

Better together: Implementing a new information sharing charter for Dorset

Executive summary

Background (What is the 'DISC'?)

The DISC is the new 'Dorset Information Sharing Charter' which launched in January 2016. In 2013, the top eight healthcare agencies in the Dorset area launched the Better Together Programme to improve the way residents received health and care services. They had noticed that these services were often delivered using a single agency approach, reflecting the way they were funded and managed separately. This resulted in a fragmented and inefficient system which had not taken advantage of opportunities to join up services, and was therefore increasingly costly to maintain in a challenging financial climate.

Aims and expectations of the DISC

As part of the Better Together Programme, partners launched the DISC to replace the previous protocol (known as the 'Dorset Overarching Information Sharing Protocol', OAISP). The programme board understood that to join up healthcare services, personal information needed to be captured and shared appropriately. By simplifying the requirements of the DISC and providing a toolkit in plain English, partners hoped to reduce duplication across agencies and ensure compliance with data protection legislation. This development therefore supports the programme's aim to integrate service delivery to provide better healthcare outcomes through "person-centred, prevention-oriented support" for the people of Dorset.

Expectations for the DISC include:

- ▶ Multi-agency working arrangements and single access points using a shared IT system.
- ▶ Better commissioning and service planning supported by shared intelligence on peoples' need for healthcare services.
- ▶ More older people being able to receive health and care services at home, due to doctors having access to the right information in order to make correct decisions about discharges.
- ▶ Reduced levels of 'inappropriate demand' on the system as a result of patient information flowing more freely.
- ▶ People only have to tell their story once.
- ▶ Local people have clear guidance about how their information is shared (and in what circumstances their consent would be sought to share it).
- ▶ Professionals have access to the information they need, when they need it, to support better outcomes for local people.
- ▶ Good decision making is supported by an information sharing framework so staff members have clear direction.
- ▶ Unnecessary appointments and admissions can be avoided.

The Centre's support for this work

To help the Better Together Programme Board engage all partners on the approach and roll out of the DISC, the Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing (the Centre) facilitated a stakeholder engagement workshop in March 2015. Key challenges cited at the workshop included the different levels of risk tolerance in the partnership; the boundaries and consequences for both lawful and unlawful sharing; and developing a simplified common language to convey the DISC's principles clearly and accessibly. Participants were very aware of the further work needed to identify both organisational and partnership approaches to better information sharing to support the DISC's implementation.

The workshop delegates were also concerned with the issue of developing a consistent and sustainable approach to information sharing beyond the DISC's launch. Responses from participants on the key issue of "how to obtain real buy-in from all the partner agencies" suggested that 'root and branch' change in organisational behaviours was needed to embed the DISC effectively within the partnership. At the heart of this change is the requirement for collaborative working and a free exchange of knowledge and ideas, which means that people will share information if there is an internal culture that allows them to do so.

Launching the DISC

The Information Governance workstream group has promoted the DISC on a dedicated website¹ and through a high-profile launch event, titled 'Dare to Share', which took place in January 2016. The launch event was an opportunity for partners of the existing OAISP to sign up to the new DISC, and be able to recognise the DISC's branding.

Stephen Curtis, the Centre's Director, was invited to talk to delegates about the cultural barriers they will need to overcome to implement the DISC successfully in their own organisation. The Centre supported these messages by sharing relevant learning from our case studies on integrated digital health and care records at a marketplace stand,² and running workshops to help partners articulate the challenges they face locally.

Key learning so far

- ▶ For healthcare staff to share patient information with their partners; support and guidance from senior leaders needs to be visible.
- ▶ Healthcare staff may find it easier to share patients' information when they have more awareness about the benefits of the sharing, clearer guidance and training around their roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ Health and care partnerships can improve information sharing by re-designing organisational development programmes to encourage a culture of appropriate sharing, and ensuring guidance on sharing is provided in plain English.
- ▶ People find it easier to share information if there is an internal culture that allows them to do so.

The future

Although the concept of working together is nothing new for Dorset, it is the first time that resources, processes, protocols and decision making will be truly formalised in such a way that allows staff to actively share information. The launch event in January was attended by a large number of partners and it was evident there was a desire to make the DISC work. The Centre held a workshop during the launch event and a number of actions were highlighted by delegates to help move the DISC forward. To see the full list of actions please see the [full report](#).³ After the launch of the DISC, the Centre will continue to work with partners in Dorset to ensure there is a shared understanding and agreement across the partnership about how implementation will be addressed.

To read our full case study of the DISC which offers more information on the background, the approach taken and the actions from the workshop at the launch event, please [click here](#),⁴ or visit www.dorsetforyou.com/disc to read the DISC.

¹ www.dorsetforyou.com/disc

² www.informationsharing.org.uk/hsc

³ www.informationsharing.org.uk/our-work/working/dorset/

⁴ Ibid