limited when faced with policies and directives calling for increased efficiency that appear to compromise quality of care. Once we decide to become more proactive, where we focus our efforts becomes more important. Our response to what happened to us will often affect us more than what actually happened, and we will choose to use difficult situations to build our character and develop the ability to better handle such situations in future.

**Principles**

Covey (2009) also subscribes to the view of connecting with our internal compass and discovering and following our ‘true north’. He asserts boldly that principles govern growth and prosperity in both people and organisations, claiming that principles draw the highest and best from people because they reflect the whole person – body, mind, heart and spirit. Equally significant, these people then choose to influence and inspire others to find their voice through these principles.

Influencing and inspiring others are key components of transformational leadership. They not only allow us to increase leadership skills and abilities, but also help us to navigate the permanent white-water environment of health care. Through the power of transformational leadership, leaders and followers raise one another to new heights of achievement and development. They are also able to sustain one another in a life-long effort to define and construct meaning in their work lives (Sashkin and Sashkin, 2003). This approach to leadership not only improves performance and productivity, but also makes a positive difference in the lives of organisation members. Transformational leaders achieve superior results because of their ability to motivate and transform people from dutiful followers into self-directed leaders who go beyond simply doing what is expected.

Bass and Riggio (2006) supported these benefits of transformational leadership, arguing that people who embrace the principles of such leadership have staff with higher levels of satisfaction, motivation and performance, as well as lower levels of stress and burnout. They also maintained that such teams are more innovative, collaborative and effective, which results in their organisations being able to respond more quickly and productively to change. In addition, these organisations possess effective, healthier and more humane cultures.

Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2008) showed similar outcomes in their comprehensive research to investigate the impact of transformational (or engaging) leadership on organisational performance in the NHS. They discovered that a culture of transformational or ‘engaging’ leadership significantly predicts increased levels of staff motivation, satisfaction and commitment. This combines with reduced stress and emotional exhaustion and increased general team effectiveness and productivity.

There are a number of transformational leadership models or frameworks that may prove helpful to nurses working in modern healthcare settings. One that has already been referred to, and is rapidly gaining recognition within the NHS and other sectors, is that of ‘engaging leadership’ (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2008). The structure of this model is represented by four clusters of dimensions: ‘engaging individuals’; ‘engaging the organisation’ (or team); ‘moving forward together’ (which relates to working with a range of internal and external stakeholders); and ‘personal qualities and core values’. Fig 1 shows the various dimensions in each cluster.

The emphasis of engaging leadership is on serving and enabling others to display leadership themselves. It is not about being an extraordinary person, but rather a somewhat ordinary, vulnerable and humble – or at least a very open, accessible and transparent – person. This approach to leadership complements other viewpoints such as Collins (2001), who described highly successful, or ‘level 5’, leaders as people who channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great organisation. These leaders have a tremendous will to get things done, yet have a level of humility that sets them apart from others. They rarely talk about themselves, yet delight in talking about the organisation and the contribution of others.

Engaging leadership focuses on the critical importance of teamworking and emphasises the benefits of collaboration that create a culture where dialogue is open and new ways of thinking and doing are encouraged, listened to and truly appreciated. It stresses that leadership exists at all levels of an organisation, especially as people share in a vision that moves them towards achieving goals of providing safe and quality health care.

**CONCLUSION**

Effective and transformational leadership is pivotal to the success of healthcare organisations.

As nurses lead, respond and adapt to change,