

International Journal of Population Data Science

Journal Website: www.ijpds.org



The Networked Data Lab: lessons from four years of analytical collaboration on common problems in health on social care

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Objective

The Networked Data Lab (NDL) is a UK-wide network of analytical teams embedded in the health and care system. Each year, we support five local partners to acquire and link new health and social care datasets on a different topic. The NDL provides insights from this linked data to help UK policymakers improve health and care, leveraging public, patient, and stakeholder engagement to prioritise topics of shared local interest.

Approach

Now in its fourth year, the NDL has commissioned a Learning Study (LS) to evaluate progress towards its aims. This employs a theory-based approach to test and assess key assumptions about programme impact through a Theory of Change. For the study, semi-structured interviews with analysts and stakeholders at the five NDL sites were conducted to identify factors influencing the programme's impact.

Results

Drawing on interim LS findings, we will describe the types of impact the programme has achieved, and some of the key barriers and enablers to analytical collaboration across geographic and organisational boundaries. Themes include senior sponsorship; stakeholder input into problem definition; information governance and tools and skills. Themes will be illustrated with case studies drawn from the different NDL topic areas, including children and young people's mental health and unpaid carers.

Conclusions and Implications

Studying the changes in end-of-life medication use will inform policy to better continue supporting people dying at home, especially where there are unmet needs or gaps between prescribed and dispensed medications.

