Transforming nursing leadership development

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- Benefits for nurses who have taken part
- Main outcomes of the programme so far

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Our award-winning leadership programme Exciting Futures started in 2009 after we had taken a practical view of how we wanted to shape the organisation through our people. It has an annual intake of 20 staff from a cross-section of pay bands and disciplines from corporate and operational/clinical functions.

There is an emphasis on clinical engagement and, in particular, in developing nurses throughout the trust. Nurses tend to make up around 40% of the intake, coming from specialties including inpatient, community mental health, infection control, district nursing and drug and alcohol teams, and from bands 5-8a.

The programme

Participants have the support of their line managers and are expected to continue in their role with some release time for the programme. They complete an individual personal development plan built up from 360° feedback and psychometric instruments, which are underpinned by our competency framework.

Participants are then carefully selected for project teams of between four and eight people, according to their competency development needs, personality strengths and preferences.

The whole programme is based on delivering projects that connect with service users through community and/or service redesign initiatives designed following the principle of “improving lives of people who use our services”.

Service managers submit project ideas via a QIPP template after holding discussions with staff and users. The precise nature and scope of the project and the specific outcomes are determined by participants through negotiation with sponsoring service managers and users.

Each project directly involves service users; it is this aspect that makes a lasting emotional connection between project teams and service users. It creates a partnership and a bond.

Any funding is self-generated; it is outside normal service delivery and must be delivered within six months, making it a considerable “stretch” beyond the participants’ usual roles. Participants’ personal development through project delivery is supported by workshops, coaching (personal and team-based) and seminars.

Benefits for nurses

Of particular value for nurses has been working with service users and/or carers outside their normal working environments. This has enabled nurses to understand the wider community and create a professional network of other clinicians with whom they would not normally come into contact. Working on projects has also given nurses opportunities to work with senior leaders and has resulted in promotion and secondments that would normally be outside their usual networks.

We have now delivered 11 strategic projects, while three are being developed by the current cohort. The programme takes an evidence-based approach and applies psychological principles to meet business objectives.

What makes this programme unique are: its alignment to business objectives; engagement of staff that is sustainable, measurable and outcome-focused; its understanding of the psychology of teams of individuals; its focus on making a difference and inspiring hope.

Outcomes

Key outcomes so far include:

- A new fast-track programme to meet short-term and long-term succession needs, identifying those staff with high potential/performance and making additional investment in their future;
- Eleven service improvement projects, raising more than £60,000 in funds to secure projects such as a choir. Made up of around 50 staff, service users and carers, this was set up in partnership with Opera North. The choir sang four operatic choruses, accompanied by two opera singers who also sang some solos, at a charity event in Leeds. This raised more than £4,000 for a dementia project;
- Creation of a group of people with shared attributes, behaviours and values in line with organisational aims;
- Development of networks between current, past and potential participants has enabled them to share personal stories and connections first hand;
- Collaboration between stakeholders across the business to define what good leadership looks like and how we can measure this;
- Development of a talent pipeline to ensure transformation of the business and ensure successors in place to take over critical roles;
- Development of individuals through strategic business projects;
- Connection with service users, patients and carers through transformation projects that create efficiency, improve productivity and deliver on innovation.

Conclusion

The key element that underpins our work is hope – the expression of fulfilment of the present and a sense of a positive future. It is this notion of a hopeful world and endless possibilities that is the mainstay of our talent programme.