

NHS Innovations



The NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement is a department devoted to supporting the entire NHS and improving patient services by the creation and sharing of new ideas.

Like every other department within the NHS, the Institute is audited by Connecting for Health, a department set up in 2005 to improve standards by bringing in new computer systems and services.

The Institute identified that in order to comply with standards set by Connecting for Health, work needed to be done to assess their current position and examine any areas that needed improvement. It was decided to employ an outside consultant to carry out the bulk of this work to supplement internal resources and enable the existing team to focus on their day to day operations.

CCL's consultant Brian Barber was set the initial task of identifying which of the detailed assessment questions put forward by Connecting for Health were relevant to the institute. He then had to look at each question in turn and identify where there was a need for standards to be raised. In total, thirty-three questions were selected as being relevant to the Institute, so each of these was subject to stringent analysis to determine both the current and required levels of compliance.

As Brian carried out his Gap Analysis he had to take into account the unique nature of the Institute in relation to other departments within the NHS. For example, there were some aspects where the Institute would not be required to comply, or would only be expected to reach a certain level as, unlike the majority of the other sites, they do not currently store any patient identifiable data.

The questions to be examined were strongly related to technology based solutions, although both electronic and hard copy information had to be considered. Areas of focus include the creation and management of records, the security of data, and compliance with laws such as Freedom of Information and the Data Protection Acts.



The completed Gap Analysis was presented to the Institute's Audit & Risk Management Committee, who accepted the current assessment, and gave the go ahead to progress to phase two. This involved Brian working on five key areas which had been identified as needing improvement to reach the required standard. Areas of interest included encryption of data for staff intending on working remotely/from home and anti virus software to prevent malicious attacks.

Brian began to work on upgrading the necessary policy documents in order to bring the department up to scratch. Each 'question' had an extensive checklist and a range of supplementary paperwork provided by Connecting for Health, which meant a lot of groundwork needed doing on his part before he could proceed.

When phase two is complete, the final stage of the project is envisaged as being an arrangement to provide ongoing review and support of all areas in order to maintain the standards set throughout the course of this project.

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