Letting the light in
Anne Cooper RN FQNI

‘Begin challenging your assumptions. Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won’t come in’

Alan Alda

When I started working with ‘computers’ it was true that many of the people I worked with had little or no experience and little inkling how to make them work for them. I remember training people to use a mouse to move around the screen. Before that there was PAS, on old green screen computers, but only those with real determination could get their heads around how it worked. Remember ‘Word Perfect’? That was the first software I used in anger as I bashed out my dissertation.

Much has changed since then; digital technology is a pervasive feature of our lives and it is almost impossible to think about life without it.

Even those people who say they don’t use technology can only really manage modern life if at least they can order things online and possibly do their banking.

It is better to know and understand the real issues than fix things that really don’t need any fixing at all.

My 78 year old mum is fairly adept with her mobile phone and her tablet and has certainly got to grips with Amazon. My dad, similarly, now loves to drop me a newsy email.

Why, then is it that in health and care we continue to act as if skilling up staff will resolve the perceived poor uptake of technology? Is this an assumption that creates our view of the world?

I think this assumption exists because we don’t know really know what impedes uptake of technology today.

That means we don’t know whether skills of the people in the system are a major factor or not.

Is it alternatively the quality of the systems we use? Or is it that nurses and midwives just don’t like technology?

I am determined that we don’t make assumptions about what a digital ready workforce means or about how we get to the place where patients and carers get the best care, enabled and
supported by the substantial opportunities technology creates for modern nursing.

The temptation to develop learning tools to deal with a potential skills deficit is, for me, too easy an assumption to make.

It’s a case of doing something, anything, to try to make things better but potentially totally missing the point.

This is why I am working with the Royal College of Nursing on a crowd sourcing consultation to try to get under the skin of the problem, clean the windows a little and see what is really going on.

What is it that nurses describe as the future of modern nursing using technology? What things will help us get there and what things get in our way? The consultation is an online workshop, working in partnership with an organisation called Clever Together.

The workshop will enable people to interact with each other, post ideas and thoughts and vote for ideas raised by others.

The information will be thematically analysed to see what thoughts and views come through.

This will advise both the profession and those trying to help with technology adoption.

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The consultation is open now and if we are to make this matter the RCN and I need people to register and, most importantly, to get involved.

We need nurses and midwives to express their views about what its like now but also, importantly their vision for the future.

You can register now on www.rcn.clevertogether.com/welcome

Nurses, midwives, health visitors, students, health care assistants, no matter where you work, please get involved and have your say.

Anne Cooper is the Chief Nurse for NHS Digital

@Anniecoops