

A chat with ... Sally Smith NAVIGO Health & Social Care CIC

What inspired you to become an Innovation Champion?

My job role centres on business support and development so becoming an Innovation Champion just seemed to fit perfectly for me. A colleague who used to carry out the role recently moved on which luckily left a void I could fill.

I work for NAViGO Health and Social Care CIC; a not for profit social enterprise which delivers a complete care and support service for adult mental health in North East Lincs. We are a very innovative bunch here and are proud to do things differently. The fact that Medipex celebrates innovation too and is able to support and add value to our ideas makes being involved a 'no brainer' as far as I'm concerned! We have an organisation full of highly engaged individuals who are always coming up with 'bright ideas.' Harnessing that whilst having access to the wealth of support and knowledge that is Medipex was a driving force for me.



What have you done to spread the word about innovation around your organisation?

Because we feel strongly here in Grimsby that all colleagues should have an equal chance to put forward their ideas, we are always trying to find different ways of promoting the fact that we have Innovation Champions within our midst. Karen Fletcher (my fellow Champion) and I send out periodic fliers, continually sneak in plugs in a variety of arenas and more recently have added a new section called 'Bright Ideas' to our Horizon Scanning meeting just for this purpose. Here we encourage fellow employees to float their proposals and offer our services as Innovation Champions to take these forward.

We must be doing something right in terms of promotion as there are already 3 on-going projects in the pipeline and we only did our training at the end of February!

How have you used the Innovation Champion Network to connect with Innovation Champions in other NHS organisations?

We connect with other Innovation Champions at the very informative and enjoyable Workshops that the Yorkshire & Humber AHSN and Medipex deliver and are delighted with the new website and forum.

What innovative ideas have you supported in your organisation since becoming an Innovation Champion?

At the moment we have three main projects being worked on. For us ideas tend to be around services rather than products or tools, I guess this is just down to the nature of our business. We are presently

developing business cases for a 'day care hub with a difference'; an 'affordable therapy unit' and marketing towards expanding our brilliant TMS service further afield.

How are these innovation projects progressing?

Very well, in a nutshell! The people concerned have commented that they feel much more able to move their ideas forward because they have colleagues on hand (aka Karen and myself 😊) to offer support in the planning/business case stage. In terms of progression, we are hoping to bring on board a further clinic for TMS which is currently being discussed at Board level; the Therapy Project is about to start on a very small scale whilst funding is sought to broaden the horizons and the Day Care Project is just awaiting some in depth figures regarding costings before the case can progress further.

What barriers have you faced as an Innovation Champion and how have you overcome them?

I guess our biggest barrier is making sure people know we are here! We think we have got this right now though as several other contacts have been received from other departments asking for advice in addition to the projects mentioned so it seems people have heard about us now!

What's your proudest moment from being an Innovation Champion?

I think this would just be to have been considered worthy of being an Innovation Champion in the first place! I feel it is quite a responsible role to be asked to act as a support for colleagues. Everyone's ideas are very precious to them and to be trusted to help others develop those innovations is humbling. My involvement with the Champions only began in February so we do not have a completed project as of yet but we are getting there!

What are you planning next?

Karen, as part of her engagement role, has just recruited Departmental Champions to represent each and every team within NAViGO. These guys will be attending the Horizon Scanning meetings and feeding back to their teams about the exciting things going at NAViGO. We believe this will get everyone's creative juices flowing when they see their colleagues being able to access grassroots support with developing ideas.

Our teams are all very engaged and competitive so to harness this we will also be introducing an 'Innovation of the Year' award from next year with a winner being selected from Projects put forward over the previous 12 months. We expect the 'hunger' for attaining the award will encourage more innovation!

What advice would you give to someone interested in joining the network?

Go for it! Medipex and the Yorkshire & Humber AHSN are great organisations to work alongside. The training and workshops are good and incorporate different business areas – there is something for everyone! Remember, becoming a Champion will not only help your colleagues to be creative but will help you to learn new ways of working and hopefully offer job satisfaction when you see an innovation come to fruition.