

## Case Study

### Introduction

Dr Tom Butler is a Consultant Haematologist and Clinical Lead for Haematology at Barts Health NHS Trust. He took part in a series of Action Learning Sets and Board Development Sessions as part of the Transforming Services Together: Outpatient Transformation Project between Barts Health, Newham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Tower Hamlets CCG and Waltham Forest CCG during 2016-17. He went on to attend the Staff College's Senior Leadership Course, Leading Self module in February 2018.

We followed up with him six months later to find out about the impact attending the programme and development sessions had on him and his service.

### **How did the Action Learning Sets (ALS) support you as a leader within the Outpatient Transformation Project?**

*"I found the ALS really personally valuable and found that they supported me while I worked on various projects. The Transforming Services Together (TST) Board wisely invested in the ALS between mixed groups of primary and secondary care clinical leaders. The sessions were focussed on projects we were leading at the time and the nature of these meant we would bring whatever leadership challenges we were facing to the sessions. I found it really useful to learn from and with people from different contexts, particularly from across boundaries and the ALS really consolidated this. I now have a far greater understanding of how GPs work and hope they also have an insight into our work in a hospital context."*

*"I found it really useful to talk about my other leadership challenges in a safe place and have the feedback from my peers. I think knowing that they were a regular session that you could look forward to helped as well. I felt personally valued by the Board for investing in my development. We need the space to develop ourselves in order to lead the changes required and both the overall TST project has gained from them, as well as my own organisation as there are changes I have led for both as a result."*

### **How did the Outpatient Board Development Sessions support the Project Board?**

*"I've also attended one of the board development sessions. We spent time after the meeting analysing the project and relationships between the leaders, reviewing and reflecting on how the meeting we'd just had went."*

*"There is a lot of money involved in the project and a large-scale change in culture is required. It could get very heated and tense but the development sessions helped to unpick some of the underlying issues and enabled us to talk about them in a safe environment. They helped build and engender a trust between members, which allowed them to talk about things they wouldn't have done otherwise, so more constructive decisions could be taken."*

### **How did your experience of the Senior Leadership Development Programme help you as a leader?**

*Based on my positive experiences with Staff College, I went on to attend the first Senior Leadership Development Programme module, Leading Self, in February 2018. I am also booked onto future courses with Staff College.*

*The way the course is structured engenders this trust between us as members and with the faculty very quickly. This provides a safe environment to develop in and we all realised early on we could open up and be vulnerable. This gave me the space and time to focus on my own development and reflect on myself and my leadership style.*

*On day 2, we'd learnt from our experiences of day 1 and you could feel yourself changing and learning over the three days. The approach of exercises designed to test some of your assumptions about leadership, followed by video and peer review was very powerful. It could be really challenging at times, but the support of everyone also made it a really fun experience and we had some hilarious moments. I liked that everything is backed up with theory, but the course is designed to introduce concepts but let you learn them for yourself, rather than just be lectured at."*

### **What changes have you seen within yourself as a result of attending?**

*"I'm far more aware now of how I am with groups of people, either with more senior leaders than myself, and with those that I lead and I try to actively stay aware of myself. I'm also more conscious of trying to manage my emotions and remain in my 'higher self,' particularly in those tense moments.*

*I'm getting better at actively listening and pulling myself back when I would previously have wanted to dive in and solve everything.*

*I think differently now about working with wicked problems and particularly about higher intent. I've realised that if everyone doesn't have a clarity of purpose and shared communication everything just degenerates into micro-management. So, I now focus my time on building consensus for the shared purpose for a group, and communicating this with them, to set the context, but allowing them the freedom to come up with the solutions they think will work.*

*I see my role now more as bringing together and building good, functioning teams. I've given them the space to work through things as they want, with me just providing the encouragement or unblocking things if they get stuck. I've realised by doing this, my teams are able to achieve far more and they're far more engaged with what they're doing because they have some control over it.*

*By taking a more strategic overview, I find I'm better placed to see things from a wider perspective, rather than getting caught in the nitty gritty. I do enjoy the detail and operational aspects but I've been trying to keep actively switching between the two levels. Taking a more strategic perspective has allowed me to see where I need to be able to influence people above me and below and keep a focus on the overall goal. I feel better able now to see what additional expertise a team may need as well in order to take things forward."*

### **What changes have you seen within your services as a result?**

*“An example recently has been the starting up of a dedicated day care service for patients with sickle cell. The team identified that when these patients came into hospital, they would generally be seen in A&E where they would have to be seen within the 4 hour wait and would often then deteriorate and have to be admitted into inpatient beds. They could see that there was still lots of assumptions being made about these patients and the quality of care they were being given wasn’t always good.*

*The team wanted to help and identified that often what these patients needed was access to day care and support for their psychological needs. I could see for it to happen, I would need to give them the moral support and the financial resources to take forward their ideas. I helped bring together a team of clinicians and managers to develop a business case and supported them to develop a pilot service by helping them bid for some additional funding available to support winter pressures. This expert team did all the work and deserve the credit, I just helped support them.*

*From there, I’ve given them the space to lead the transformation work as they see fit, being there for them in a mentoring role when they’ve got stuck with certain problems. Sometimes I have provided direct support for new funding and new staff. I’ve tried to help them see that a crisis isn’t really a crisis and hold back from giving them the answers, instead supporting them to come up with their own answers. I’ve taken the time to see how they are, to be aware of when there are problems brewing and to ensure that team members feel supported and valued.*

*Within a year they have managed to set up a successful day unit for sickle cell patients. In doing so, they’ve reduced hospital admissions by up to 75% with patients being seen instead in a dedicated service that understands their needs. Patients are being seen more quickly and in a better managed way so they are less medicalised and have greater control over their care. They’re also able to spend less time in hospital and more time at home as a result.*

*This has saved a significant amount of money for the Trust, and these savings are now being invested in the continuing specialist day unit.*

*Due to the success of the pilot, the Trust are now keen to look at other areas where the model could be used. The team are now looking at the potential of extending the service to other sites within the Trust and potentially extending its hours to include weekends. This is something we’d never even have been able to consider a year ago.”*

### **Difference for my team**

*“Historically, many members of my team have worked really hard and faced a lot of challenges. They work in an area that doesn’t see a lot of the spotlight.*

*Through trying to spend my time in opening doors for them and helping secure the resources they need to do the things they believe need to be done to improve the care they provide has given them the space to grow.*

*My clinicians feel much more valued now and are happier in the work they do as they can see the real differences they’re making as a result of their hard work.”*