

North West Skills Development Network

# Annual Report 2020/2021



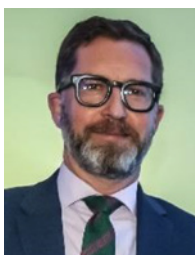
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# Welcome

In my introduction to last year's SDN Annual Report, I reflected on the changes that the Covid19 pandemic had necessitated for the Network. Little did we know then that the pandemic would still be dominating our lives one year on.



The move to online working, while not ideal in all circumstances, has brought clear benefits to the Network, with attendances at events up by 30% during the year; and with a waiting list of over 350 people wishing to attend events that were at capacity first time around. This growth in numbers at Network events has been accompanied by a reduction in programme costs of over 50%, due to the economies achieved by running events virtually. That direct reduction in costs takes no account of the further savings to organisations arising from reduced travel claims, nor the beneficial impact on colleagues' working lives of reduced travelling, nor of the sustainability benefits achieved.

Having said that, it should be recognised that we have undoubtedly missed the benefits of face-to-face events. We have also missed the 'showpiece' conferences that form such an important part of our annual cycle of events. While the Connect conference went ahead on a virtual basis and was widely considered to be a great success by its participants, there is no doubt that delegates missed the opportunity to gather in one place.

We will ensure that the Network takes all the above into account when planning its activities in 2021/22 and beyond.

2020/21 saw several changes in key personnel in the Network. I'd like to thank Andrea McGee and Claire Yarwood for their excellent work over recent years in leading and developing the FSD Steering Group and Towards Excellence Finance Assurance Group, respectively. I'm delighted to welcome Rob Forster and Jackie Murray as their replacements.

Significantly, we also saw the retirement of Di Ormandy last summer. Di led the SDN Network with great skill and tenacity throughout her time in her job, as well as contributing enormously to the national agenda. I would like to thank her personally for everything that she did for colleagues in the NW during her seven years in the role. She will be missed. However, it was a pleasure to welcome David Ellcock back to the NW to head up the Network, after his time working nationally with the Future-Focused Finance initiative. David has already shown in the six months that he has been with us that he will ensure that the NW continues to be a leading light in all aspects of Skills Development for staff in Finance, Informatics and Procurement.

## **Jonathan Stephens**

Chair – North West Skills Development Board

It was an enormous pleasure for me to 'come home' to the North West in 2020 to take up the role of Director of the NW Skills Development Network. I am very grateful for the incredibly warm welcome that I have received from friends and colleagues across the patch.



I must begin by wishing Di Ormandy, my predecessor, all the very best in her retirement and to thank her for the very healthy state in which she left the Network. I very much look forward to building on the successes of which Di was such a key part.

As Jonathan Stephens has said in his introduction, the Covid19 pandemic has had an impact on our ability to deliver face-to-face events, but the team has responded brilliantly in moving everything online. The number of event registrations increased enormously over the year, showing that there is an appetite for events that don't require delegates to travel long distances to attend. We have taken note of this and will continue to provide a mixture of online and face-to-face events once the worst of the pandemic is behind us.

One other significant change that we saw during 2020/21 was the solidification of our commitment to the various apprenticeship programmes across the Network, as we put Julie Davison's employment onto a permanent basis in January. Our work with apprentices is a key part of our Network activities and I look forward to continuing to help Julie develop our offering.

We also took steps to improve the way in which we tackle the vital issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I), with the appointment of Shahida Mohammed, from Liverpool University Hospitals NHS FT, as the first ED&I 'Champion' on the Skills Development Board. Shahida will ensure that ED&I is front and centre of all discussions at the Board.

Finally, I'd like to thank the many colleagues across the NW who give up significant amounts of their discretionary time to sit on the various groups across our three professions. We really are your Network and we rely on your input to ensure that we do the right thing for our members.

## **David Ellcock**

Director – North West Skills Development Network

## About Us

The North West Skills Development Network (NWSDN) is an innovative learning and development Network offering development opportunities from Apprentice through to Director level. The Network provides an infrastructure for Finance, Informatics, Procurement and associated staff to improve leadership and professional development skills, raise standards and share best practice through economy wide learning.

The NWSDN is proactive in identifying and providing learning and development opportunities to meet organisational needs, encouraging and facilitating the sharing of best practice and learning through Network events. These events are highly regarded and also demonstrate best value for organisations through shared learning.

### Our Mission

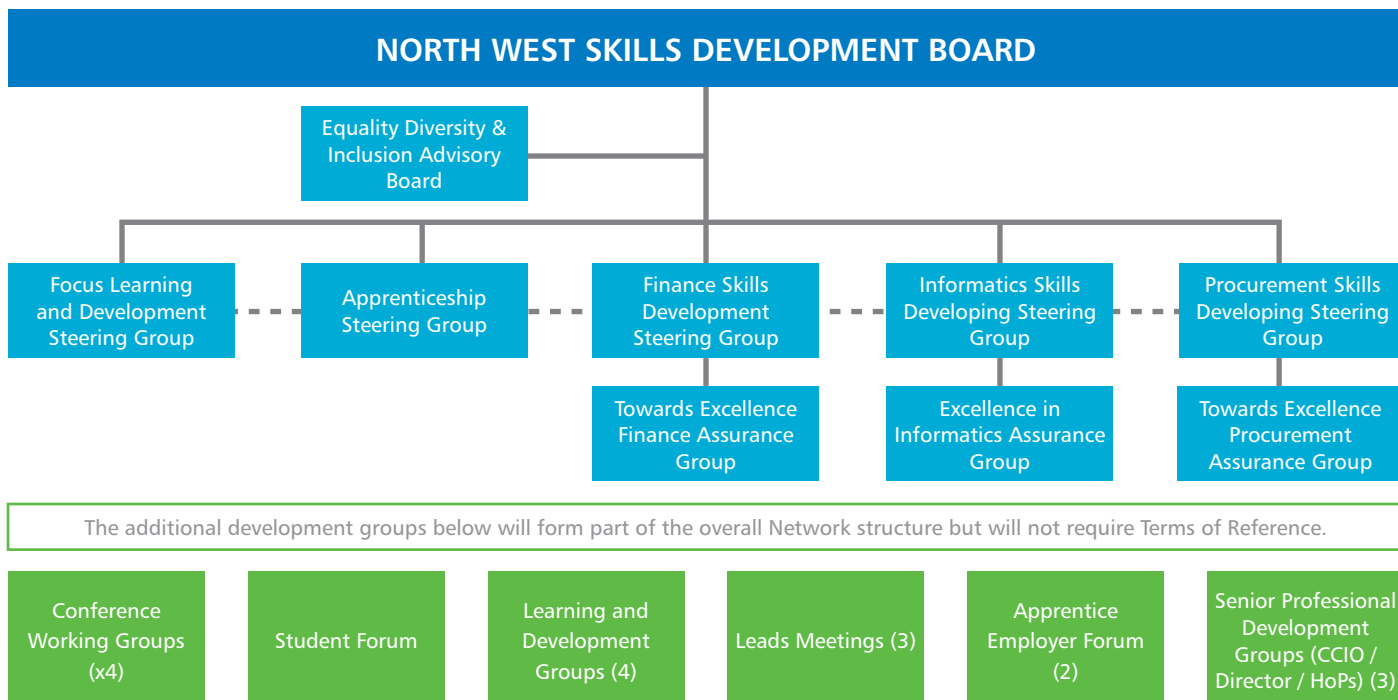
To offer an innovative and inclusive infrastructure to effectively support the continuous development of our member organisations across the North West, thus providing a sustainable and diverse workforce to support the continued delivery of high quality patient care.

### Our Vision

To be the chosen provider of inclusive and bespoke learning and development opportunities in the Health & Social Care sector in the North West.



# Governance Structure



## Meet the Chairs



**North West Skills Development Board**  
Jonathan Stephens,  
North West Regional  
Director of Finance  
NHS improvement / NHS  
England



**Focus Learning & Development Steering Group**  
Jonathan Wood,  
Director of Finance /  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust



**Finance Skills Development Steering Group**  
Rob Forster,  
Chief Finance Officer /  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Liverpool University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust



**Informatics Skills Development Steering Group**  
John Glover,  
Executive Director of Digital  
Lancashire & South Cumbria  
NHS Foundation Trust



**Procurement Skills Development Steering Group**  
Sharon Robson,  
Director of Procurement  
Lancashire Procurement  
Cluster



**Towards Excellence Finance Assurance Group**  
Jackie Murray,  
Chief Finance Officer  
Greater Manchester  
Shared Services



**Excellence in Informatics Assurance Group**  
Steven Bloor,  
Chief Information Officer  
Blackpool Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust



**Towards Excellence Procurement Assurance Group**  
Daren Hopkinson,  
Head of Procurement  
North West Ambulance  
Service NHS Trust



**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Board**  
Shahida Mohammed,  
Assistant Director of Finance  
Liverpool University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust



**Apprenticeship Steering Group**  
TBC,  
TBC  
TBC

# Network Objectives

The Network's objectives were streamlined during 2020/21, and are now as follows:



## 1. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Make measurable progress towards a diverse workforce across our organisations, through appropriate equality, diversity & inclusion initiatives.



## 2. Organisational Development

Support our organisations to develop their staff to improve the quality of their services, through training, sharing good practice and collaboration across the Network.



## 3. Raising the Professional Profile

Improve the professionalism of our teams by promoting the value of gaining a qualification from, and being a member of, a relevant professional organisation.



## 4. Sustainability

Explore opportunities to expand the Network's reach, both within existing member organisations and by seeking new members, while maintaining a sound financial base and offering excellent value for money.



## 5. System Working & Collaboration

Support our staff to work effectively across system and organisational boundaries.



## 6. Workforce Skills Development

Develop our workforce to meet organisational needs through appropriate programmes and initiatives.

There are appropriate measures underpinning each of these objectives, which are kept under regular review by the NW Skills Development Board.

# NW Skills Development Network Products & Services



## Learning & Development

- Coaching & Mentoring
- On-line & Learning Portal
- Bespoke Events Programme
- Free Microsoft Training
- Website & Resources
- Management & Leadership Development Programmes
- Development Days
- Student Forum
- Shadow a Senior Leader



## Workforce Development

- Apprenticeship Recruitment
- Bespoke Apprenticeship Programmes
- Study & Pastoral Support
- Undergraduate Placements
- Annual Workforce Profile
- Workforce Benchmarking Reports
- Graduates into Health Programmes
- Informatics Skills Framework for Healthcare Analysts



## Peer Review Accreditation

- Future-Focused Finance – Towards Excellence
- Excellence in Informatics
- NHS Procurement & Commercial Standards
- Promoting Personal & Professional Development
- Peer Review Assessments
- Celebration of Success
- Sharing Best Practice



## Networking & Sharing Best Practice

- Informatics, Finance Directors, Student & Payroll Conferences
- Sharing Best Practice Events
- Quarterly Leads Meetings
- Special Interest Groups
- Apprenticeship Development Days
- Celebrate Success
- Regional Value Maker Networks & Events
- Annual Awards



## Professionalism & Leadership Development

- Management & Leadership Development Programmes
- Masterclasses
- Links to Professional Bodies
- Undergraduate Placements
- Skills Frameworks
- Personal Portfolio Development
- University Links
- Director Development

Finance, Informatics, Procurement & Student Leads

Mentoring, Coaching & Action Learning Sets

# Skills Development Network in Numbers

## Focus Learning & Development Programme



Delegates Accessing a Focus event

1291

**£84** Average spend per delegate

71



Events

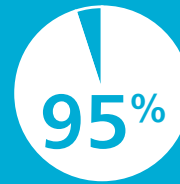
**£115**

Average Focus event cost

2



Conferences



95% of delegates considered events good value for money

Approx **£140k** saved on venue hire by running events virtually.

Delegate Attendances

**138** Connect

**79** (27 NW) National Payroll

## Media Engagement

6,161

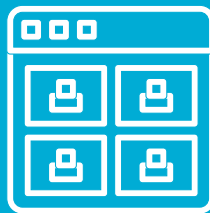
Website Registrations

81% of the workforce

2,970 Total event registration

% of Delegates recommending our events

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neutral	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
63%	24%	9%	3%	1%



### Website Statistics

\*\* figures relate to the national usage

500,000 visits

### Most visited pages

- \* Event bookings
- \* On-line learning
- \* People skills
- \* Financial skills



906 Followers

61% increase in followers

## Added Value



599

on line learning registrations

Delegate attendances

914

26 Free network events

### Free Events

1 Senior Informatics Staff	43
5 Leads meetings	320
1 SDN	43
19 Special Interest Groups	508



Value for money

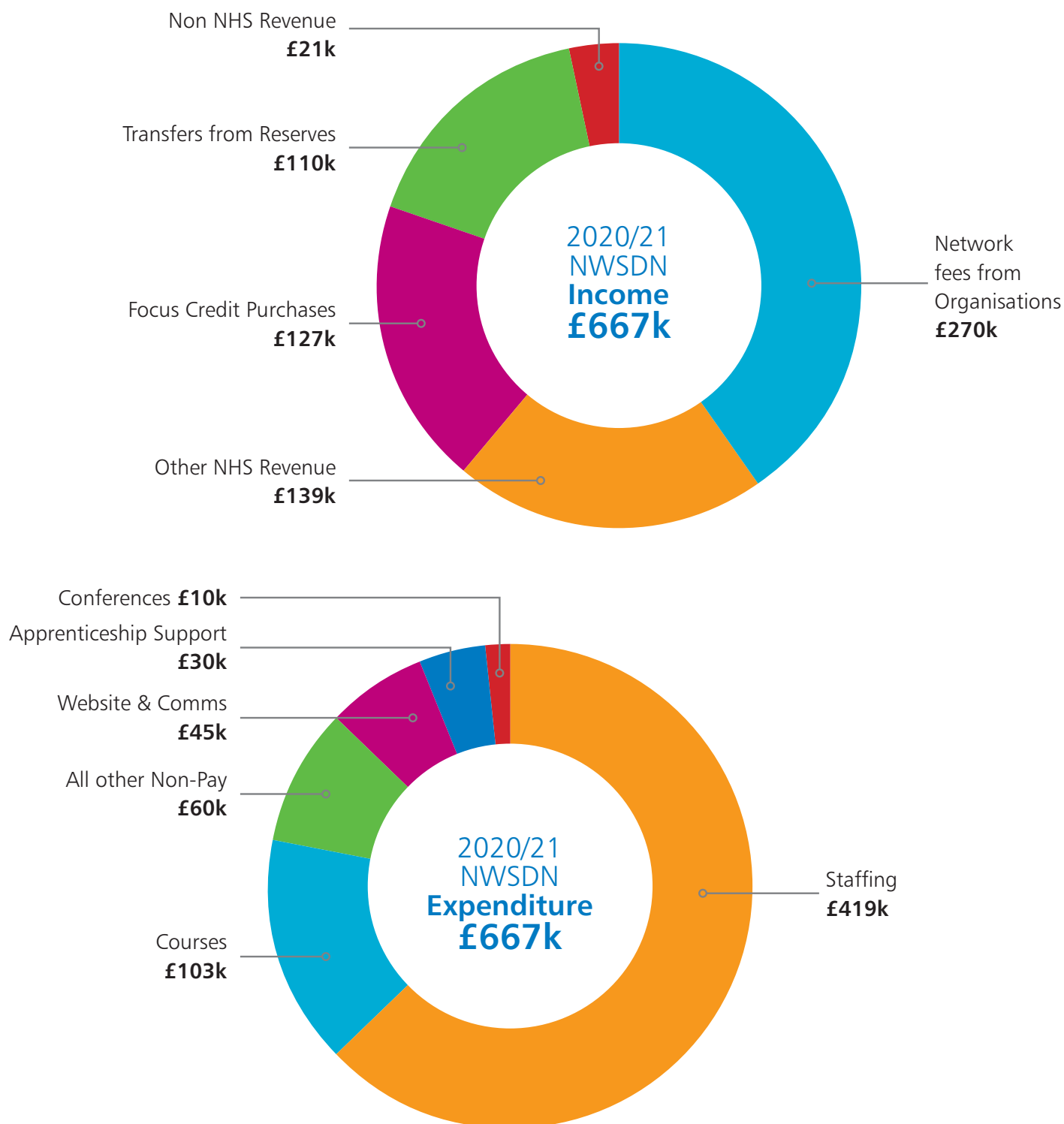
**£70** Network event

Commercial equivalent **£185**

**£222k** Value Added



## Network Income and Expenditure 2020/21



Reserves	Open	Close	Movement
General reserve	£367k	£329k	-£38k
Focus reserve (including Credits held)	£438k	£422k	-£16k
NW PSD reserve	£51k	£46k	-£5k
National PSD reserve	£110k	£58k	-£52k
Redundancy reserve	£253k	£253k	£0k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,219k</b>	<b>£1,108k</b>	<b>-£111k</b>

Numbers may not balance due to rounding

## Equality & Diversity

The Network continues to place a high premium on ensuring that Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) are front and centre of everything that we do. During 2020/21 we demonstrated this commitment by:

- Appointing Shahida Mohammed, Assistant Director of Finance at Liverpool University Hospitals NHS FT, as the first ED&I Champion on the NW Skills Development Board. Shahida will work as a full member of the Board to ensure that all the Network's activities demonstrate best ED&I practice, and that due consideration is given to ED&I issues in its decision making.
- Working with Shahida to establish an ED&I Advisory Board that will ensure that all aspects of the ED&I agenda are fully considered in the Network's activities.
- Continuing to gather and analyse diversity statistics on everyone who participates in our events, to ensure that we are not inadvertently excluding colleagues from participation.
- Being active participants in the North Finance Diversity Group, set up by Jonathan Stephens and Tim Savage, Regional Finance Directors for the North West and North East & Yorkshire respectively. The Group was created to review ED&I practice in NHS finance teams across the North of England, in the light of the outcomes of the 'safe house' discussions with colleagues with a range of 'protected characteristics' that were held during the year.
- Supporting the Future-Focused Finance (FFF) Sponsorship Programme, through the active leadership of Jonathan Stephens, and beginning work to roll the programme out across all the Network's professions during 2021/22. The North West has the highest numbers of Sponsees and Sponsors across the country.
- Playing a full role in the FFF Inclusion & Diversity Ambassadors initiative, by encouraging organisations to nominate an Ambassador.
- Working with a range of colleagues to establish how we best gather information on the diversity of our workforce, in a way that is culturally and personally sensitive.

We will continue to build on this work to help the Network's member organisations embed good practice around diversity across the North West.

## Accreditation

	Finance		Informatics		Procurement	
Accredited	58	85%	23	43%	28	53%
Working Towards Accreditation / Re-accreditation	10	15%	21	40%	6	11%
Not Accredited	0	0%	9	17%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>53</b>		<b>34</b>	

As the table shows, we are making good progress towards achieving our target of ensuring that every organisation in the North West has at least Level One accreditation for each profession.

The Covid19 pandemic forced us to re-think the way in which we undertook our accreditation assessments, as site visits obviously became impossible. We are very grateful to all those organisations and colleagues who helped us to 'find our feet' as we trialled new ways of working. We have also now started working with CCGs to ensure that our accreditation processes will support them as they move towards ICS status.

Huge thanks are due to the many people across the region who willingly give up significant amounts of their discretionary time to ensure that our three accreditation programmes – Towards Excellence Finance, Excellence in Informatics and Towards Excellence Procurement – continue to be as well-supported and successful as they are.

# Workforce Development

## Apprenticeships

The last twelve months has seen several significant changes in terms of how the Apprenticeship Programme is delivered around governance, the introduction of new partnerships and a move to virtual recruitment brought about as a result of the pandemic.

In order to help shape and develop the apprenticeship programme going forward a new steering group was established with membership comprising individuals from Finance, Informatics, Procurement and HR with an interest in workforce development and apprenticeship provision. This group will look to build on the existing work undertaken with a view to ensuring provision is 'fit for purpose' and meets the needs of member organisations whilst maintaining the high standards achieved to date.

Given the Network's existing provision of a graduate accountancy programme, the Network felt that working collaboratively with the Graduates into Health team would be a good way of introducing similar provision for Informatics through the introduction of the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) Scheme. The two-year programme recruits high-calibre graduates with a view to developing technical specialists and fast-tracking them into middle managers and beyond.

A decision to postpone the 2020 autumn intake of apprentices to the Foundation Programme was made by the Steering Group early into the pandemic. However, once it became evident that the situation would not be quickly resolved it was agreed to proceed with recruiting a new cohort to commence in January 2021. Significant work had to be undertaken to amend existing processes to enable virtual recruitment but ultimately this proved to be successful with the enrolment of 17 new Level 3 Accounting and Informatics apprentices.

Considerable work was undertaken with the new cohort once on programme given the added challenge of many of the apprentices working remotely some, if not all, of the time. This included a robust induction programme over the first three months involving weekly meetings. In addition, to enhance the pastoral support of apprentices, the Network established a relationship with The Prince's Trust to provide mentoring with the intention of further developing this for future cohorts to include signposting of young people to the programme.

Despite the challenges of recruiting throughout the pandemic retention has been excellent which can be attributed to the level of pastoral support received from everyone involved in the programme ie. managers, The Prince's Trust mentors and the Network.

As a result of all the above developments the apprenticeship programme continues to successfully grow. To date there have been in excess of 250 enrolments across the various schemes and apprenticeship levels with both retention and achievement on programme being well above national averages. Work will continue to develop provision further where possible with the potential introduction of additional apprenticeship standards in procurement and clinical coding.



AAT Students at iCount



Apprentices meeting via Teams

## Moving Online

The Skills Development Network (SDN) responded very quickly to the Coronavirus situation following the announcement of lockdown on the 17th March 2020.

It was extremely important for us to ensure that, as far as possible, we were able to maintain business as usual for our subscribing organisations.

Our initial response to the situation and the additional pressures being placed on NHS colleagues, was to cancel all face to face events, meetings, venues and speakers. This was achieved successfully without incurring any penalties with regard to facilitator and venue costs.

It was clear from the outset that we were entering a very different way of working and was important for us to ensure we were still able to support staff and organisations.

Within three weeks of the lockdown announcement, a series of virtual events was organised to assist staff and organisations in dealing with the changing working environment. The events listed below were run free of charge during the first couple of months of lockdown.

Date	Event
15 April	Managing teams through uncertainty and change
30 April	High performance virtual teams
15 May	Prep to Pass – helping you achieve exam success
15 & 27 May	Launching virtual team projects
20 May	Managing conflict and challenging conversations
27 May	Launching virtual team projects
28 May	Resilience during periods of change and uncertainty
10 June	Managing your work life balance
18 June	Time Management Techniques to Maximise your Performance in a COVID-19 environment

These events not only provided support around the use of new technology and ways of working, but also supported the health and wellbeing of staff during what was a very difficult time for everyone.

It quickly became apparent that we were unlikely to be able to hold our highly regarded conferences as planned. Subsequently, following advice from the NW Skills Development Board, the Student Conference (due to take place in July 2020), and the Finance Directors Conference (due to take place in October 2020) were subsequently postponed.

However, it was felt that we should look to pilot at least one of our larger events through a virtual platform, so the Connect Conference went ahead as planned in September 2020.

All Network meetings and development groups were rearranged and moved to Microsoft Teams.

The Network continued run virtual events throughout 2020/21, including three very successful management and leadership programmes.

Given the success of the virtual programme of events in 2020/21, we will be providing a more blended approach to our learning and development programme for 2021/22.

## Connect 2020

The annual Connect conference was held on a virtual platform this year and was attended by 180 delegates. The decision to run the conference virtually was made in early July and it was a bit of a roller coaster for the conference planning group and the SDN team to make it happen!

The conference is usually attended by Chief Information Officers, Chief Clinical Information Officers and other senior informatics staff. The conference celebrated its 10th anniversary this year and maintained its usual vibrancy by offering a large variety of sessions showcasing digital and analytical innovation, motivational presenters, leadership development together with, very importantly, patient experience speakers. The conference heard from several leaders from North West Trusts about their analytical work and digital programs, together with Sonia Patel, Chief Information Officer of NHSx and Janet King, North West Regional Director of Digital Transformation.

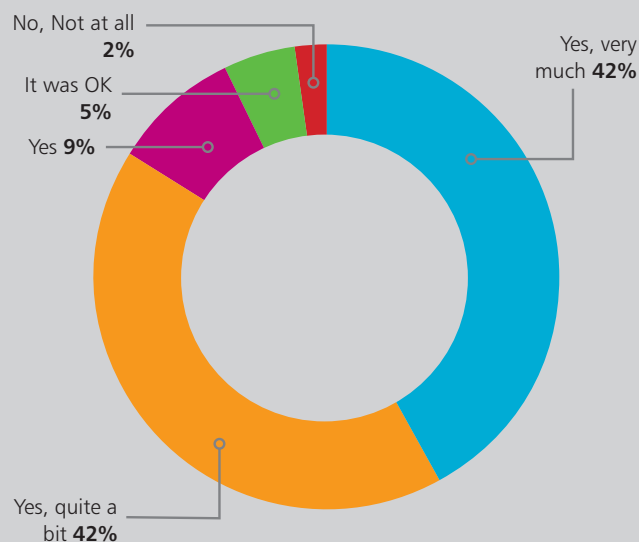
We are very lucky to have great engagement with our supplier sponsors and despite the short notice, 10 suppliers sponsored our virtual event.

The feel to the virtual platform was very uncluttered, professional and welcoming. There was a lot of chatter and banter in the chat box and a stream of Q&As; it helps to be part of a small but very active community. The two days were interspersed with many informal networking events where our team of facilitators kept us all on track and engaged; we also embedded facilitated networking sessions with senior leaders as well as roundtable discussions and workshops with our sponsors to allow yet more two-way communication.

More information on the conference can be found by visiting:  
[www.skillsdevelopmentnetwork.com/connect-2020](http://www.skillsdevelopmentnetwork.com/connect-2020)

Overall, the conference was a great success and we have received lots of positive feedback - see the poll we took at the end of the conference.

### Did you Enjoy Connect Conference?



## Informatics Special Interest Groups

Our Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are going from strength to strength despite the challenging year we've had.

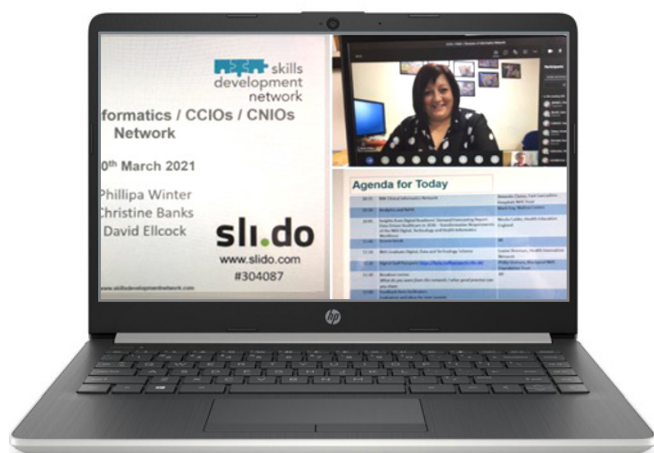
All events have been facilitated virtually via Microsoft Teams and the feedback has been really good as this saves a lot of time on travel.

At the development sessions, breakout rooms have been used for discussion and workshops which works really well and provides opportunity for meeting new people.

Here are some key highlights of our networks:

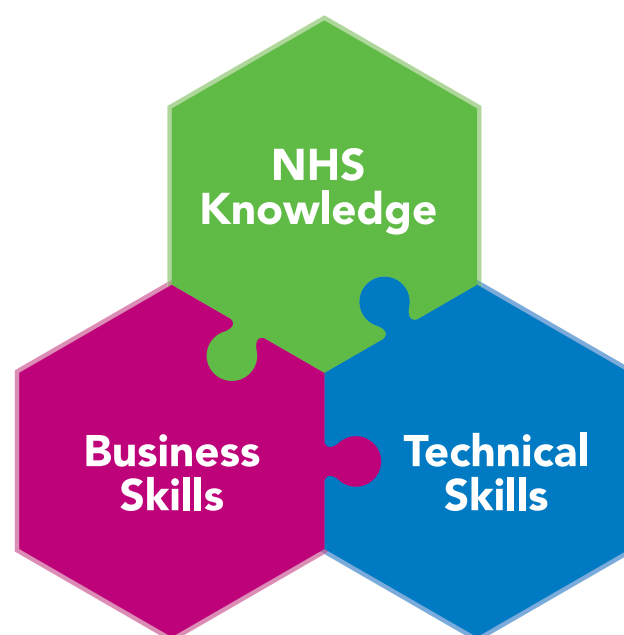
- Strong leadership by chairs and planning groups
- Good engagement with national partners, i.e. professional bodies, HEE, NHS Digital, NHSE&I, NHSx
- Networks are maturing by engaging with one main lead per organisation
- PMO network engages with Informatics as well as trust-wide PMOs
- Self-help support provided to all networks in times of home working and general exhaustion
- SIGs help with identifying learning needs among colleagues

2020/21	Meetings	Delegates	Cancelled
CCIO / Directors Network	2	107	1
Heads of Information	3	48	
Senior Information Analysts Network	2	81	1
IT Management Forum	2	50	1
PMO Network	3	110	
Digital Workforce Development Leads meeting	3	73	
Clinical Informatics Network	2	65	1
Data Science Network	4	124	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>4</b>



# Informatics Skills Framework

The Informatics Skills Framework project, funded by the Health Foundation, was successfully completed during 2020/21. Although the Covid19 pandemic necessitated several changes to the original project plan the increased acceptance of tools such as MS Teams allowed the framework and its contents to be shared much further afield than the North West and garnered many positive reviews. Skill attainment across the three domains of technical skills, NHS knowledge and business skills is loosely tethered to the four levels of professional registration achievable through the Association of Professional Healthcare Analysts and the vast majority of learning material is free to access from an analyst's desk to facilitate fast task-based learning as well as signposting or linking to opportunities for deeper topic study. The Framework featured in discovery work commissioned by NHSX from Apha regarding competency frameworks applicable to information analysts in the NHS and the Framework will in 2021/22 change location to be more visible on the network website and will be openly shared across the regional Skills Development Networks.





## Meet the Team



**Di Ormandy**  
(Until August 2020)



**David Ellcock**  
(From September 2020)



**Jacky Bowman**



**Christine Banks**



**Julie Davison**



**Carolyn Harding**



**Donna Hanson**



**Tony Haslam**



**Sara Braidwood**



**Helen Pennington**

## My Apprenticeship

As part of my role I undertake data analysis for the North West Skills Development Network (NWSDN), but always felt I was making it up as I went along with no real foundation for what I was producing which was being sent out to all stakeholders.

I requested to do a Level 4 Data Analysis apprenticeship for which the NWSDN team were very supportive, and with the support of both the NWSDN team and the Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS FT Information team, I began the apprenticeship in May 2019.

Initially it was quite straightforward with many of the starting modules being basic, setting the concepts of data analysis. The first project I had to produce as part of my portfolio covered my current job role and how it fitted in with the apprenticeship.

From here things started to pick up quickly with the technical approaches covered in the sessions, including Power BI, SQL and R Studio, then taking the knowledge gained, using it within my job and evidencing this within a project for my portfolio.

As time went on, I found myself spending more time with the Trust information team for certain technical elements the NWSDN were not able to provide directly. I was there to complete my own project while with the information team, but I was also able to shadow team members briefly to gain an insight as to what happens within NHS information teams.

In March 2020, the country entered lockdown as I was approaching the end of the apprenticeship which meant the remaining training sessions had to be reorganised to take place over Microsoft Teams. Although this approach worked, I personally felt it lost the interaction gained in face to face training sessions.

Luckily, I only had a few modules remaining when this happened, so was able to complete them and take the Dell EMC exam remotely which I passed. Following this, I moved on to the synoptic project which was a challenge in the new circumstances I found myself in. I needed to block out my diary to do the 40-hour project while also balancing home learning for my 7-year-old son.

I finished off with a professional discussion over Teams and received confirmation I had completed the apprenticeship with a Merit grade in August 2020.

Overall, this apprenticeship was a great experience which I feel has helped me in my day to day job, and with more time to embed the knowledge I gained, will help me progress in my future career which is why I would recommend an apprenticeship to any existing staff members in the NHS.

**Tony Haslam,**  
Event Coordinator & Data Analyst, NWSDN



**The NHS Skills Development Network** operates across NHS organisations in England. Its remit is to provide the infrastructure for improving leadership and professional development skills, raising standards and sharing best practice through economy-wide learning.

The Skills Development Network uses a dedicated website, **[www.skillsdevelopmentnetwork.com](http://www.skillsdevelopmentnetwork.com)**, to publicise and support its work. The website is the primary source of information for all staff in providing resources for personal and organisational development.

Contact us: [whh.skillsdevelopmentnetwork@nhs.net](mailto:whh.skillsdevelopmentnetwork@nhs.net)

Follow us on twitter: [@nwsdn](https://twitter.com/nwsdn)