



FOCUS ON: Alexander Royan

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Why is the role of CDAO important now and in the future?

With Integrated Care Systems now put on a statutory footing and much greater emphasis placed on improving population health outcomes, reducing inequalities and improving evidence of value for money, the need for high quality analysis in the NHS has never been greater. Yet the value from data is so often locked away in siloed systems or under-utilised, with too much emphasis on descriptive analysis (e.g. reporting to commissioners) and too little emphasis on extracting insights (the stuff that adds value). This is a major barrier for strategic commissioning – and the likes of population health management - to become business-as-usual, rather than an ad-hoc, rare activity. A Chief Data and Analytical Officer is the person who should unlock that value, by getting systems working for us, removing information management barriers, upskilling the data professional workforce, and pointing data analysts at the most salient challenges.

How to keep a work-life balance while being a Chief Data and Analytical Officer?

Go to fewer meetings and recognise the value of your time. Sharpen your focus on a narrow set of priorities and be strategic; focus on where you want to be in several year's time and prioritise those activities that will get you there. Deliver through your team and trust them to get the job done but be present and interject when they need your leadership to guide and support them through thorny issues. Routinely block out parts of your diary to focus on personal development or to prioritise your wellbeing. Evaluate your work-life balance intermittently and be self-aware, acknowledging that sometimes the balance will be wrong and that you specifically need to do something to correct that.

What does it mean to be a Chief Data and Analytical Officer in healthcare?

I see my role as translating insights from data into policies and strategies that set the delivery priorities across the healthcare system. This is about proactively understanding the health and care needs of the population now, as well as forecasting this, and translating insights into actionable recommendations that colleagues can use to shape their work programme. This is key to obtaining a data-driven, intelligence-led healthcare system that maximises the value obtained from their data. From a data professional perspective, the role is about building the data strategy and necessary infrastructure to collect and analyse the right data. This requires development of the data professional workforce such that we have expertise across the data engineering, data science and data analysis disciplines.

More broadly I aim to provide visible leadership on data and analytics for the data professional community, but also for other colleagues who want to know what the data is telling them and offer assurance on the quality of analysis.