



Unique leadership development and employee well-being programme helping Mersey Care to prepare for Foundation Trust equivalent Status

- Underpinning structural change with employee well-being and engagement -

A unique and integrated leadership development and employee well-being programme from UK business psychologists, Robertson Cooper, has been implemented by Mersey Care NHS Trust to help it prepare for Foundation Trust equivalent (FTE) status.

Mersey Care NHS Trust provides specialist mental health and learning disability services for the people of Liverpool, Sefton, and Knowsley. Achieving FTE status will enable the organisation to be more responsive, more effective and more accountable to its local population. As part of this process, Mersey Care is implementing an organisational change programme that involves modernisation and restructuring to increase service capacity and efficiency.

At the heart of the change process is the establishment of new Clinical Business Units and teams of clinical and managerial staff have been selected from within the organisation to run them. Senior staff took part in development centres that helped them to decide which new roles they wanted to apply for. In addition to these changes, the Trust is making a concerted effort to improve the leadership skills of its clinical and managerial staff.

A priority for Mersey Care was to ensure that its staff felt involved and supported throughout the new structure. The Board realised that if employees felt good about coming to work and engaged by their roles they would respond more positively to the changes that were planned. In turn, this would be key to implementing a sustainable change.

Kim Crowe, the Trust's Director of Service Development and Delivery stated, "Like many NHS Trusts, we are undergoing major changes that are placing new demands on our staff. We appointed Robertson Cooper because they offered a unique way of incorporating well-being and management development. This programme is enabling us to assess the impact of the restructure on our managers whilst we are developing their leadership skills. At the same time, the process is helping them to clarify their career goals and make sound decisions about the roles that they aspire to play in the Trust."

The Programme

Robertson Cooper used ASSET, its market-leading change and well-being measurement tool to survey all staff to assess the impact of the changes taking place. Using the results, individual employee action plans were designed to improve well-being and engagement, and inform managers about how to address staff priorities and become more effective leaders.

A programme of Development Centres (DC's) for 51 leaders was designed and implemented, based on the NHS Leadership Qualities Framework (LQF). The design reduced the established 16 leadership 'Qualities' (competencies) from the LQF into four, making it less complex for managers to access and easier to apply for wider organisation development.

Gordon Tinline, Director of Robertson Cooper states, "Mersey Care has taken an advanced approach to change management. Placing employee engagement at the centre of its programme will deliver sustainable change because it will be strongly underpinned by psychological well-being among its workforce. Typically, change only lasts as long as the project that implements it and often, such programmes are poorly communicated to employees. Cultural change needs to take hold and this is only possible when employees are fully engaged, driven by strong leadership and feel a real sense of purpose."

Tinline continues: "Because Mersey Care is integrating well-being and engagement into its leadership development programme, we are confident that sustainable change will be achieved here. They have started to build a workforce

which has the right people, leadership and engagement levels to deliver excellent health services to patients in Merseyside.”

Results so far

83% of the senior managers and clinicians who completed the evaluation agreed that the content of the development centres met their expectations.

The results from the organisation-wide *ASSET* survey are now being used to build action plans with leaders as they settle into new roles in the restructured Clinical Business Units over the next 12 months. This, together with the reports the managers received is providing a firm foundation for building strong staff engagement in the restructured organisation.