

Professionalising management in healthcare: an organisational journey

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Objectives: A current priority for UK healthcare administrations is the improvement of patient safety and the delivery of compassionate care. Following a public inquiry into failures at one hospital in England (Francis Report 2013) NHS organisations have been required to strengthen leadership and management to achieve better outcomes. This poster outlines the practical steps taken by one healthcare provider to effect culture change through targeted management development, and the measured impact of change in terms of organisational performance and staff engagement and commitment.

Population: The organisation provides a broad range of mental health, learning disability and community care services. Following a merger of services in 2011 the organisation doubled in size and needed to harmonise services, integrate professional groups and enhance corporate alignment with the requirements of regional funding agencies. A management development programme was established to distil the evidence base linking staff engagement and cultures of high quality care and to disseminate this learning to all staff with line management responsibility.

Methods: The programme was launched in October 2013 and delivered off-site to cohorts of 18 managers at a time, as three 2 day modules. A core element is a strong focus on managing effective appraisals and giving performance based feedback, in light of the evidence of a link between appraisal and patient outcomes (West 2002). By May 2016, 570 managers had completed the course (86% of all managers in the organisation). An action learning approach and a range of evaluation methods are used to assess the impact of the course including, participant feedback, project outcomes, results of the annual staff survey and external auditor's reports.

Findings: The benefits resulting from this investment substantially outweigh the costs and challenges of sustaining the programme in face of increasing financial pressure. Specific benefits cited by attendees are: confidence building, the opportunity for collective problem solving and feeling valued by the organisation. The staff survey has seen an average increase of 18% in satisfaction in areas relating to engagement and commitment; and a 30% increase in belief that *'we are providing high quality services to our patients/service user'* (from 43% in 2012 to 73% in 2015). At an organisational level a number of reputational benefits have been, in part, attributed to the programme: one course initiated project has been short listed for a national award. Directly attributable to the programme is an improvement in performance appraisal uptake and quality of the appraisal (with an 8 % increase in staff reporting that they had a well-structured appraisal one year after launch of the programme).

Conclusion: This organisational journey is offered as a realistic, tested and evaluated model of workforce development for organisations facing similar challenges. Clear focus on evidence based management, an organisation-wide approach to management development and an explicit focus on culture change behaviours underpin the success of the programme.