

TOM DALEY EAT YOUR HEART OUT: DEEP DIVING INTO SERVICE LINE REPORTING

Since 2007 a majority of NHS Trusts & FTs have had a go at Service Line Reporting (SLR) and, to some extent, Patient Level Costing (PLICS). Typically they've run an implementation project and then spent a long time looking at allocations and apportionments until finally they report SLR on a quarterly or sometimes monthly basis.

All good stuff and certainly nothing to be sniffed at, but let's be honest, how many NHS organisations are REALLY using the information produced in their decision making? Working with Trusts across the country it's still clear to us that SLR has not become embedded and that many operational and clinical staff remain, at best, ambivalent and have particular issue with the apportionment process in particular.

But it doesn't need to be like this and Trusts that don't keep working at this really are missing a trick. However, all is not lost and one idea that seems to be gaining traction now is the concept of 'deep diving' – looking in detail at a particular area to identify where, by improving processes, costs can be reduced and profitability increased.

Have you thought, for example, about taking a specific directorate and slicing profitability two ways, by procedure and by clinician? Doing this quickly highlights areas that deserve further inspection. Easy indicators to look at include average costs per clinician differing by 25% or more, or marked differences in the first to follow-up ratio per clinician for the same procedure.

As you get down to this patient level you get a much greater understanding of your variations. In the work we've done in this area it's usually a question of standardising a drug or other consumable and this genuinely does give Trusts a chance to make significant savings.

Whilst we don't generally advocate quick fixes (as they never usually stick in our experience) it is clearly worth focusing these deep dives on specialties that you feel are loss making, so don't be shy and jump on in.

P.S. the first person at today's Contact conference who comes up to me and says the words 'Tom Daley' wins a bottle of champagne...