Leading the roll out of Productive General Practice

A guide for CCGs
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Productive General Practice is an important element in creating capability and capacity in primary care.

The programme is a tried and tested systematic approach to support practices in their drive to improve productivity. It helps to create improvement capability, engages the whole practice team, improves working life of staff, supports patient involvement and develops safer services.

Productive General Practice is gaining momentum across the country and we now have experience of working with hundreds of practices and scores of CCGs. This has given us a range of insights into the critical success factors for the effective establishment and roll out of the programme from a CCG perspective.

We have developed this guide to help you consider key questions as you start on your Productive General Practice journey.
Productive General Practice is a significant change programme

Productive General Practice is designed to be led and shaped by practices in order to achieve their objectives. It is a significant change programme and needs to be project managed within the practice. The roll out of this programme across a number of practices also requires active programme management from within the CCG.

Key considerations and actions

There are a number of key considerations and actions that need to be taken into account when embarking on Productive General Practice.

Confirm strategic alignment

As a CCG can we see the strategic benefits (see below) of the programme?
- Supporting primary care.
- Creating capacity in primary care / releasing time.
- Creating improvement capability in primary care.
- Creating transformational change capability in primary care.
- Providing an opportunity to increase cross practice learning and sharing.
- Reducing unhelpful variation.
- Improving working life.
- Patient engagement.
- Promoting safety.

Has the programme been endorsed by the CCG?

Establish programme management for the CCG

Have we allocated a senior CCG leader to the programme?

Have we allocated a senior manager to manage the roll out?

The senior CCG lead and manager should:
- establish a programme management reporting structure;
- ask for regular updates on progress from practices;
- set broad milestones for practices to establish a sense of expected progress;
- create a method with practices to capture evidence of progress and impact;
- have regular updates with the Delivery Partner that will be providing support to practices.

Create awareness of the programme

- Practices need time to develop an understanding of the programme and to create a wider support base within their own practice. This takes time, perhaps a few months.
- If this awareness is not developed, practices may feel that the CCG is imposing this on them and the CCG will get push back.
Choose the right practices

Experience has shown that it is best to support practices that have sufficient commitment, capability and capacity for change. Primary care is under great pressure and this programme is unlikely to be successful where no time is given to implementation, or it is seen as just another thing to be done.

Ask practices for expressions of interest to create a sense of competition for places and to ensure the most appropriate practices are engaged. Use the ‘Practice Readiness’ prompt questions to help practices assess and debate whether they are ready to undertake the programme.

Consider rolling out in waves. The first practices will be able to share their experiences with peers and create further awareness and interest in other practices.

Manage expectations - impact

The first part of the programme helps the partners agree on the direction of travel for the practice. This is followed by a diagnostic exercise where a picture is formed on how well things are going in the practice in areas such as staff experience, patient engagement, managing workload etc. The whole practice team then come together to discuss the findings and agree on areas where they want to make improvements. At this point there are benefits in terms of improving morale, team work and sense of direction. However, the changes to day to day activities have not yet started. So manage expectations during this mainly diagnostic phase.

The practices will then go on to make improvements in key areas such as prescribing, back office and scheduling of work in line with their identified priorities. This is where more quantifiable improvements are made.

Manage expectations – Delivery Partners

In addition to the box sets of modules and access to scores of associated resources (analysis tools, films, documents, presentations etc.) practices will also receive hands on support from the Delivery Partner. The Delivery Partner is there to guide and coach and does not manage or implement the programme for the practice. It must be owned, led and implemented by the practice, for the practice.

The Delivery Partner has a set amount of days and a prescribed approach to support practices. The Delivery Partner will provide initial advice and insight into the modules in order to develop understanding and confidence in the practice, but the practice undertakes the work. The Delivery Partner is not in a position to offer unlimited support to practices.

In discussion with the Delivery Partner the CCG may be able to negotiate a change in emphasis away from early insight into the modules, towards more problem solving support later on during implementation. Make sure this is agreed and planned for early on in discussions. Your Delivery Partner may also be able to support you with the programme management of your roll out.
Develop local knowledge and capability

Get to know the tools and resources.

It is important that the CCG ensures that local knowledge of the programme and associated resources is developed. This local knowledge might be developed through a combination of the CCG manager, a CCG facilitator, locality manager and key practice managers or GPs. This will ensure that there is not over reliance on the Delivery Partner and that key insights and knowledge are retained at the CCG level in some form.

Practices have also reported that external facilitation of the whole practice workshops can be valuable. As a CCG you may have effective facilitators who could perform this role or you could talk to your Delivery Partner. The default position is that the practice facilitates this in-house.

Make links with other work

A range of CCG work can be linked to Productive General Practice.

- What are the prescribing and referrals challenges and how do the relevant Productive General Practice modules relate to this?
- What are the patient engagement challenges and how can the *Involving Patients in Improvement* module support this work?
- What are our challenges regarding transforming the approach to large groups such as those with Long Term Conditions? How can the *Shaping Our Future Practice* module help?
- What are our access challenges? How can we link to the *Planning and Scheduling* module?
- How do we plan to develop improvement, leadership and transformation skills in our clinicians and managers? How does this link with the tools, approach and methods contained within Productive General Practice?
- How do we plan to spread good practice and sharing across practices? How can we use Productive General Practice learning events?

Creating a mind set for change and improvement

We have also discovered that GPs and practice managers often welcome an upfront opportunity to think about the challenges of leading a practice team through change and implementing sustained improvement. This helps participants to think about the reasons why they might engage in a change programme, the challenges along the way and how an improvement methodology is an important element in success. Time spent on this can help ensure that key members of the practice leadership team are motivated to change and can see the benefits and importance of the Productive General Practice approach.

Talk to your Delivery Partner about what help is available from NHS Improving Quality to help with this preparation.

Encourage pragmatism – but not short cuts!

Every practice is different. There is variation in size, staff, skills, approaches and workload. Productive General Practice provides a comprehensive and detailed method for addressing the key challenges in the practice. It is a significant change programme so requires commitment and time. However, this has to be balanced with the day to day running of the practice.
It is reasonable for a practice to make an informed judgement about how much time and energy it puts into implementation. The programme as a whole and each module provides a robust approach and provides detailed guidance and tools. Getting a thorough understanding of how things operate at present before identifying changes is always encouraged. However, if a practice has a robust understanding or analysis about a specific area, then it may be reasonable to use existing information and insight rather than undertake a new data collection exercise.

A word of warning though! Practices should always be challenged to base decisions on evidence or there is a risk that decisions are made on anecdote and gut feeling, and this might lead to wasted time and energy implementing the wrong solution.

Deliver quick wins

Especially when there are great day to day demands on a practice, in some instances practices have taken quite some time working through the first few modules. (These cover setting direction and completing a diagnostic assessment of the practice.) If this takes a long time, momentum can be lost.

We would, therefore, recommend at one of the first practice meetings to allow staff to create a frustrations list and identify which changes can be completed quickly and easily. This often leads to swift changes that create energy in the practice.

Plan interventions with the Delivery Partner

Plan delivery dates with the Delivery Partner in advance to ensure dates are clear and communicated. Where practices cancel practice visits at short notice those days may be lost to the practice. Advance planning of dates can also ensure maximum use of Delivery Partner time (e.g. they can undertake two half day visits on the same day).

Support Productive General Practice as a strategic enabler

Productive General Practice offers the CCG a systematic way of supporting practices, whilst at the same time retaining practice control over their own destiny. The programme will be most successful when it is positioned at the strategic level as a method for enhancing capability, productivity and change in primary care. It will also need the support and level of commitment that a strategic initiative requires.

Further information

This guide is intended to provide leaders in CCGs with some prompts to aid the set up and on-going leadership of Productive General Practice in their area. For more detailed discussions please talk to your Delivery Partner.