; for individuals, teams, the organisation and beyond.

Knowledge Working Group and Programme Board

What was formed last year as a Knowledge Working Group is this year developing a clearer role of 'KM Programme Board', to commission the KM Lead and others to implement our strategic KM work during 2009-10. This Board includes

- our Associate Director (Chief Knowledge Officer),
- Business Manager,
- Head and one other member of IT Services,
- one representative Programme Consultant and
- the Knowledge Management Lead.

We are keeping the membership of the KM Board under review, particularly as we explore with the rest of NHS West Midlands what needs and opportunities exist for joint work on KM initiatives across the wider organisation.

Contact the **Knowledge Management Working Group** at wmkmworkinggroup@wmrdc.org.uk

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