Virtual Learning Together Series Webinar Recap

Making Change Last: Sustaining Improvements

December 14, 2021

Takeaways

Sustainability is an important, complex and continuous process. To help teams implement and sustain changes, the Long-Term Success Tool is used to prompt reflection and action across twelve, evidence-based factors, related to people, practice and setting, which are known to impact the successful sustainability of improvement initiatives.

Recap

Dr. Laura Lennox is the Improvement Science and Health Improvement lead at the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Northwest London (ARC NWL) within the Department of Primary Care and Public Health at Imperial College London. Prior to joining the Imperial College in 2011, she worked as a registered nurse in Ontario, Canada. Laura obtained a Master's in Public Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 2010 and was awarded her PhD from the Department of Medicine at Imperial College of London in 2019. Laura's current research focuses on understanding evidence-based implementation, sustainability and spread in complex systems.

Discussion

Making Change Last: Sustaining Improvements

- Sustainability is a continuous process for overcoming barriers and emerging issues, and consists of the following elements:
    - Outcomes and benefits
    - Activities
    - Relationships, partnerships and networks
    - Procedures and policies
    - Attention and awareness
    - Skills and capabilities
    - Innovation and adaption
    - Recovering costs

- In a time of COVID-19, sustaining improvements is particularly important due to rapid changes to services and patient care, improvement loss and its consequences for patients and staff, and the need for resilience.

- Programs fail to sustain for multiple reasons, such as the need for continuous effort, competing priorities, loss of interest and changes in staff and stakeholders. As such, sustainability can be managed by:

  - Stepping back: making time to consider the bigger picture

  - Timing: considering long term success early

  - Reflect: understanding how 'sustainable factors' may impact the work

  - Act: employing key strategies to engage, integrate and adapt

- The Long Term Success tool identifies twelve factors for sustainability across three domains (practice, setting and people) and is used to support teams to implement and sustain changes.

- The five sustainability factors associated to the 'people' domain are as follows:

  - Involvement (i.e., who needs to be involved, who is impacted, how are their views incorporated into delivery of program)

  - Skills and capabilities of staff and other people delivering the change

  - Leadership (i.e., leaders are approachable, available and able to garner support)

  - Team functioning (i.e., accountability and responsibilities of the workload)

  - Commitment to the improvement (i.e., personal and organizational commitment to the program and shared aims)

- The four sustainability factors associated to the 'practice' domain are as follows:

  - Robust and adaptable processes (i.e., adaptation to local processes and emerging needs, recording successes and failures of changes made)

  - Monitoring progress for learning and feedback

  - Evidence of benefits (i.e., demonstrating benefits, and communicating and sharing with staff and service users)

  - Resources in place (i.e., funding, staff time, equipment and facilities)

- The final three sustainability factors associated to the 'setting' domain are as follows:

- Alignment with political and financial environmental (i.e., awareness of the impact of political and financial changes)

- Support for improvement (i.e., organizational values and beliefs related to continuous improvement)

- Alignment with organizational strategies and priorities (i.e., gaining buy-in and support)

Exploring Strategies to Enhance Sustainability

- The five most common challenges for sustainability include workforce stability, changing timelines, organization priorities, stakeholder support, and capacity for implementation/improvement.

- Sustainability challenges can be mitigated or supported by employing specific strategies to engage (i.e., involve service users, senior leaders and network), integrate (i.e., accountability and ownership, continuous training and capacity building, measurement and monitoring) or adapt (i.e., respond to contextual needs, reduce the initiative's complexity).

Resources Shared

Listed below are the resources mentioned during the webinar:

- HEC Learning Together resources

Webinar Recording

- Watch the full webinar here!

Healthcare Excellence Canada is an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada