

# # slack

#DigitalDiaries

## My Care Academy gets schooled in Slack



Fiona Cameron, Digital Communications Manager at My Care Academy partnership, discusses how trialling Slack transformed learning by creating an online knowledge building community

When a colleague posted on Slack for help I knew we were onto something good. Their question around a teenage mental health guide sparked replies as people shared feedback.

**“I learnt more about mental health and team members I could connect with.”**

This reaction is what we wanted for My Care Academy. As a knowledge building community encompassing Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, Barnet Enfield & Haringey Mental Health Trust and Middlesex University, we know that we're greater than the sum of our parts. We want our partners to come together to share their knowledge.

We've introduced an online 'Knowledge Bank' using Slack. Along with our website and a virtual classroom (using Moodle), we're helping connect our partners online for a culture of shared learning.

### Slack – in a nutshell

Slack is an online instant messaging tool for internal employee-to-employee communication. Conversations can be divided into public or private topic channels, such as by team, project or office location. It's not just about written messages; you can share images and documents with co-workers, create reminders, make voice or video calls and add apps.

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### Getting started

So – why Slack? For starters, there’s a free version and you can use it on multiple devices from mobile to PC (via iOS, Windows and Android platforms). It allows you to bring together multiple organisations under one work space, whereas competitor platforms are often only accessible for one organisation.

Slack is flexible; we created topic channels for all partners as well as private ones for specific topic areas. It supports mixed media for internal communication – from video to chatbots – content is searchable and new features mean it grows as we grow.

Our partners viewed Slack as an ethical company so were more open to using their platform. From a user’s point of view, its functionality is very similar to WhatsApp, which our partners use regularly. If someone can text they can use Slack!

Because Slack is free, we could test it out with a small group of employees as a proof of concept. We ran a pilot with a group of 75 employees and raised awareness via emails and user guides with top tips.

We reassured senior leaders that the tool could be used professionally and securely. I explained that poor behaviour online is no different to poor behaviour in a face-to-face setting – so employees are still covered by our HR policies. Then we asked them to promote Slack to their teams via champions. I created a welcome chatbot and an ‘#about me’ channel to break the ice.

### Teething problems

The day our pilot went live, we were hit by the global cyber-attack – you could say we had terrible timing! Fortunately, our partners were not fully infiltrated and in fact it illustrated Slack’s benefits. Unable to email or access network files, some partners turned to Slack – which, as a cloud-based platform, was unaffected – to communicate.

Other teething problems included technical snags: some users forgot to download the mobile app and missed out on real-time alerts. We had to manage partner expectations carefully. They needed to understand this wasn’t like turning up to a party where all the food and music was already set up; they are the content creators.

We led by example and posted frequently within our project team to engage employees. Slowly, early adopters began to post and ‘like’ posts. I saw people sharing new research and quality improvement, posting about events and asking for advice from colleagues.

In our pilot survey, 60 per cent said they’d recommend Slack to a colleague – a huge endorsement.

### Cultural shifts

We learnt a lot from the pilot to build on. For phase two we’re asking partners



**Slack**

**4,858**  
messages sent

**55%**  
found it easy to use

**60%**  
would recommend  
Slack to a colleague

**70%**  
learned something  
new

**25%**  
logged in daily

to nominate enthusiastic and digitally competent employees to own key topic channels and be champions.

Employees told us they wanted face-to-face training to get to grips with the platform features, so we'll be running digital drop-in sessions to demo Slack and help them gain confidence.

Instead of a 'big bang' approach, we're focusing on key locations and topics to bring people together across teams to share knowledge. We've refined the topic channels and created organisation-specific 'private' channels so partners can test the water within their 'tribe' before posting in main Slack channels.

This is the beginning of a cultural change for our partners – encouraging people to take charge of their own learning, accessing it anywhere, anytime. By embedding that culture and unlocking hidden expertise, we will pass on the benefits of learning, firstly to each other and ultimately to our patients.

### The information technology story

**Konrad Hutchins, Head of IT at Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, says that collaborative tools – like Slack – are the future of work**

"It gives us the ability to easily share training, ideas, advice and best practice in a collaborative, yet controlled and secure way. Ultimately this will help deliver improvements to the care provided to patients and drive innovation. I've seen those benefits myself when using Slack to manage project teams."

Fiona adds: "It's safe and secure. I collaborated with information and governance managers to create community guidelines to ensure employees don't post any personal, private or patient data."



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