The challenge

Access to Allied Health Professionals’ services in England needed to be improved. For example, some waiting times were extremely long:

- 40 weeks for a children’s wheelchair
- 272 days for an insole from an orthotics service
- 18 weeks for speech and language therapy for 472 pre-school children.

The challenge was complicated by limited management information about the quality of services and limited local ownership of data.

The strategy

The project team focused their efforts on nearly 30 service providers across the UK, helping them develop service-led local improvements, based on:

- building patient participation – ensuring that services receive clear feedback and patients are engaged in redesign
- pathway redesign
- strong local leadership – agreeing plans, setting goals and using data to foster team commitment
- changes in the skills mix – providing better access and reducing costs by identifying roles for assistants.

The learning

- AHP leaders enable teams and through partnership build a culture of continuous service improvement
- Attention to metrics at an early stage ensures that services demonstrate impact for their organisations and for commissioners
- Preparation of a project initiation document is valuable and keeps a focus on the improvements to be achieved
- Whole systems change by AHPs working across organisation and sector boundaries improves quality and productivity
- Reporting and messaging with internal and external stakeholders are essential for maximising improvements.

The outcomes

**98% patient satisfaction**

Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

Children’s occupational therapy

A service redesign involving changing the skills mix and redesigning the initial consultation has led to a better patient experience and reduced waiting times.

**£5,000 savings a week**

Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust

Physiotherapy service

A service redesign centring on changes in the skills mix has increased the quality of care, reduced waiting times and saved £5,000 a week.

**FASTER wheelchair assessments closer to home**

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly NHS

Children’s wheelchair service

Paediatric wheelchair assessments are now provided as part of an existing appointment close to the child’s home, thus improving service quality for patients.

**Projected savings £18,000**

Lincolnshire Community Health Service

Musculoskeletal physiotherapy service

A service redesign based on self-referral and a same-day triage telephone call has reduced waiting times, improved productivity and increased patient satisfaction.

**Waiting times HALVED**

Leicester City Community Health Service

Children’s speech and language therapy service

Children have faster access to services and there has been a 10% cost saving thanks to more appropriate referrals, better data capture and streamlined processes.

**Better access for high-risk patients**

West Kent Community Health

Diabetic podiatry service

By reducing inappropriate referrals, engaging with stakeholders and creating new processes, waiting times for high-risk diabetic patients are down while patient satisfaction is up.

For further details see the accompanying leaflet or visit www.dh.gov.uk/chpo