Introduction

National Managed Diagnostic Networks (NMDNs) are specialty focused networks that adopt a consortia approach to maximising the effectiveness of diagnostic services; through collaboration across professional, geographical and organisational boundaries.

NMDNs have benefitted from good communication with NHS Boards at a service level; however their success in influencing across all disciplines and effecting strategic links has been limited. Improving this situation has supported NMDNs to extend their reach and harness their potential to effectively influence service improvement.

National Managed Diagnostic Networks (NMDNs) include:

- Scottish Clinical Biochemistry Managed Diagnostic Network (SCBMDN)
- Scottish Clinical Imaging Network (SCIN)
- Scottish Microbiology & Virology Network (SMVN)
- Scottish Pathology Network (SPAN)

To maximise effectiveness, the National Network Management Service has implemented a range of tools to improve communication between the networks, the wider service and strategic partners.

Aims

The project aimed to improve the effectiveness of communications in the NMDNs, thus extending their reach, and maximising their ability to deliver service improvement.

More specific aims included:

- Develop effective social media content and channels to make communications more accessible to a wider range of stakeholders
- Link with major stakeholders (for example, The Royal College of Pathologists (RCPath) and the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS)) to further promote the reach and influence of the NMDNs amongst senior diagnostic communities
- Nurture strategic links with the Scottish Government to ensure alignment of network aims to national priorities
- Develop an effective governance structure to ensure good work can be progressed and promoted across NHS Scotland, ensuring best practice can be identified and implemented

Methodology

A range of approaches and tools were used:

- Extensive engagement, targeting:
  - Network steering groups, to identify their perceived needs
  - Clinical Services via focus groups, to evaluate key communications
  - Senior managers to progress governance discussions
  - Social media experts to advise on utilising modern technology to revitalise communication strategies and target a new audience
- Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles to test ideas for improving communication
- Health Foundation’s Maturity Model for Networks
- Standard national commissioning review process, in line with the Scottish Government’s Principles for Networks

Results

- Websites
  All NMDNs have developed websites which are trusted sources of information and are accessed widely across Scotland. Web analytics highlight how resources are utilised to support clinical practice.

- Collect, Use and Improve
  - Pathology
    SCBMDN has developed an Atlas of Variation showing testing requesting patterns in primary care. In the long term, this will realise the NHS ambition of equitable care as we target unwarranted variation through engagement with primary care. This is an ongoing development in partnership with the Realistic Medicine team.
  - Biochemistry
    SCIN has introduced a series of Quality and Performance Reports, benchmarking all Scottish labs, which can be shared with senior management and used for service planning.

Who gets our newsletters?

- SPAN 717 people
- SCIN 313 people
- DSG 179 people
- SMVN 165 people
- SCBMDN 198 people

Number of website visitors

- SMVN 4913
- SCIN 2522
- SCBMDN 2956
- SPAN 4651
- In total 15042 people

Strategic Partners

Improving engagement at a senior level has been key to ensuring NMDNs can effectively influence change. The NNMS has supported a re-modeling of Scottish Government’s Diagnostic Steering Group (DSG). This ensures the NMDN workplans and ambitions align to national priorities.

The development of SPAN’s National BMS Dissection Training School is evidence of how this new pathway is making networks more effective in influencing change. Networks are transforming services through effective communication and contributing to service sustainability in line with the 2020 Vision.