

## Evolving personalised care and support planning through a pandemic – keeping sight of the patient and what’s important to them



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When I joined [Year of Care \(YOC\) Partnerships](#) in February 2020 full of enthusiasm and fear in equal measures, I could never have anticipated how things would change in a matter of weeks.

I was lucky enough to be immediately immersed in training experiences and visits to general practices, travelling across the North East and Scotland, my feet hardly touching the ground, and days at my new desk in the office a rare occurrence.

Coronavirus chatter was growing, but like for many people at this point the enormity of its impact was unimagined. We were still delivering face to face training to practice nurses in early March, but then the postponements started rolling in. Teams were getting prepared, clearing the decks in readiness for what might be coming to their door. Then in late March our team like many was ‘sent home’ to work.

As demand for our work paused we took the opportunity to review and refresh our training, making it suitable for a remote delivery model, and worked on updating this over the summer months. So, my experiential learning of my new role became a desk-based exercise of dissecting and reviewing content and immersing myself in the theory and resources. This time was also a huge learning curve on the digital front. The team had to be equipped with IT set ups at home, familiarise ourselves with Microsoft Teams and learn to work as a team in a virtual way – much more than just getting to grips with the technology. We’ve had our ups and downs but being able to stay connected in the early days until we got back to our COVID secure office in May was crucial.

We kept in touch with practices who were navigating the new health care landscape and all its limitations and restrictions. The evolution of the remote consultation was exponential and once adapted and adopted, staff started to step back enough to think about patient experience in the midst of change. They told us remote consultations had been thrust upon patients by necessity with no engagement; early consultations were reactive, and HCP focused /led; and routine person-centred care for long term conditions was under threat from the drive to ‘manage’ during the pandemic.

The desire from HCPs to keep sight of the patient and what was important to them, bringing patients back to the heart of their consultations whether by phone, video or face to face became the driver for a new phase of work for the team. We worked in partnership with practices to develop [resources and guidance](#) to enable person-centred care and support planning conversations to happen remotely, including resources to enable patients to prepare for their appointment. We delivered webinars locally and nationally to support practices with remote care and support planning, giving [unrestricted access to the resources](#) we had developed.

We started to receive enquiries from new practices who had not implemented the YOC approach and saw an opportunity amidst the challenges of COVID to overhaul their processes and systems to introduce care and support planning; their key motivation being to create a more holistic and collaborative way of working with people with long term conditions. Since September we have delivered 33 remote training sessions to practices and clusters of practice across England and Scotland and it’s amazing to hear how colleagues have embraced change and driven improvement

through the most challenging of times. They have not lost sight of the enabled and empowered patient and what matters to them.

It's fair to say, its not all been plain sailing! We've certainly crossed off a 'full house' in Zoom bingo but we have kept the YOC flag flying over the last year, and even secured Personalised Care Institute [\(PCI\) accreditation](#) for our core training along the way.

So what next? Undoubtedly, there have been great benefits from technology in terms of accessibility, time and cost savings, but narrators in the twitter sphere now refer to [Zoom or MS Teams fatigue](#). We are human beings who thrive on physical and social connections. Even as the introvert in our team, there is something appealing to me about a time when we can all be in a room together experiencing lightbulb moments, making new connections out of spontaneous 'coffee' chats, and having the protected space and time to literally think outside the box that has been our world this last year. I look forward to meeting so many of our partners and colleagues across the UK when we can.

In the meantime, you can contact me at [andrea.elsbury@northumbria-healthcare.nhs.uk](mailto:andrea.elsbury@northumbria-healthcare.nhs.uk) or on [LinkedIn](#) and follow us on Twitter at @YearofCare for the latest news.

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## **Andrea Elsbury**

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Andrea has a passion for person-centred, holistic care to improve health outcomes for the most disadvantaged and this, combined with her quality improvement background, led her to take up her role as national trainer and facilitator within the Year of Care team.