

Case Study

Introduction

Dr Tim Hodgson, Consultant in Oral Medicine and Divisional Clinical Director for the Eastman Dental Hospital, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, attended the Staff College's Senior Leadership Course in 2010-11. We followed up with him seven years later to find out about the long-term impact attending the programme had on him and his hospital.

"When I attended the Senior Leadership Course back in 2010, I had recently become a Clinical Lead. As a clinician, I was very comfortable with my clinical expertise, but the leadership aspect of my role was new and though I thought I was doing it reasonably well, I wanted some tools to help me improve what I did."

"Attending the first course was the first time I had ever truly stopped and reflected on "me" and actually thought about my performance and the impact I had on others. I met others who were in a similar situation, who had also realised that what we were trying to do wasn't easy and it was re-assuring to discover that others were finding it difficult too."

How has attending Staff College impacted on you personally?

"Since attending, I've thought about things differently. I've always been motivated by people and doing the right thing for them, but I'm more people orientated now and more focused on trying to get the best out of people and enabling others to lead."

"When I joined the course, I wasn't sure leadership was for me, but after attending, I realised that I could make a bigger difference for patients by stepping up into a more senior leadership role and ensuring that I provide an environment for others to flourish. The programme gave me the confidence to step up and I've been a Divisional Clinical Director for the Eastman Dental Hospital for four years now."

"I now have less fear about taking risks. The practical aspects of the course, the group exercises and reviews, lit a flame in my head -- a belief that taking risks could bring big rewards. The feedback I had from peers in my group was very positive and helped consolidate the realisation that I was already doing some things well and that I could do other things better. It helped me develop a self-belief and confidence in my abilities."

How has attending impacted on your team?

"I now feel if you want to be successful you need to surround yourself with people who want the same outcome. With that said, you also need people who think differently to you as part of your team. Having invested time into developing my team, and the individuals in it, I now have a team with a great synergy who are all passionate about moving forward in the same direction."

How has attending impacted on your service?

“There have been many changes to the services and quality of care we provide for patients that have occurred as a result of my developing leadership in the years since attending the course. An example of a significant change relates to our provision of support for patients with oral cancer. The level of support provided by our consultant body was ok, but I thought we could do more to provide higher levels of care for our patients. Despite various attempts to encourage our consultants to offer a more robust level of care, with everything else on their plates, they weren’t engaging in the way I’d hoped they would.”

“After attending Staff College, I stepped back, took the time to understand, from their perspective, why they were not engaging and spent less time getting frustrated with them for not doing more. I realised that we had several senior trainees who were able and keen to get involved, but they weren’t being given the opportunity to do so. Before attending, I would not have given them the chance to step up, as I would have thought it was too big a risk. With the inspiration I received from Staff College, I encouraged my Registrars to take the opportunity to make changes and I supported their efforts to make the changes they thought needed to be introduced. They rose to the challenge and managed to significantly improve outcomes and the quality of care for our patients.”

How has this affected your organisation?

“When I started as Divisional Clinical Director, there was a higher level of reported cases of bullying and harassment than in the other hospitals within the Trust. By believing that leadership starts with me, taking responsibility for my own behaviour ensuring that I exhibit the behaviours I want to see from others, and holding others to account for their actions, the culture of the whole hospital has changed. I believe that talking about values and behaviour is not enough. If you walk past a member of staff and ignore them, they’ll remember it and they won’t trust you when you say how valuable they are at a later time. It’s about backing up what you say with what you do, and showing that you do care about people and investing the time to find out how they are and what’s going on with them.”

“This year, we have a far lower number of cases of bullying and harassment than in other areas of the Trust, with much higher levels of staff satisfaction. I’m now supporting the wider Trust using the training offered by Staff College to help others who are in leadership positions.”

“Next year we move the dental and ear, nose and throat services to a new building. I’ve been involved with the planning for the move since it started four years ago. Early on in the planning, I stopped a meeting talking about where the sinks and toilets would be placed, to focus instead on what sort of environment we needed for our staff to provide the best care for patients. Taking this active step and drawing the process back to the important components of what we do gave the opportunity for our staff to voice their concerns about the move address concerns and get them involved.”

“I have also realised I need to invest in organisational development. While the move isn’t without its challenges, I’ve worked to support my teams so that they don’t feel as anxious and they feel part of the change that needs to happen. This has helped us overcome much of the resistance to the change.”

How do you think differently now about leadership?

“I reflect often on Staff College’s challenge to us that we all have choices. Just last week I decided to decline a request to attend a meeting with the other Trust DCDs for the CQC as it

didn't concern my hospital. I've realised that my time is limited and I'm much more confident taking the time to question why I need to be involved in something and say no to things that I don't think I can actively contribute to, in order that I can make better use of my time and focus on those things that truly require my attention."

"Staff College helped me understand and accept that we can't get everything right all the time, but it's important not to be paralysed by a fear of failure. It's ok to show vulnerability and share your concerns with others. This helps build trust between you and your team as well as resilience and support."

"I learnt that if things aren't going the way you expect, ask questions and find out why. Listen to your staff. Take the time to notice what's happening. It will make a world of difference for both you and for your team."