West Midlands Radiotherapy Operational Delivery Network 2023-24 annual report

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WEST MIDLANDS RADIOTHERAPY NETWORK

Context

- During 2023-24, there was a change in staffing at the ODN, with a resulting 2-month vacancy for the ODN manager role
- As a result, some of the original plans and aspirations for 23-24 were delayed
- A new ODN manager started in post at the end of August 2023
- The original work plan activities were reviewed and a prioritisation exercise undertaken and consulted upon at the October Expert Advisory Group
- A revised workplan was approved by the Radiotherapy Network Oversight Group at its November 2023 meeting
- This annual report focuses on the activities delivered between September 2023 and March 2024 and their impact

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2023/24 revised workplan

(November 2023)

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Strategic aims	Activities
1. Improve access	• SABR roll-out to further complex oligometastatic indications • Evaluation of current brachytherapy service provision • AI Auto contouring in all 6 centres
2. Improve experience of care	• National Patient Experience Survey, results and action plan • Workforce project and strategy development • Scoping out a regional Late effects service and exploring e-PROMs
3. Increased access to clinical trials	• Clinical trials project comprising: ➢Increasing the number of open trials ➢Increasing the number of participants ➢Recording whether patients offered the option to take part in clinical trials
4. Reduce variation in quality	• Implement ProKnow to aid treatment quality improvement • Protocol reviews and implementation • ODN quality reports to inform QI activity
5. Reduce variation in equipment	• Co-ordinate capital equipment replacement process and investment

Key successes

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Sharing best practice; and
Developing communities of practice

Comms and engagement

Partnership working

Increasing the visibility of RT services

Sharing best practice; and
Developing communities of practice

- One significant success during 2023-24 was our workforce project led by Marie Brown, our workforce facilitator
- Of note, was the work focusing on engineers including:
  - Engineers insight gathering
  - Engineers shadowing visits
  - Engineers event: 19th March: key evaluation findings are below

We collected feedback at the beginning and end of the day in to evaluate the event

Feedback was positive with the enthusiasm for engineering in the WM increasing by the end of the day!

Meeting people and networking was noted as the best part of the event

Trainees would like to visit other centres

The attendees said they would commit to communicating with engineers in the region

Aims of engineers event

1. To bring the engineers of the region together and engage all in finding solutions to some of the issues raised
2. To report the findings from the visits
3. To have guest speakers on topics such as the National Engineer Survey, projects and collaborative working
4. To discuss the findings and to brainstorm about how collaborative working in the WM might look

23% increase

In engineers feeling very enthusiastic/ enthusiastic after the event

Sharing best practice; and
Developing communities of practice

- Another success was the delivery of a **brachytherapy 'lunch and learn' webinar** on 21 March 2024.
- The suggestion came from our brachytherapy group – where some trusts had shared their **experience of recent CQC visits**: it was felt that we could share the learning and continue to learn from others, if we organised a multi-ODN event involving colleagues from the West Midlands, East Midlands, South West and East of England.
- There was **positive feedback** from participants and the style of event has inspired other ODNs, as well as **informed our plans for 2024-25** concerning the ongoing development of communities of practice across the network geography

98% of respondents (n = 44) said they strongly agreed or agreed that the session was helpful

89% of respondents had identified actions to take

98% of respondents indicated they'd like to attend similar sessions in the future

One of the key themes from the webinar was the importance of clinical audit (not just process audit).

As a result, our brachy group wants to develop a WM regional clinical audit in 2024-25

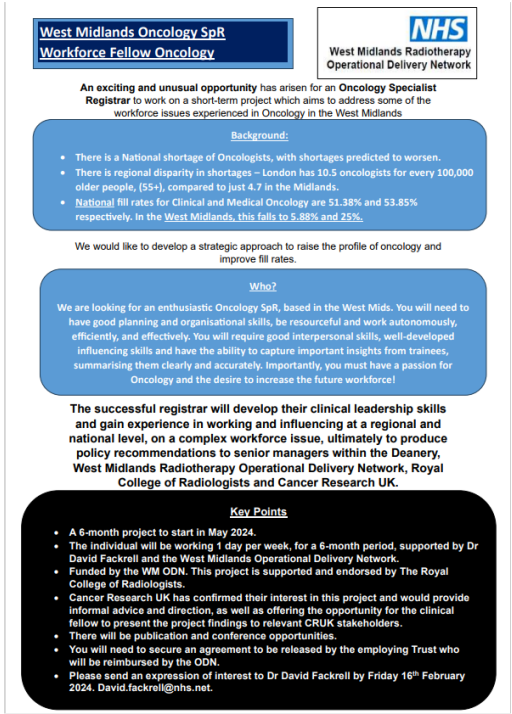
Partnership working

- During Q3, we received the results from the **National Patient Experience Survey**. We had very pleasing results across the West Midlands, but one area identified for improvement was regarding website information for patients, and in particular, patients told us they would have liked more information about side effects and late effects.
- As a result, we successfully bid for Service Development Fund (SDF) monies from NHS England, to deliver a **project focusing on digital information for breast radiotherapy patients**
- During Q4, a number of volunteers from RT teams worked together to review existing digital content for breast radiotherapy patients, and to agree on what new digital assets we would want to create together
- It was really important that we could get more patient insight to inform our project, so **working in partnership** with the Lingen Davies Cancer Fund and colleagues at SaTH and in BSol ICB, we ran an on-line survey to understand more about patient preferences for accessing digital content
- Our **partnership working** continued working with Lingen Davies Cancer Fund and SaTH in planning the filming of new videos that would then be curated into a patient information hub, on our new website

£7,500 SDF funding received
To improve breast radiotherapy patient experience

Partnership working

- We have actively contributed to collaborative working across the Midlands with our EM ODN partners in relation to the **Midlands Therapeutic Radiographers group and sub groups** (practice educators and schools liaison). Our workforce facilitator chaired these meetings during 23-24 and received positive feedback
- We have worked together to **support Workforce Transformation & Education** colleagues in the review of **practice educator funding bids**
- The ODN has led the planning co-ordination of **Midlands-wide SABR study day** due in May, with a project team comprising colleagues across the West and East Midlands.
- We've worked in **partnership with Training Programme Directors** to make this study day part of the mandatory training days for SpRs, and to ensure that the programme supports their learning.
- Our partnership working with the WM Training Programme Director, led to us recruiting a **Clinical Fellow to undertake an insight and education project** aimed at increasing the fill rate for SpR posts in the West Midlands. To make the post attractive, we secured **endorsement from the RCR and support from Cancer Research UK** who were both interested to hear about the project and keen to understand the findings and how this could support their policy and influencing work



West Midlands Oncology SpR Workforce Fellow Oncology

NHS West Midlands Radiotherapy Operational Delivery Network

An exciting and unusual opportunity has arisen for an **Oncology Specialist Registrar** to work on a short-term project which aims to address some of the workforce issues experienced in Oncology in the West Midlands

Background:

- There is a National shortage of Oncologists, with shortages predicted to worsen.
- There is regional disparity in shortages – London has 10.5 oncologists for every 100,000 older people, (55+), compared to just 4.7 in the Midlands.
- National fill rates for Clinical and Medical Oncology are 51.38% and 53.85% respectively. In the West Midlands, this falls to 5.88% and 25%.

We would like to develop a strategic approach to raise the profile of oncology and improve fill rates.

Who?

We are looking for an enthusiastic Oncology SpR, based in the West Mids. You will need to have good planning and organisational skills, be resourceful and work autonomously, efficiently, and effectively. You will require good interpersonal skills, well-developed influencing skills and have the ability to capture important insights from trainees, summarising them clearly and accurately. Importantly, you must have a passion for Oncology and the desire to increase the future workforce!

The successful registrar will develop their clinical leadership skills and gain experience in working and influencing at a regional and national level, on a complex workforce issue, ultimately to produce policy recommendations to senior managers within the Deanery, West Midlands Radiotherapy Operational Delivery Network, Royal College of Radiologists and Cancer Research UK.

Key Points

- A 6-month project to start in May 2024.
- The individual will be working 1 day per week, for a 6-month period, supported by Dr David Fackrell and the West Midlands Operational Delivery Network.
- Funded by the WM ODN. This project is supported and endorsed by The Royal College of Radiologists.
- Cancer Research UK has confirmed their interest in this project and would provide informal advice and direction, as well as offering the opportunity for the clinical fellow to present the project findings to relevant CRUK stakeholders.
- There will be publication and conference opportunities.
- You will need to secure an agreement to be released by the employing Trust who will be reimbursed by the ODN.
- Please send an expression of interest to Dr David Fackrell by Friday 16th February 2024. David.fackrell@nhs.net.

Comms and engagement

- During 2023-24, we've focused on strengthening our comms and engagement activities, both with internal and external stakeholders
- We've established a quarterly **ODN newsletter** which is sent to a large number of RT stakeholders and wider partners
- We've commissioned a new **logo, creative assets and brand** guidelines from a creative agencies, and consulted with RT stakeholders to inform the design work
- We've commissioned a new stand-alone **website** which will give us an important platform going into 24-25 for our ongoing comms and engagement with RT stakeholders and patients
- We've held an **away day** with RT managers and reviewed our ways of working and communication with each other
- We've funded **face to face meetings**, rather than solely relying on MS Teams – due to the positive feedback we've received about the benefits of networking in person
- During our remote meetings and webinars and our face to face workshops, we've introduced **interactive polls and tools** to ensure more interaction, higher levels of engagement, more feedback and improved evaluation response rates

2 ODN newsletters (November 2023 and February 2024)

680 unique views

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Increasing the visibility of RT services

- Since September 2023, the ODN manager has meet with all 6 **ICB cancer leads** to raise awareness of some of the key radiotherapy challenges and opportunities, particularly relating to workforce and capital equipment
- As a result, the ODN manager is now a member of 3 **ICS cancer boards** and has inputted into meetings, workshops and strategy reviews, ensuring the voice of radiotherapy is heard more
- **Networking activities** with regional stakeholders has included **WT&E leads for practice educators, METIP and apprenticeships** (to discuss workforce issues); with the **WM Clinical Research Network** (to identify opportunities for collaboration) with **other networks** to identify transferrable learning e.g. WM Imaging Network and WM Diagnostics Network, EM Head and Neck Network;
- At the end of March 2024, the **24-25 workplan** was presented to the **WMCA board comprising trust and ICB reps**, which provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the huge potential for radiotherapy to improve outcomes for patients, and our priorities for action. This led to further interest in and support from workforce and capital equipment replacement discussions
- We've also shared **suggestions and proposals for WMCA** to consider in terms of its **24-25 plans**

2023-24 in numbers

71 radiotherapy colleagues across 6 trusts actively involved in delivering the ODN workplan

6 ICBs engaged with about linac replacement

4 Expert Advisory Group meetings

214 responses for National Patient Experience Survey

51.1% of patients with metastatic bone receiving single fraction (70% benchmark)

9.6 minutes average saved per patient through AI auto-contouring at SaTH

1276 ProKnow plans uploaded by end Jan 24

£11,000 SDF funding secured for QI projects

16 clinical protocols reviewed

4 Network Oversight Groups meetings

2 ODN newsletters

680 total views

68 delegates at brachytherapy lunch and learn;

98% saying it was helpful

Delivery against our 2024-25 workplan

- Achievements
- Challenges

WEST MIDLANDS RADIOTHERAPY NETWORK

1. Improve access – SABR roll-out

Achievements

- Baseline/stocktake completed with 6 x trusts
- Discussions/emails with individual trusts regarding their implementation progress and support needs
- Led the project planning of a Midlands-wide 2024 SABR study day (to take place on 16th May):
  - Developed agenda with project team of experts
  - Fully booked (150 delegates) event
  - Secured sponsorship
  - Partnership working with Training programme Directors in WM and EM leading to study day being mandatory for SpRs;
  - Commissioned filming of educational videos and promotional material to support workforce challenges

Challenges

- Lack of capacity and inability to cope with cross-regional referrals for some centres
- Lack of referrals from MDTs for some centres
- Staffing challenges delaying approval
- Lack of clarify regarding contractual/financial arrangements for SABR activity

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1. Improve access – evaluation of brachytherapy service

Achievements

- Successful lunch and learn webinar held showcasing the good practice and learning from CQC visits:
  - positive evaluation
  - 68 attendees from across several ODNs
- Launched new patient experience survey with both on-line and hard-copy questionnaire options (small numbers so far)
- Facilitated quarterly brachy meetings to share best practice and provide support, including review of activity/capacity
- Initial plans for brachytherapy educational video

Challenges

- Lack of capacity across all 4 centres
- Not manager to progress a review of service provision, but plans for 24-25 include proactive capacity tool and clinical audit (applying the learning from CQC visits)

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1. Improve access – AI auto-contouring

Achievements

- Baseline/stocktake complete and AI contouring project group re-established
- Revisited previous NOG decision to aim for a single supplier – deemed no longer feasible
- Facilitated discussions to adopt a framework agreement approach. However, discussion with NHS England indicated they were working on similar areas, so no point progressing this currently
- Funded a ‘gold standard’ WM dataset for future product evaluation (ongoing)
- Discussion at January 2024 NOG including sharing the SaTH data regarding impact on workload
- Submitted outline business case or 24-25 funding to specialised commissioners
- Raised awareness of AI auto-contouring benefits with ICB cancer leads, especially as a means to supporting workforce challenges

Challenges

- Funding is the biggest barrier: two trusts do not have funded licences going into 24-25
- ICB digital leads unaware of potential benefits to RT
- Specialised Commissioners confirmed 13% uplift funding given to trusts in 23-24, but no trust could identify this/not passed down to RT teams

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2. Improve experience of care – national patient experience survey

Achievements

- Survey live 4th -29th September 2023. 214 WM responses(2,506 nationally):

Trust	Total number of responses	Response Rate
Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust*	4	3%
Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust	35	39%
University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust	95	36%
University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust	23	23%
University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust	45	AWAITING DATA
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	12	12%
West Midlands ODN	**214**	**22.6% excl UHNM**

*6 paper responses were received after the closing date and are therefore not captured in the results.

- Overall, we had excellent results across the West Midlands, often better than the national average.
- Discussion at QI and EAG meetings and some possible actions identified
- SDF funding secured for digital patient information for breast pathways on the back of these results:
  - Mapping and appraisal of existing digital information for breast RT patients
  - Agreement about new content to be developed
  - Patient insight gathered to inform new content
  - Commissioned filming/production of videos; and new RT Network website

Challenges

- Poor response rates – due to survey design and methodology – limited usefulness

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2. Improve experience of care – workforce project and strategy devt

Achievements

- Successful delivery of workforce project undertaken by fixed term facilitator: separate end of project report available
- Important insights gathered and deep dive/project activity delivered focusing on SpRs, engineers and radiographers
- Evaluation of impact completed; and recommendations for 24-25 identified
- Awareness raising with wider system stakeholders: ICB cancer leads, ICB workforce leads, WT&E, etc
- Supported WT&E colleagues in reviewing practice educator funding applications
- Review of Radiotherapy Board workforce strategy template/identification of good practice and transferrable learning from other partners e.g. WMIN
- Business case for funding submitted to Specialised Commissioners
- Planning for workforce strategy development workshop (held on 12th April)

Challenges

- Original possible scope was too large and unfocused.
- Delays in project due to ODN manager vacancy – but re-prioritisation exercise provided stronger focus on areas with greatest potential impact and/or realistic in remaining 6 month period
- Lack of funding/resourcing to take forward recommendations in 24-25 will hinder progress
- Lack of joined up approach across the region and RT workforce challenges not being prioritised

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2. Improve experience of care – Scoping out a regional late effects service and exploring e-PROMs

Achievements

- Discussions during the year showed keenness to take forward – more of a focus on e-PROMS
- UHB excellent project on e-PROMs being taken forward
- Discussions with Macmillan clincial advisor signposted to e-PROMs research project as an alternative way forward, linking patient reported experience and HES data (in order to build business case for late effects service)

Challenges

- Lack of capacity to take forward by ODN
- Lack of funding or dedicated resources to convert aspirations into robust project plan/business case development
- Conversations with Macmillan regarding partnership support unable to progress due to their organisational strategy review
- Focus on e-PROMS was more from a planning perspective than a patient experience, making it harder to link with the development of business case for a late effects service
- Discussions with stakeholders when discussing 24-25 work plan leading to:
    - deprioritised this for the ODN – in the hope that WMCA would be able to take forward/resource properly going forwards

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3. Increased access to clinical trials

Achievements

- Increased visibility of open trials by way of the MDT circular and using hard copy posters and information on the WMA Website.
- Established collaborative working to enable trials to be open quicker by sharing knowledge
- Gathered intelligence of the preferred method of contact for staff and departments trusts wide
- Engaged with patients to gather feedback on their experiences and to gain perspective of where improvements could be made
- Identified good practice used by individual trusts to increased visibility of trials and to assess patient suitability
- Enabled a cohesive R&D group for discussions and sharing of information
- RT trials leaflet designed with QR code linking to new ODN Trials webpage
- Cross regional referral SOP agreed and approved
- Regional MPE discussion forum established
- Worked with Northern RT ODN to produce patient-facing videos addressing known barriers

Challenges

- The original project scope was too large for the 12month timescale
- Difficult to establish a regional research map of trial opening pathway
- The project struggled to engage trusts consistently throughout the project due to capacity constraints, especially due to industrial strikes

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4. Reduce variation in quality – ProKnow implementation

Achievements

- Baseline/stocktake complete: variable uptake by trusts; understanding barriers and enablers
- Regular ProKnow group meetings established
- Analysis of lung and breast collections and breast IMC audit completed: findings discussed and actions identified by individual trusts
- National good practice sharing webinar on 11th January 2024 resulted in increased interest
- Discussion regarding clinical engagement in ProKnow at 9th February EAG
- Agreement for a programme of audits in 24-25

Challenges

- The workload involved alongside the limited QI potential when there are any small numbers of plans uploaded
- Differing views about the cost (in terms of workload) benefit and if this adds value.
- Unclear what the ongoing funding of licences will be or the national direction of travel is
- Lack of clarity about whether ProKnow is to be used for peer review or not

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4. Reduce variation in quality – protocol review & implementation

Achievements

- 16 protocols reviewed and ratified by the EAG during 2023-24
- Revised review schedule agreed at December EAG to ‘smooth’ the review workload going forwards
- RCR publication January 2024 necessitated further review of all protocols
- Lessons learnt exercise completed to inform the process going forwards
- SOP developed

Challenges

- Delays in updating protocols on the WMCA website resulting in queries (resolved early April 24)
- Difficulties in ensuring all relevant stakeholders were involved/aware of progress
- Challenges in building the audit trail for email discussions

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4. Reduce variation in quality – ODN quarterly reports

Achievements

- New process established where ODN manager and clinical review quarterly reports; discuss with national team and then pick up queries with individual trusts. Tracking log ensures follow up of actions completed by trusts and national team
- Common themes discussions at quarterly QI meetings
- Facilitated discussion with trusts regarding Rad 18 quality metric: agreement to record reasons for decisions not to follow guidance, with audit at 3-6 months
- A number of WM strengths identified by national team
- 30-day mortality data discussed with RTDS and reviewed with trusts

Challenges

- Data quality concerns can mask the real performance – due to the 12 month rolling basis for many indicators, it is not possible to see timely improvement in the reports, even when issues have been addressed
- The timeframe in which data quality issues are addressed/reports amended by RTDS is not always clear
- RTDS performance data does not align with CWT performance data

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5. Co-ordinate capital equipment replacement process & investment

Achievements

- Equipment log updated by HoPs and master copy held by ODN
- Deep dive and updates requested at Network Oversight Group to encourage senior trust support for RT teams
- ODN Manager met with 6 ICBs cancer leads to discuss capital equipment and to raise awareness; followed by targeted discussions with the 3 ICBs where urgent action required (working closely with Heads of Physics/RT managers)
  - ❑ presented at the BSol cancer board
  - ❑ met with the H&W ICB DoF
  - ❑ met with C&W ICB DoF
- C&W ICB DoF Madi Parmar agreed to 'sponsor' a proposal for ringfencing/pooling/top slicing to WM DoFs and then WM CEOs: briefing note provided on 4.12.23.
- Presentation to WMCA Board included capital equipment replacement challenges

Challenges

- ICBs unaware of their new responsibilities
- Lack of formal process for each trust/ICBs: lack of clarity about who needs to do what
- Insufficient capital allocations to accommodate RT equipment needs
- Lack of feedback from ICB capital leads – difficult to track progress
- Awaiting update/feedback from WM DOFs/Madi Parmar

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