



NHS QUEST tackles the wicked problem of falls in hospitals

We helped
NHS QUEST to:

- Develop a shared understanding across the Clinical Community
- Discover the key relationships between different aspects of the problem
- Develop a Breakthrough Plan

Client background

NHS QUEST is the first member-convened network for Foundation Trusts who wish to focus relentlessly on improving quality and safety. NHS QUEST members work together, share challenges and design innovative solutions to provide the best care possible for patients.

The Falls Clinical Community was formed by NHS QUEST in 2013 to reduce falls and the harm from falls in hospital ward environments.

Client challenge

Despite significant efforts by many people in the health service over many years, none have succeeded in reducing falls reliably across acute care. The issue exhibits the characteristics of a 'wicked problem' - these are typically not resolved using standard management processes, despite the best efforts of all concerned. A new approach was required.

How Catalyze helped

Catalyze worked with the NHS QUEST Falls Clinical Community to plan two workshops using the Synplex process, designed to tackle complex or 'wicked' problems.

The first workshop began with introductions and the review of answers to a trigger question: *"What are the key issues, barriers and challenges we face in reducing the number of falls and harm from falls in hospital ward environments?"* The attendees were split into table teams to discuss the responses and choose the most important ones. The responses were then used to begin the influence-mapping process.

The process involved deciding whether two problem statements had a direct influence on each other. This was decided using a group vote with yes and no voting cards. If the decisions

“It was a fantastic two days at the Falls Clinical Community event with outstanding contributions made from all of those who attended.”

Bernadette George, Lead Nurse Patient Safety & Risk, Royal Devon and Exeter

Falls Clinical Community Workshop Report:
<https://www.quest.nhs.uk/2014/05/review-falls-clinical-community-workshop/>

were not unanimous the issue would be debated, to understand why participants saw it differently. During the process, the problem statements were clarified and re-worded. Implicit assumptions were revealed and any misunderstandings resolved. Through this influence-mapping process the relationships between certain problems began to emerge from the model presented by the Synplex software. And crucially, a common language was established.

In the second workshop, objectives were formed by the participants to represent a future state or vision in which the issue would be resolved or significantly ameliorated. The complete set of objectives addressed all of the factors shown on the Influence Map.

A Breakthrough Plan was developed which showed each of the objectives identified. For each Objective the plan depicts the factor from the Influence Map which is addressed by that objective; and then the key action steps that have been identified to achieve the Objective.

The Breakthrough Plan is aspirational, and cannot be implemented by the group of participants alone. The participants however are able to represent the plan or specific parts of it to their organisations to seek commitment and resources.

There were also specific improvement activities that the participants were able to implement almost immediately to take steps in the direction of the Objectives, and to help build momentum for wider change within their organisations and through the wider NHS QUEST Network.

Enabling Effective Decisions

By using the Synplex process and facilitated discussions, the NHS QUEST Falls Clinical Community was able to:

- gain a shared understanding from a diverse and informed set of stakeholders of the range of issues that must be faced when tackling falls prevention;
- discover the key relationships between the challenges faced in reducing falls;
- develop a Breakthrough Plan.

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Catalyze is a strategy consultancy, helping clients to prioritise and make robust sustainable decisions. We believe the best results are delivered through effective decision-making that engages people and aligns organisations. We have an established track record of enabling our clients to achieve results, whether it's improved shareholder value, a better planet or both.

Catalyze was founded in 2001 in conjunction with the London School of Economics and Political Science, applying techniques built on robust and validated decision theory. We support global clients from offices in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand.