Telemedicine into Everyday Practice

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Introduction

This document is an element of the Implementing Transnational Telemedicine Solutions (ITTS) project funded by the Northern Periphery Programme. It provides a checklist to policy makers, health service planners, clinicians and technicians wishing to introduce new telemedicine services, and presents some of the steps required and the challenges identified in this project during implementation. We hope it will be of some value to those undertaking similar ventures.

Dr. David Heaney

Project Director

INITIAL SCOPING

CHECKLIST	ACTIONS	POTENTIAL BARRIERS
Are you wishing to implement one of the ten demonstrator projects undertaken in ITTS?	Refer to ITTS website. Refer to technical details in " A Case for Telemedicine" Contact project team	These services may already have been surpassed by newer technology.
Are you wishing to adapt one of the ten demonstrator projects undertaken in ITTS for another clinical specialty?	Refer to ITTS website. Refer to technical details in " A Case for Telemedicine" Contact project team	
Is there a clinical need for your proposed service?	Initial discussions with local clinical staff	Clinical staff may often be sceptical about ehealth, or change in general
Is it technically feasible to set up what you are planning?	Initial discussions with local technical staff	Technical staff may be concerned about the short-term and long-term impact on their workload
Does this fit with local and national ehealth strategy ?	Initial discussions with local health service management Consult local and national strategy documents	It can be difficult to implement services which are not within the strategy of local organisations
Is there a patient need for your proposed service?	Initial discussions with local patients and their representatives	These can throw up unexpected challenges

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INITIAL SCOPING cont.../

CHECKLIST	ACTIONS	POTENTIAL BARRIERS
Does this service already exist somewhere in Europe?	Check academic literature Check results of EU projects Find examples of similar implementations, locally, nationally, internationally Contact service providers running the service Collate any evaluation evidence	It can be difficult to find relevant information
Will you service require the development of a new product?	Discuss with local research and development expertise Identify potential industry partners	Development of a new product for the health market is a highly complex process
Is your proposed service suitable for external grant funding?	Identify possible funding sources Approach potential funders Approach potential partners	External funding can be difficult to secure and will take time
Is this a local, national or transnational project? Is this project at scale?	Decide the scope of your project. Maximise knowledge exchange.	Careful consideration is required to decide the characteristics of the project, and this can be constricted by time, resource, and logistics

PLANNING PHASE

CHECKLIST	ACTIONS	POTENTIAL BARRIERS
Who should become involved in this project?	Identify the skills required to implement your project Identify a leader Identify a potential team with sufficient capacity and capability for designing and delivering your service Create a rough plan of action Identify milestones Conduct an early SWOT analysis Consider setting up a panel of expert guidance Apply for external grant funding if deemed appropriate	Again, careful consideration is required before planning commences in full. Partners will have their own agenda and groundwork is required to ensure that the team is functional and working together
Is there local information?	Conduct a readiness test such as the e-hit (e-health implementation tool) Interview local stakeholders to gather views. Use results to determine whether to proceed, where to proceed, and how to proceed	The results may not fit what was planned

PLANNING PHASE cont.../

CHECKLIST	ACTIONS	POTENTIAL BARRIERS
What should the plan look like?	Create a business case. See "A Case For Telemedicine" for examples of business cases, and the ITTS business case template is available. This can be modified to suit circumstance. However, any business case should address the following: • Describe The Service Currently In Existence • Issues Facing The Current Service • Is There Information From Elsewhere? • Problems / Issues Encountered Elsewhere • Evaluation Data From Elsewhere • Clinical Need For New Service • Benefits To Patients Of New Service • Benefits To Healthcare Staff • Technical Requirements • Staffing Requirements • Where Will The Proposed Service Be Implemented • Justification For Purchase Of Equipment • How Many Patients • Training Requirements • What Is The Plan For Sustaining The New Service • Timescale For Implementation • Are There Any Legal Issues? • Are There Any Managerial Issues? • Are There Any Ethical Issues?	Producing a business case is a lot of hard work, but detailed preparation at this stage will reap rewards at the implementation stage. It may also identify weaknesses in the project

PLANNING PHASE cont.../

CHECKLIST	ACTIONS	POTENTIAL BARRIERS
What should the plan look like? cont.../	• Are There Any Social Issues? • Projected Costs • SWOT Analysis	
Who should ratify the plan?	Business case should be ratified internally, and the externally by those providing funding or support	It can be challenging if external experts or funders do not agree with your business case or provide support for it
Does the introduction of the service require evaluation? Or audit? Or research? Should this be independently conducted?	Draw up a plan for monitoring/audit/evaluation/research. This could follow the Model for Assessment of Telemedicine (MAST) and might include: • Health problem and characteristics of the application • Safety • Clinical effectiveness • Patient perspectives • Economic aspects • Organisational aspects • Socio-cultural, ethical and legal aspects	Not all organisations have the capacity to participate in an evaluation process. External evaluators may not understand the complexities of the project. Or may produce results that challenge the project.
Who needs to know about this project?	Draw up a communication /dissemination plan	

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

CHECKLIST	ACTIONS	POTENTIAL BARRIERS
Is the service approved for implementation?	Ensure time is set aside for procurement of equipment, testing of equipment, piloting of service. Conduct a publicity campaign to inform staff, patients and the public. Launch the service. Get early feedback from patients, clinicians and technicians to iron out teething problems	Procurement of equipment will take longer than planned. Despite publicity patients or clinicians may not be fully aware of change Teething problems can be time consuming
Day to day running of the service	On-going communication with the service is required. Flexibility is required to ensure success Regular meetings (e.g. months 1,2,6,12) should take place to ensure service is working and that timescales have been adhered to. Ensure milestones are achieved or modified. An operational day-to-day plan, of lower intensity, is required as the service embeds into everyday practice, considering any modifications required.	Sometimes adherence to the change can drop after an initial period of enthusiasm from patients or from staff

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE cont…/

Closing the project	After suitable amount of times reports on the progress of the service should be produced. Ensure all reporting which was planned is complete Recommendations should be made Dissemination plan should be completed to ensure achievements are recorded and acknowledged. Future developments should be considered.	Reporting can be a final hurdle to overcome as the project closes down and key members of the project team leave.
Success	If you have got this far…….	WELL DONE!