

Using Project ECHO to create a multi-professional and multi-sector, online community of practice, to improve understanding of healthcare sustainability



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Aims

- To create an online community of practice for healthcare professionals and students to engage in concerning issues relating to healthcare sustainability
- To widen participation of learning and discussion relating to healthcare sustainability across different professions and sectors of health and social care
- To improve participant understanding of and confidence to engage in themes relating to healthcare sustainability, through case studies and subsequent discussion

Introduction

Healthcare faces immense challenges relating to sustainability, at economic, social, and environmental levels. At NHS Highland, Scotland, we created an innovative, online community of practice, with the Scottish Centre for Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes), to provide healthcare professionals and students with opportunities to learn about healthcare sustainability.

Project ECHO is a global movement modelling online, peer-learning networks. Its aim is to improve capacity for health professionals to provide better care, through an 'all teach all learn approach' democratising expert knowledge, and, primarily, ground learning in real-life case-based discussions¹.

Whilst Project ECHO has previously facilitated curricula discussing the health effects of climate change², there is not a multi-professional and multi-sector, online community of practice discussing the sustainability of health services from environmental, social, and economic perspectives.

Results/Discussion

Over 50 participants registered for the online curriculum with representatives from a vast range of professions as demonstrated in the word cloud inserted. Upon evaluation, feedback (n=11) showed that the series improved participant knowledge of, and confidence in discussing issues relating to healthcare sustainability. Additionally, participants reported intent to change practice as a result of the series, and felt they had more people to contact to help enact sustainable change.

Project ECHO provides an exciting opportunity to engage a range of professionals and students from different sectors to discuss healthcare sustainability. Multi-sector action is deemed fundamental to promoting meaningful change and improve sustainability of health and healthcare services. This project demonstrates that online, peer-learning networks can facilitate extensive engagement.

Conclusion

The use of online, peer-learning forums, such as Project ECHO, can facilitate extensive, multi-sector engagement in discussing and learning about issues relating to healthcare sustainability.

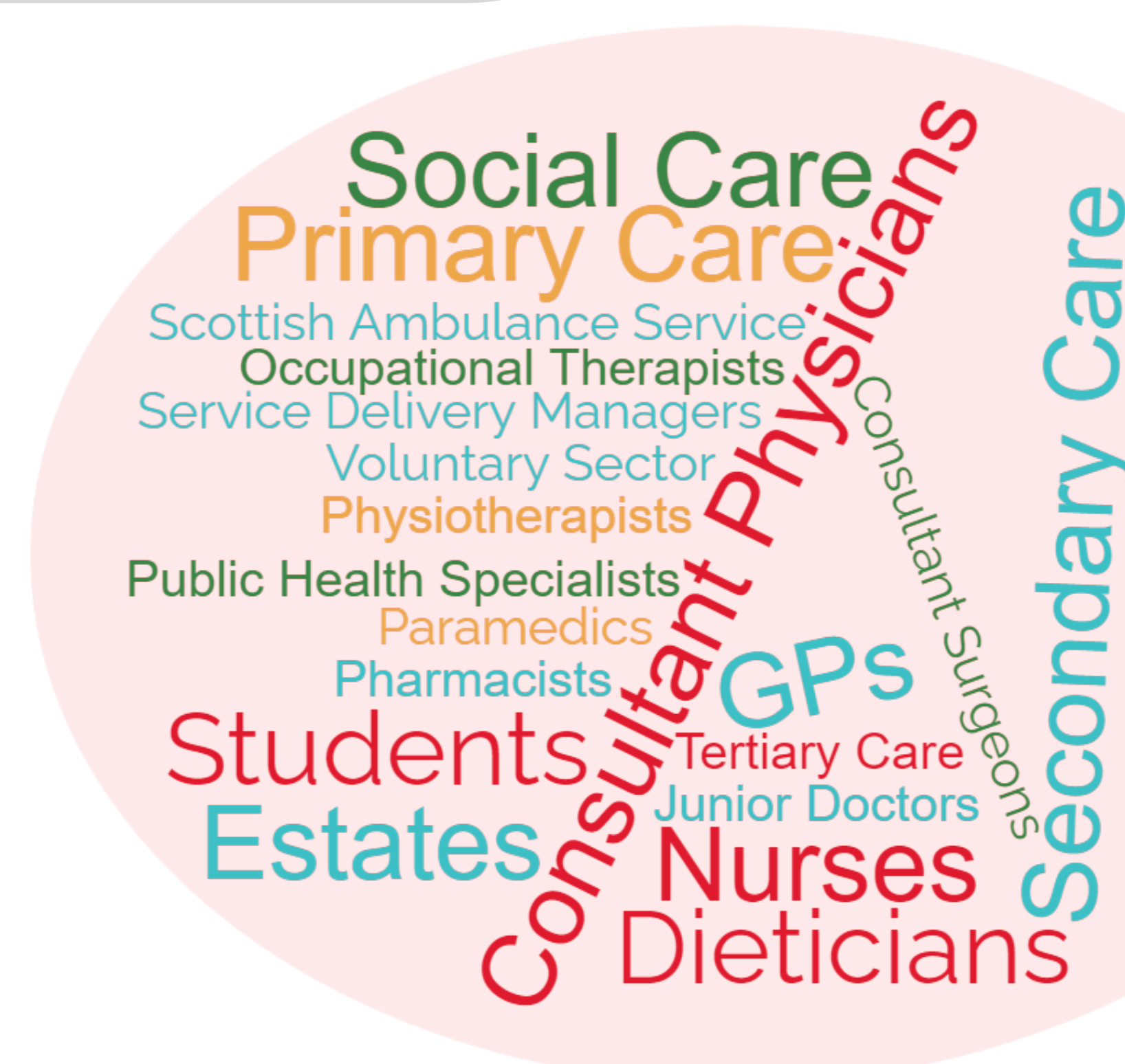
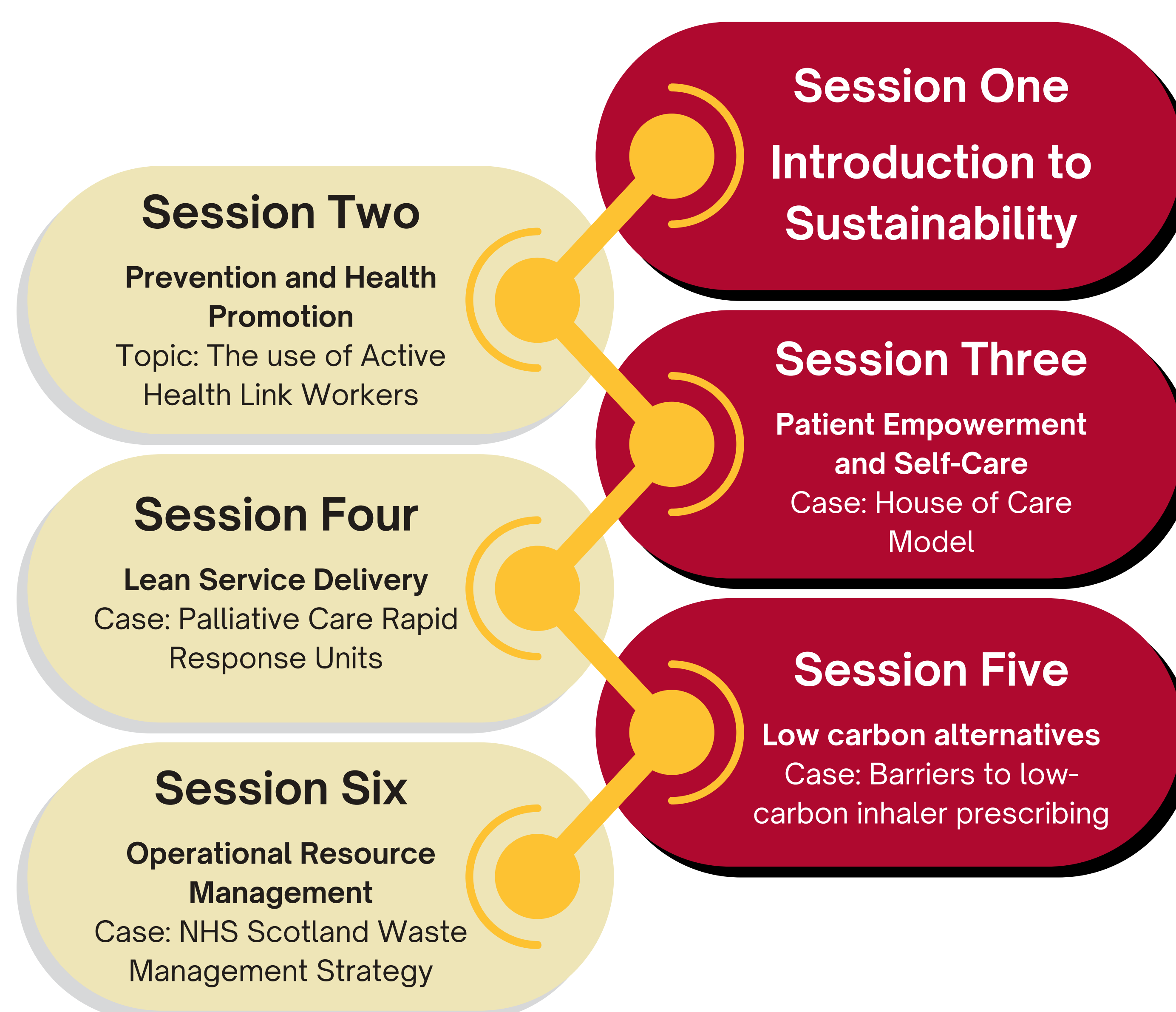
References

- 1) Home - Project ECHO. *Project ECHO*. 2024. Available from: <https://projectecho.unm.edu/>
- 2) Katzman JG, Herring D, Wheat S, Groves R, Kazhe-Dominguez B, Martin C, et al. Climate Change ECHO: Telementoring to Improve Climate Literacy for Health Professionals. *AJPM Focus*. 2023 Mar 1;2(1):100051. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.focus.2022.100051>
- 3) Mortimer F. The sustainable physician. *Clinical Medicine*. 2010 Apr 1;10(2):110-1. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.7861/clinmedicine.10-2-110>

Methods

A pilot curriculum of 6 sessions was created, extending between January and March 2024, and delivered via online video conferencing software. Following an 'Introduction to Sustainability', each session focussed on a different principle of sustainable healthcare, as proposed by Dr Frances Mortimer³. The sessions consisted of subject experts presenting for 20 minutes on examples of care implemented illustrating the respective principle. This was followed by a case-based discussion for 40 minutes, centred around an anonymised problem submitted by participants.

Curriculum



Captions

Above: Curriculum demonstrating theme of session and topic covered by subject expert.
Below: Word cloud demonstrating background of participants involved in Project ECHO.