The Midlands Decision Support Network
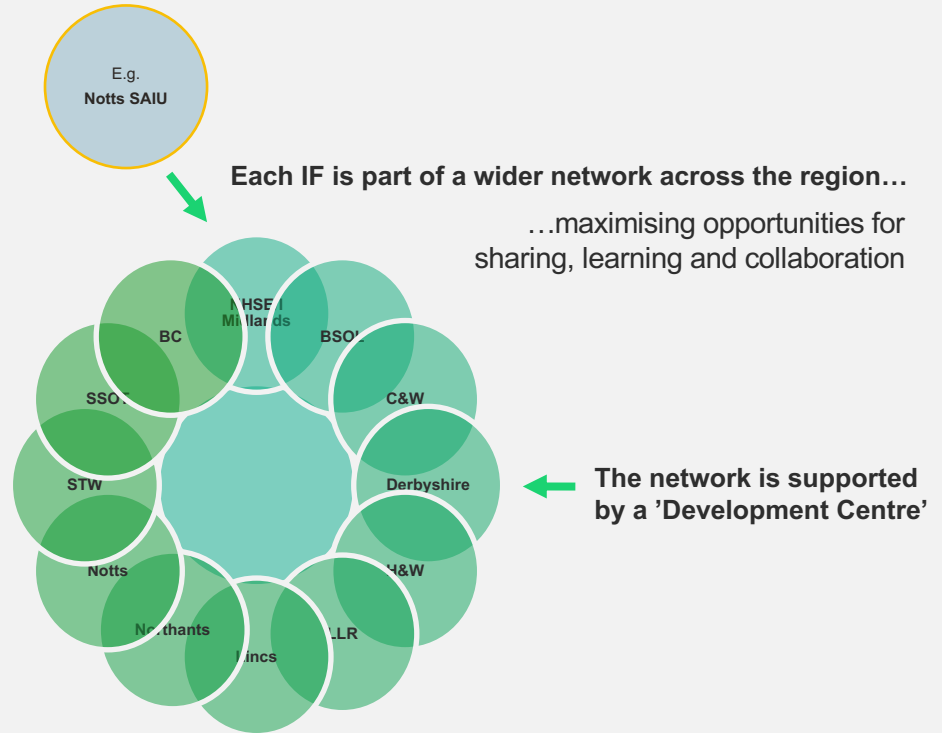*Work programme 2022/23*

Summary

- The Midlands Decision Support Network has demonstrated the power of regional collaboration between ICSs and has moved the region into a leading position nationally.

- The programme for 2022/23 builds on its success and will provide essential support for systems to respond to national requirements to develop cross-system intelligence functions, build the capabilities to deliver population health management and address health inequalities.

- We will:

    - Expand the training & development programme in response to highly positive feedback and significant demand, with offerings aimed at analysts and decision-makers

    - Deliver a regional analytical programme focused on member priorities, with an enhanced focus on supporting systems to move 'insight into action'

    - Actively promote knowledge exchange and collaborative working between systems as a means of supporting continuous learning and improvement

    - Add value through regional co-ordination – attracting investment, building partnerships and proactively supporting local intelligence function development

- Our work programme will continue to be overseen and shaped by members using existing governance arrangements.

The Midlands Decision Support Network is an established learning network that connects health and care systems across the Midlands, supported by a development centre that is provided by the Strategy Unit

- The **Midlands Decision Support Network is the Midlands' regional learning network for health and care systems**. It brings together 11 Integrated Care Systems and NHS England across the Midlands region to collaborate, exchange knowledge and share practice with one another.

- **The network acts as the primary mechanism for connecting emerging intelligence functions across the region**, supporting systems to develop the capacity, capability and culture needed to make consistently high-quality, analytically informed strategic decisions.

- **The network is supported by a 'development centre'** provided by the Strategy Unit, working in partnership with the OHID Local Knowledge and Intelligence Service.

- **The MDSN is nationally recognised as a forerunner model for regional learning networks.** The South West region has recently established its Decision Support Network based on the Midlands' model and other regions are exploring a similar arrangement.

Each ICS (and NHSE/I) has an intelligence function…

E.g. **Notts SAIU**

Each IF is part of a wider network across the region…

…maximising opportunities for sharing, learning and collaboration

NHSE Midlands
BC
BSOL
SSO
C&W
STW
Derbyshire
Notts
H&W
Northants
LLR
Lincs

The network is supported by a 'Development Centre'

Support from the development centre comprises an extensive educational offer, a regional analytical programme and active knowledge exchange between systems

An extensive educational offer – focused on building the competencies to **support strategic decision-making at system level**.

This includes **1000+ places/year on development programmes and courses across the region -** the latest prospectus is here. These are delivered alongside open educational events such as those comprising the 'INSIGHT' festival (see last year's programme).

The offer is open to staff **across all health and care organisations in the region** (including public health and local authority staff), is **highly practical** and is focused on **addressing the challenges that systems currently face**.

It is primarily structured around:
- Building a breadth of technical skills to undertake high-quality strategic analysis
- Improving decision-making practice in system leaders
- Developing analytical leadership and fostering the analyst/decision-maker relationship

"The development centre has played an invaluable supportive and networking role for our system through the jointly-developed analytics work programme and suite of training and development opportunities for our workforce" **Prof Derek Ward – Greater Lincolnshire DPH**

A strategic analytical programme to support decision-making– undertaking high-quality work once, at scale on behalf of the region, with a **focus on inequalities and underexplored topics**.

This currently comprises **three major analytical projects each year,** proposed and prioritised by members; the outcome of the most recent prioritisation process is here.

The programme is underpinned by **significant support for systems to move 'insight to action'**, including action-planning workshops for system leaders, comprehensive access to analytical code, briefings on methodology for local analysts and after-action knowledge sharing events between ICSs.

Recent work includes inequalities in access to planned care and the follow up report on strategies to address them, resource utilisation in the last 2 years of life, inequalities in access to children & young people's mental health services and an algorithm for classifying outpatient appointments by function.

"I would like to congratulate the team for producing such a clear and pragmatic analysis-in-action report and look forward to seeing these strategies implemented" **Dr Bola Owolabi – Director, Healthcare Inequalities, NHS England**

Active knowledge exchange – building professional identity for the **key roles that support decision-making** and enabling **collaboration between systems**

The development centre hosts a series of established professional communities of practice – see here**.** They include a regional analytical network (c.700 analysts drawn from across health and care, with fortnightly educational huddles), a 'Chief Analysts Group' and groups for evaluation leads and knowledge mobilisation experts across the region.

These increasingly form a focal point for **collaborative work between systems** (such as shared evaluations and R&D projects), as well as a route for supporting the **adoption of common standards and approaches** across the region (see key network guidance here)

Development centre staff also provide **direct support to local ICS intelligence function leads** including advice and guidance, facilitating system workshops and recruiting to key roles.

"I would like to say the [community of practice] has been an inspiration to me and brought a sense of the wider analyst community to my role which I previously was missing" **Midlands Analyst Network member**

We will expand the educational programme in response to highly positive feedback and significant demand, with offerings aimed at analysts and decision-makers

Training & Development Lead – Professor Mohammed A Mohammed

The programme for 2022/23 is focused on building competencies to support strategic decision-making at system level – it is aimed both at those who undertake strategic decisions and those who support them with analysis, with content aimed at building technical and leadership skills in these groups.

It is designed in response to feedback from a breadth of sources, including minuted discussions from strategic and operational group meetings, requests from local intelligence function leaders, surveys of professional communities of practice (e.g. the Midlands Analyst Network) and regional analytical skills assessments undertaken by Public Health England staff. Moreover, it reflects the Strategy Unit's work with the NHSE/I national team and the Association for Professional Healthcare Analysts in defining the nature of intelligence functions and the competencies required from staff.

The programme will include:

- **Structured development programmes –** Combining formal learning, reflection and project-based work delivered to a cohort across the region. Aimed at building the core competencies for improving strategic decision-making at system level, with attendees selected by intelligence function leads based on their local development strategy.

- **Short courses –** Typically focused on a particular analytical tool or technique of importance (e.g. time series forecasting) or an entry-level version of one of a structured development programmes (e.g. 'Introduction to Decision Quality')

- **Open events –** Providing an ongoing 'drop-in' programme of educational sessions based on network priorities, including opportunities for sharing and learning from peers. Includes webinars connecting local staff to regional, national and international experts, findings from the regional analytical programme and the INSIGHT 2022 festival (see across).

Core components of the offer in 2022/23

e.g. 'Decision Quality for system leaders' development programme; thinking tools for decision-making; training in analytical concepts for leaders.

e.g. 'Leadership for Analysts' programme (2x cohorts); communication skills/ arguing with numbers; data visualisation; presentation/ facilitation skills.

Improving decision-making practice
Providing system leaders with practical tools & techniques for making better, more analytically-informed decisions

Developing analytical leaders
Fostering the skills analysts need to work more closely and effectively with decision-makers

Strengthening analytical capability
Building technical skills to undertake high-quality strategic analysis

Moving beyond the numbers
Ensuring decisions are informed by findings from a range of disciplines

e.g. advanced PHM analytics; operational research methods; machine learning; time-series forecasting; open-source coding tools; reproducible analytical pipelines

e.g. approaches to evidence review and avoiding cognitive biases; core skills in knowledge mobilisation; fundamentals of evaluation

INSIGHT 2022
The network will also host its annual INSIGHT 'festival' of learning at a similar scale and profile to previous years – a programme of talks, panel discussions and training events focused on the leading edge of decision-making practice. In 2021, this included speakers such as Sir Michael Marmot, Jennifer Dixon, Nigel Edwards and Richard Murray, alongside local system representatives (see here for recordings).

We will deliver a regional analytical programme focused on member priorities, with an enhanced focus on supporting systems to move 'insight into action'

Chief Analyst – Steven Wyatt

The development centre analytical function will undertake a regional analytical programme prioritised by members in 2022/23, aimed at addressing questions where undertaking high-quality work once, at scale, on behalf of the region will achieve best outcomes and value. Projects will be relevant to the whole region, have the potential to influence strategic decisions, will address health and care outcomes, health inequalities or service efficiency and will focus on issues that have not traditionally received sufficient attention.

The budget for network projects will fund approximately three major analytical projects in 2022/23, of a size and complexity comparable to those shown opposite. Strategic Group Members and the system leads for local intelligence functions will be supported through a facilitated process in Q1 2022/3 to shape an analytical programme that reflects their strategic priorities.

Each project will produce bespoke system reports and systems will also be supported to use outputs as the basis for further analytical work – through briefings for local analysts on methods and access to underlying code and materials, alongside advice and guidance from members of our analytical team. The outputs will serve both as examples of good practice for strategic analysis and a means to build closer working relationships between analysts in local systems and our faculty.

In response to feedback, we have developed an enhanced 'insight to action' offer for 2022/23, to increase the support available for systems to effectively respond to the findings from network projects**. This will include (for example): support for local staff to work with their system's decision-making bodies, increased engagement during project delivery to shape outputs to the interests and needs of members, facilitated action-planning workshops in local systems and 'after action' knowledge sharing workshops between ICSs. The network training & development programme will also include an offer around knowledge mobilisation, to support local teams to build capability to respond to strategic analysis.

Comparable regional projects delivered for the network to date…

- *Health service use in the last two years of life*
(system reports & launch webinars)

- *Socio-economic inequalities in access to planned care: causes & consequences* (report/pathway analysis & launch webinar)

- *Inequalities in access to mental health services for children and young people* (report/data packs & launch webinar)

- *MDSN algorithm for classifying outpatient visits by function*
(summary report & launch webinar)

Projects prioritised by members in progress for 21/22…

- Strategies to reduce health inequalities in planned hospital (project summary)

- What are the health implications of reduced access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic? (project summary)

- How is the growth in diagnostic testing affecting NHS practice? (project summary)

We will actively promote knowledge exchange and collaborative working between systems as a means of supporting continuous learning and improvement

Building regional professional communities of practice

We will continue to host a series of regional professional communities of practice on behalf of the network. These are aimed at supporting collaboration and sharing between peers across the region, as well as building professional identity in the essential roles that support strategic decision-making.

- **The Midlands Analyst Network**: Our longest standing network, comprising c.600 members across the region meeting in fortnightly educational 'huddles', with contributors ranging from local analysts presenting on current projects to renowned subject specialists.
- **The Midlands Evaluation Network:** Comprising evaluation leads and others with an interest from each system (including graduates of our evaluation training programme), meeting bimonthly for advice and guidance to support local evaluations and to share learning.
- **The Midlands Knowledge Mobilisation Network:** Comprising staff working in evidence & knowledge roles across the region, meeting bimonthly with a focus on sharing resources and making best use of capacity to support local systems' efforts.

An 'analytical leaders' community of practice is also planned for 2022/23, bringing together the Chief Analysts from each system across the region.

Leading collaborative regional projects

We will use the communities of practice to facilitate several exemplar collaborative projects.
They will be delivered by blended teams from across the region and be designed as a means of providing collective and comparative learning.

These are planned to include:

- **Regional evaluation project:** Community of practice members will agree a topic for a shared evaluation, based on a common issue that aligns with network priorities (e.g. falls prevention, good practice in end-of-life care, support for homeless young people). They will then develop and deliver a common approach to evaluation and meet regularly to share progress and emerging themes. The evaluation lead for the development centre (Paul Mason) will lead on authoring a final report to summarise learning from the process.

- **Exploring automation in evidence synthesis:** We will assess the potential of data analytics tools to improve the efficiency of the evidence synthesis process, as a means of making better use of the limited capacity within systems available to support rigorous evidence review. The community of practice will identify a suitable pilot project and produce a guide for the wider network, focused on the tools available and their most effective use.

Capturing learning & sharing knowledge

We will create a regional 'repository', providing a systematic approach to managing and sharing MDSN content.
This will improve the ease of finding insights produced by the development centre and members and raise the profile of the network as a reputable producer of valuable insights.

We will also provide evidence analysis on a series of topics based on network member priorities (in a programme led by our knowledge and evidence lead Alison Turner). This will contribute to the knowledge base for decision-making and raise awareness of gaps for future work.

It will include:
- **Evidence signposts:** High-level summaries of policy, guidance and selected research evidence to provide a starting point for framing a problem
- **Evidence scans:** Synthesising findings and lessons from policy, guidance, research and practice, to inform improvement efforts.
- **Evidence maps:** At-a-glance overviews of relevant evidence for a topic by theme, enabling decision-makers to identify and explore useful evidence.
- **Evidence updates:** Regular alerts helping decision-makers keep up to date with new and emerging evidence on a topic

We will add value through regional co-ordination – attracting investment, building partnerships and proactively supporting local intelligence function development

Attracting investment into the Midlands region

- **We will continue to seek further investment in the MDSN for the benefit of members** – national and regional bodies have consistently recognised the benefit of the scale at which the network operates, its role as a forerunner model in supporting intelligence functions and its potential as a mechanism for rapidly disseminating learning. We are increasingly positioning the MDSN nationally as an ideal platform for large-scale innovation.

- **To date, the development centre has attracted a further £430,000 funding for activities to support members in 2021/22** (from £145,000 in 2020/21). This has funded the development and delivery of a breadth of educational opportunities for staff across the region. We anticipate being successful in attracting significant resource to support meeting members requirements in 2022/23.

Supporting local intelligence function development

- **We will provide active support for local intelligence function development** – including advice and guidance from the core programme team on the nature of local arrangements, support for recruitment to key roles (e.g Chief Analysts and other professional leads), facilitating 'design workshops' and providing support for systems to develop their local professional networks.

- **We will develop our formal guidance for members in 2022/23** – refining core documents such as our analytical typology, the network guide to evaluation, intelligence function design principles, guides to knowledge mobilisation and evidence review. Members' local staff will continue to benefit from access to informal advice and guidance from our faculty leads in analytics, education, evaluation and evidence.

Developing partnerships

- **We will build on our existing partnerships, undertaking collaborative work to generate learning and relationships that will benefit members.** For example, we are currently delivering a collaborative project with ADASS in order to build a system dynamics model for domiciliary care, which can be used to investigate scenarios and the implications of policies chosen. Elsewhere, we are working with the Association of Professional Healthcare Analytics and the NHSE/I national team to describe analyst career pathways. We are also partnering with NHSE/I and HFMA to support an allocative efficiency programme using the STAR method across the MDSN, focusing initially on respiratory disease.

- **We will continue to engage regionally and nationally to promote the network**, with a particular focus on sharing learning between the MDSN and other regions who are considering adopting a similar model, as well as engagement with national teams to translate learning from the MDSN into informing ICS requirements.

Programme management

- **We will continue to provide a high-quality overall programme management function to ensure the success of our planned interventions at regional level.** We have put in place an experienced and knowledgeable team who will lead programme design and delivery, as well as undertake co-ordination and facilitation of the key network meetings that underpin its governance. They will also undertake an evaluation of programme activities to inform ongoing improvements to the offer.

- **We will work closely with your intelligence function leads and tailor our support to local needs as they emerge.** Each lead will have a relationship manager working with them regularly to co-ordinate our offer of support. They will also support creation of a local staff development strategy, identify opportunities for action in response to regional analytical projects and support engagement with non-healthcare organisations.

Our work programme will continue to be overseen and shaped by members using existing governance arrangements

It is proposed that the work of the development centre continue to be overseen by existing governance arrangements, consisting of two primary forums:

The MDSN Regional Strategic Board

Meeting twice yearly

Membership: ICS chief executives from each subscribing member (or a board-level nominee with delegated decision-making authority), board-level nominee from the NHSE/I regional team. Chaired by **Amanda Sullivan** (Nottingham & Nottinghamshire)

Functions:
- Establish overarching priorities and objectives for the MDSN
- Agree priorities to inform the MDSN analytical and educational work programme
- Agree annual member contributions to fund network activities
- Identify additional funding opportunities to support network activities
- Develop regional and national partnerships to support the work of the MDSN
- Review evaluation of development centre work programme
- Agree recommendations from the operational group/development centre e.g. on network-wide standards to be adopted or other regional initiatives.

The MDSN Intelligence Function Leads Group

Meeting every two months

Membership: Intelligence Function leads from each member (or senior manager with delegated decision-making authority). Chaired by **Lucy Heath** (The Black Country)

Functions:
- Provide advice & guidance to inform the delivery of the ongoing MDSN work programme, including providing feedback on its local impact and any emerging needs.
- Ensure local systems engage with and take full advantage of network activities, including promoting the educational offer, analytical programme and knowledge exchange activities
- Seek opportunities for collaboration across local intelligence functions within the region
- Share learning between systems, including key outputs produced by intelligence functions for inclusion within the network repository
- Make recommendations to the regional strategic board as to network outputs that should become regional standards
- Other activities in support of the priorities and objectives of the MDSN, as agreed by the regional strategic board

Amanda Sullivan – Chief Executive, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire ICB and Regional Strategic Board Chair (Midlands Decision Support Network)

amanda.sullivan7@nhs.net

Simon Bourne – Programme Director (Midlands Decision Support Network)

simonbourne@nhs.net