

How to...

Write a case study for sharing good practice

Use this guide to:

- Prepare a practical case study about good practice in diabetes care.
- Write a compelling case study showing others how good practice was achieved.
- Share your case study with the right people so that it has maximum impact.

This guide is for:

- Anyone involved in writing a case study for sharing good practice.



We can help you share your good practice across the NHS. You can send us your case studies by emailing sharedpractice@diabetes.org.uk or visit www.diabetes.org.uk/shared-practice

Why write a case study?

Variation in care is one of the biggest challenges facing the NHS. When solutions to common problems are found, they need to be recognised and spread as widely as possible. Sharing good practice and learning through a case study can help others drive change, reduce variations in care and improve the lives of people with diabetes.

A good case study:

- presents the steps you took to improve care in a practical and accessible way
- gives others the knowledge they need to improve care in their areas
- provides an opportunity to reflect on your successes and challenges
- helps to identify learning and further areas for improvement.

Step 1 Prepare a case study



Essentials checklist



- Identify your audience.** Who are you writing this for? What are their priorities and needs? What do they need to know to help them improve care in their area?
- Get others involved.** Work with colleagues and people with diabetes to map out the steps you took to improve care and identify any learning. Consider hosting a workshop or series of meetings to work up the case study as a group.
- Gather the evidence you need to illustrate your improvement.** This can include patient stories and feedback, staff survey results and quotes, outcomes data, and cost savings.
- Decide how to share your case study.** Use the communication methods on page 9 as a starting point. Which methods will have the most impact?
- Start writing.** Get a first draft down on paper then ask for feedback and make edits as you go.



Top tip

You need to prepare if you're going to write a compelling case study. Give yourself plenty of time to reflect on your improvement and identify learning before you start writing. A good understanding of these will help set the tone and direction of your case study.

Step 2 Write your case study



The way you write is just as important as what you write. Use simple, conversational language to make your case study more accessible.

- Use short words and sentences (aim for 15–20 words per sentence).
- Use active not passive voice. Active voice means the subject of the sentence is doing the action. 'I spoke to the patient' is active, 'the patient was spoken to by me' is passive.
- Be personal. Use 'I' and 'we' to give your writing an informal tone.
- Be clear and concise. Use 'provide' for 'provision' and 'use' for 'utilise.' Avoid phrases like 'prior to' and 'in the event of' when 'before' and 'if' will do.
- Use three to five bullet points to break up a dense paragraph.

You can find more tips on writing clearly from the Plain English Campaign who have a series of **useful guides**¹.

Use the following structure and questions as a guide when writing your case study



Title

A good case study starts with a good title. Make it captivating and linked to your content, but keep it short. It may be helpful to write the title last, when you can better see the full picture of your case study.



Top tip

Good title examples include:

- 'Fixing footcare in Sheffield: Improving the care pathway'.
- 'DAWN: diabetes appointments via webcam in Newham'.

¹ Available at www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html

Step 2 Write your case study



Summary

In one or two short paragraphs explain what you improved and the impact of the change. This is your chance to grab reader's attention.

Questions to consider

- Who is your audience? Does the summary relate to their priorities and needs?
- What common problems have you addressed?
- What headline achievements and outcomes can you include?
- What impact has your improvement had on people with diabetes?
- Does the summary encourage your audience to read on?



The case for change

This section explains why the change was needed. Identify the problem and the impact it was having in your area.

Questions to consider

- What are the demographics of your local population? Set the scene with some key statistics.
- What was the problem and why did it need to be addressed?
- How was the problem affecting people with diabetes? Include performance measures and outcomes to demonstrate why the change was needed.
- Was there a previous attempt to solve the problem? What worked? What didn't?



The model of care

This section presents the model of care, service or intervention that was put in place to solve the problem.

Questions to consider

- What has been changed? Introduce the model with a short summary of the care pathway.
- What are the key features of the model?
- What clinical and non-clinical systems and processes were put in place? How do they work?
- How is the model resourced? Consider the staffing, equipment, technology and building resources needed to deliver the model.
- How does the model integrate with existing care pathways?
- How are people with diabetes involved in the ongoing development of the model?



Top tip

Details matter. 'Patients attended weekly education sessions at the community centre from 6 to 7pm on Tuesdays for six weeks' is more useful than 'patients attended regular education sessions over several weeks'.

Step 2 Write your case study

How the change was achieved

This section describes the steps taken to develop and implement the model of care, service or intervention.

Questions to consider

- How was the change initiated and managed?
- Who was involved in delivering the change? What were their roles and responsibilities?
- How were people with diabetes, healthcare professionals and commissioners involved in the design of the model?
- How were solutions and learning from other areas incorporated into the design?
- How was the model financed and procured? What contracting approach was used?
- How were people supported to make the transition to the new way of working?



Top tip

Use a timeline to show the key milestones in the change process.

For example:



Step 2 Write your case study



Outcomes

This section presents the results of your change. This is your chance to showcase the impact of your work and how it has improved care for people with diabetes.

Questions to consider

- What have you measured to evidence the impact? Describe how you measured your results.
- How can you best present the data, acknowledging any limitations or inconsistencies?
- Can you demonstrate your impact by comparing outcomes before and after the change?
- Were the results what you expected? Were there any unexplained or adverse outcomes?
- Can the results be directly attributed to the change? Have any external factors out of your control affected the results?
- What difference have people with diabetes reported? Include short stories and quotes.
- Can you provide any further evidence of your impact? This could include staff survey results.



Lessons learned

Even the most successful examples of improvement have lessons we can learn from. This section presents the knowledge you gained throughout the change process.

Questions to consider

- What worked? What didn't?
- What were the barriers to improvement? How did you overcome them?
- How did people react to the change?
- Were there any unforeseen advantages or disadvantages of the change?
- What would you have done differently?
- What top tips would you give to others beginning a similar process?



Top tip

You can help others learn from your work by acknowledging mistakes or unresolved issues. Consider including a written reflection from a person who was involved in delivering the change. Personal insights, both good and bad, can help others avoid similar mistakes and speed up improvement.

Step 2 Write your case study



Future plans

In this section, briefly describe your ideas for the future and next steps. Readers will be interested in how you plan to continue improving care for people with diabetes.



Acknowledgements

In this section, recognise those who played a key role in delivering the change and anyone who contributed to the case study. Acknowledge people with diabetes who have also been involved.



Further information

In this section, list any templates, documents and resources you can share with other areas. Include your contact details so readers can get in touch for more information.

Step 3 Share your case study



Your case study isn't complete when you write the last sentence. Now it's time to spread the word. People across all parts of the NHS will be interested in hearing about your work and there are many ways to reach them.

- Share your case study using a variety of different communication methods.
- Tailor your case study to specific audiences. This may mean adapting it to suit different needs.
- Expose audiences to your case study multiple times and through multiple channels.

You can find more information about using different communication approaches to spread improvement by reading The Health Foundation's [practical guide](#).²

Communication methods

Diabetes UK

No example of good practice is too small to make a difference. Have you improved care for people with diabetes? You can share your case study with us by emailing sharedpractice@diabetes.org.uk or visiting www.diabetes.org.uk/shared-practice

In your local area

You are the best advocate for your improvement. Share your case study with colleagues and peers in NHS, local government and voluntary sector organisations. Present your case study at meetings and ask for it to be included in other organisations' newsletters.

Clinical and professional networks

You can bring your case study to life by presenting it at local, regional and national networks. Identify opinion leaders in these networks who can help champion your work.

Conferences

Presenting or displaying a poster at local and national conferences is a great way to share your improvement with larger groups of people. Don't forget to take printed copies of your case study for delegates.



Top tip

Get in touch with the communications team in your organisation. They may be able to help share your case study, for example through your organisation's website, social media or local and national press.

² Available at www.health.org.uk/publication/using-communications-approaches-spread-improvement

Step 3 Sharing your case study

Online

There are many places you can share your case study online. Examples include:

- **NHS Improving Quality** – the Long Term Conditions Improvement Programmes publish monthly bulletins that often feature case studies. Contact the team to have yours included.
- **The Academy of Fabulous NHS Stuff** – submit your case study to the academy.
- **NHS Learning Environment** – submit your case study to the Learning Environment pinboard.
- **NHS Confederation** – complete and submit the NHS Confederation case study template to give over 500 NHS organisations access to your improvement.
- **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence** – submit your case study to the local practice collection to demonstrate how you put NICE guidance and standards into practice. Submissions are automatically considered for a shared learning award.

The dos and don'ts of writing a case study



Do keep your audience in mind while writing.



Do involve others in developing the case study.



Do write in plain English and use an active voice.



Do keep your writing conversational and avoid jargon.



Do provide as much detail as possible, but keep it relevant.



Do share your case study using a variety of communication methods.



Don't get overwhelmed by the writing. A case study is simply an explanation of what you improved and how it was achieved.



Don't overcrowd your pages. A simple layout with plenty of white space increases readability and helps to keep the reader's attention.



Don't over use footnotes. Important details can easily get lost at the bottom of the page.



Don't avoid data. Evidence can be the reason others adopt similar ways of working.



Don't be afraid to talk about your failures. This can offer valuable insight to others.



You can download this and other guides at www.diabetes.org.uk/how-to-guides

You can find other examples of case studies at www.diabetes.org.uk/shared-practice



You can get more information about writing a case study or share an example of good practice by emailing sharedpractice@diabetes.org.uk

www.diabetes.org.uk

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