Evaluating large scale health information systems: problems and solutions....
...the Whole System Demonstrator programme

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7th February 2012
The team...and partners

- Prof. James Barlow
- Dr. Theopisti Chrysanthaki
Policy context - How best to care? How to afford to care?
Background

- My research focuses on the organisational challenges in achieving large scale change
- The adoption and diffusion of complex innovations
- Remote care (telecare / telehealth) is a major part of UK government policy to
  - shift healthcare **out of expensive settings** – hospital to home
  - introduce more **preventative models of care**
Key factors moving towards large scale adoption

Remote care adoption

Adoption
- Enthusiasts
- Grants
- Project mgt

Spread
- Awareness
- Champions
- Leadership
- Local Evaluation

Mainstreaming
- Business case
- Robust Evidence

Time
Evaluating the WSD

- The programme is being evaluated by a consortium (ministerial led)
- The largest RCT of remote care worldwide probably
- Our focus - organisational aspects of implementation - within and outside the RCT context

Quantitative

- Service utilisation
- Impact on costs
- Clinical measures and patient reported quality of life
- Mechanisms of impact on service user outcomes and variations between subgroups

Qualitative

- Patient, carer and professional experience
- Organisational context and implementation process

Coordinator role UCL

King’s Fund, LSE, UCL, Oxford

Manchester, Oxford, Imperial
The environment...

- RC to deliver whole system change...
- New configurations of services, technology and infrastructure
- Complex
- Turbulent
- Uncertain
- Highly politicised
Policy and politics...

- Large scale = policy = political aims and agendas
- Power relations. The sites - politically charged groupings
- RCT = the provision of robust evidence
- The parameters of credible, effective evaluation, effective performance can be subtly shifted
- New and competing political agendas…
- Evaluation - equally politically astute
- Flexible, future & policy proof
- All challenges in terms of what evaluation should look like, and seek to provide
Larger bet, higher stakes....

• Produce the right results - in an experimental context
• The process of evaluation (RCT) - skews reality
• Developing solutions under the spotlight - within a short time frame
• Organisational factors recognised as relevant but not understood
• Sustainability - project-level or programme-level
• Sustainability ambitions - values of national or local policy makers?
• Contingent on political structures, policy agendas, top level management, local priorities and resources
• Disagreements over goals and the levels of success achieved…
Rhetoric versus reality...

- Tensions - what is promoted and what is actually happening …
- Across national and local levels
- Not all members will equally subscribe – some may actively resist…..
- Need to ensure feedback is as even-handed as possible - findings available to all
- WS collaborative processes could not fixed - easily evaluated in terms of impact – it’s a process
- Shifts away from statistical-probabilistic approaches increasingly accepted in academia - for clinicians they remain contentious…
The results... still embargoed...

- WSD - clue in the title
- 3 sites with contextual differences charged with demonstrating WS integration and service redesign under an RCT...
- Constraints of the trial required differences in local processes be flattened
- Robust evidence – at what cost for local implementation?
- Unresolved issues of ownership and identity after the WSD trial ends...
And now I can reveal the solution.....
Work in progress...

- Evaluation - sensitive to policy and particularities of the sites and individual themes and projects
- Hard work - develop and tailor outputs to speak the discourse of academic, practitioner, public and policy
- Theory driven approach; linking disparate, developing activities via a common theoretical framework
- Understanding conflicting local and national pressures - how stakeholders view potential benefits
- Different perspectives - help policy makers, the sites and the evaluation team learn from each other
- Micro, meso, macro - time-consuming in the context of time-pressured, applied research.
- An evaluation nimble enough to respond to the changing nature of policy – and remain true to our ethos