

Evaluation of the NHS Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy Practice Manager Leadership Programme

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Thames Valley and Wessex
Leadership Academy

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Evaluation of the NHS Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy Practice Manager Leadership Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Practice Manager Leadership Programme run by the Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy.

The evaluation was undertaken in two parts:

1. An analysis of the results of questionnaires sent to 71 practice managers who had participated in the Practice Manager Leadership Programme
2. One-to-one in-depth semi-structured telephone interviews with 7 practice managers

In addition, an analysis of the informal feedback collated from the programmes by Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy was undertaken.

Eighteen replies were received in response to the questionnaire and seven telephone interviews were conducted. The key findings are:

- The main impact of the course was the opportunity to meet other practice managers, to network and to discuss issues and concerns in common in a safe environment. This permitted time out' from the practice in order to reflect, review and re-evaluate their position, aspirations for their work and personal development.
- The course provided a springboard for the participants to move to other roles, undertake further study and carry out activities outside of their regular role
- Five participants reported that, as a result of the leadership programme, they had applied and were successful in obtaining major roles in their clinical commissioning groups and other NHS organisations
- A key area that was considered to be of great help was the learning from the session on negotiating skills run by an inspired speaker who motivated the practice managers and used tools and other techniques that had a practical application.
- The opportunity to have coaching was well received with some using the techniques learned and applied to staff in their own practices.
- The effect of the leadership programme had two major outcomes; one was improvement in the functioning of the practice (e.g. better staff management and improved patient involvement in the practice) and the other was the wider development of the practice (e.g. setting up a new appointment system, embarking on a practice merger, becoming a training practice and developing a pathway of care for Nepalese patients)
- Generally the feedback was positive in most areas presented and discussed on the course. There were a few exceptions where the input was considered to be of limited benefit such as the session on patient participation, equality and diversity, the role of the GP and practice manager and the NHS changes.
- Overall the programme was considered to be of great value to the participants who have continued to recommend the course to others. The selection of topic areas and speakers were appropriate for the needs of the practice managers and it was considered a good starting point for those working in primary care at that level.



The recommendations are that:

1. The Practice Manager Leadership Programme should continue to provide the leadership skills and knowledge to equip practice managers to gain the competence, confidence and motivation to lead practice teams and enhance practice performance.
2. There is a need to consider the wider strategic development of practice managers to enable them to work better with other practices and within the CCG

INTRODUCTION

This is an evaluation of the outcomes of the Practice Manager Leadership Programme run by the Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy since 2010.

The course is open to practice managers and deputy practice managers who work in practices in the Thames Valley and Wessex area which includes Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, South Wiltshire and Dorset.

Currently six cohorts of practice managers (a total of 71 participants) have been through the Practice Manager Leadership Programme.

The five day programme is run over five months and has been designed to help practice managers to deliver more effective leadership within their practices and the wider NHS system. It is a personalised approach to developing and strengthening leadership qualities which will give practice managers the competence, confidence and motivation to build on their existing skills.

The programme comprises sessions on:

- What is leadership?
- Leadership styles
- The current NHS system and the challenges for general practice
- Influencing and negotiation skills
- Leading and managing change
- Habits of successful practice managers
- Feedback skills
- Emotional intelligence
- Access to coaching and leadership diagnostics such as Myers Briggs Personality Questionnaire (MBTI) and a leadership multi-source Leadership Framework 360⁰ feedback

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was undertaken in two parts:

1. An analysis of the results of questionnaires sent to 71 practice managers who had participated in the Practice Manager Leadership Programme
2. One-to-one in-depth semi-structured telephone interviews with seven selected practice managers



In addition, an analysis of the informal feedback collated from the programmes by Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy was undertaken and included in this evaluation.

The aim of the evaluation is to assess the outcomes experienced by the participants against the original aims/learning outcomes of the programme. Areas for evaluation that were covered included the following:

- The effectiveness of the programme on personal development (e.g. personal effectiveness, confidence etc)
- The application of the skills and knowledge acquired through the programme to daily practice (.e.g. improvements and/or innovations in patient care, better team working, enhanced services, increased income to the practice, wider working with other agencies such as the Clinical Commissioning Group)
- Aspects of the course that were particularly helpful
- Areas where the course could be improved
- How the course has helped in career development (e.g. new responsibilities, promotion, greater autonomy, new post etc)

A copy of the questionnaire used in this evaluation can be found in Appendix A.

All the information collected via the survey and the semi-structured interviews was received and treated with confidence and no participating practice or individual is identified in this report

The evaluation was undertaken in January 2014.

The outcomes of this piece of work is a report summarising the findings of the survey, telephone interviews and analysis of other feedback, and an article for submission to the Health Service Journal or related publication.

FINDINGS

In total 18 replies were received in response to the questionnaire and seven telephone interviews were conducted. The findings are summarised below and include the informal evaluations undertaken after three courses:

1. The effectiveness of the programme on personal development

The main impact of the course on personal development was the opportunity to meet other practice managers, to network and to discuss issues and concerns in common in a safe environment. As a consequence practice managers felt less isolated and more able to find solutions to problems they were facing in their practice. In particular, feeling able to plan their work and delegating more was a discovery to those who felt overloaded.

Related to this finding was the appreciation of having some ‘time out’ from the practice in order to reflect, review and re-evaluate their position, aspirations for their work and personal development.



As a result of this course many practice managers considered that they were able to manage their GP partners more effectively, be clear about the topics to be discussed, deal with sensitive issues and planning and running practice meetings properly. This was attributed to greater confidence and assertiveness with dealing with their employers (the GPs) and having to lead the business as an employee.

A few participants were able to gather the confidence to move on and seek other roles, for example, promotion within the practice to practice manager from a deputy position, whilst another became an assistant contracts manager for the local NHS England area team.

In addition, some practice managers reported that they had greater confidence in talking to others in healthcare meetings outside of the practice.

One practice manager was motivated enough to apply and begin a masters course in health and social care management, whilst another helped to organise the local practice managers' annual conference and a third tried to get onto the Approved List of Parliamentary Candidates.

A couple of practice managers reported greater autonomy in the way they functioned in the practice following the programme with the partners allowing them to make some decisions without reference to them.

2. Aspects of the course that were particularly helpful

A key area that was considered to be of great help was the learning from the session on negotiating skills run by an inspired speaker who motivated the practice managers and used tools and other techniques that had a practical application.

The opportunity to have coaching was well received with some using the techniques learned and applied to staff in their own practices.

There were many comments about continuing the networking after the end of the course with the practice managers meeting regularly, or having 'buddy visits and feedback. However these have been varied in their success due to other pressing matters overriding these intentions.

3. The application of skills and knowledge to practice

The effect of the leadership programme had two major outcomes; one was improvement in the functioning of the practice and the other was the wider development of the practice.

The functioning of the practice

A major aspect of improved functioning of the practice involved better staff management using techniques learned from the sessions on management and learning styles, emotional intelligence, team building and motivation as well as applying leadership diagnostics such as the Myers Briggs Personality Questionnaire (MBTI). Examples of this included:



- The successful recruitment of a new member of staff following the development of a business plan
- Dealing with underperforming staff
- Implementation of a new staff structure, contracts and communication structure
- Undertaking appraisals which resulted in six staff members embarking on apprenticeships.
- Using a coaching approach to staff
- Dealing with a long-standing team dispute in the dispensary that was affecting morale
- Demonstrating increased team satisfaction

Another key outcome focuses on patients:

- Patient participation groups (PPG) have been set up where there have been no such input before
- Creating new positions in the practice centred on patient experience and satisfaction
- Using the PPG to help set a new nurse triage service with the group producing all the publicity material and arranging a press release
- A surgery being rated number one for patient satisfaction in the whole of the county of Oxfordshire.

The wider development of the practice

The wider developments included:

- the implementation of a new electronic stock control in the dispensary resulting in the backlog of work being cleared
- a pathway of care which involved an educational tool for Nepalese patients on how to use primary care (this project was shortlisted in the finals of the Practice Manager of the Year Award)
- project managing the merger of the practice with a neighbouring one covering the common issues at stake such as finance
- enabling the practice to become a training practice
- implementing a new telephone appointments system to manage the increasing doctor workload

4. Areas where the course could be improved

Generally the feedback was positive in most areas presented and discussed on the course. There were a few exceptions where the input was considered to be of limited benefit such as the session on patient participation, equality and diversity and the role of the GP and practice manager. Dissatisfaction was also voiced about the session on the NHS changes as the national picture was not clear. However at the time the Health and Social Care Bill was still under discussion and many changes were being proposed to the original document.

There were requests to have more time on strategic topics, e.g. commissioning as well as business issues and team working and building. There was also a desire to have an opportunity to identify specific subject areas or 'hot topics' that could be covered at the end of the course.



5. How the course had helped in career development

Generally the course provided an opportunity for participants to re-evaluate their career trajectories, whether it was to provide further impetus and motivation to continue in practice management, to move jobs or to seek new responsibilities in the wider NHS. Four respondents said that the course did not facilitate their career development while five felt that it was early for the programme to have an effect.

Five participants reported that, as a result of the leadership programme, they had applied and were successful in obtaining major roles in their clinical commissioning groups (CCG) and other NHS organisations, for example, practice manager representative on the CCG board, chairing a performance review group, becoming a governor at the local Foundation Trust and working with the Department of Health. Another practice manager became a member of a steering group of local practices who were involved in establishing a federation.

Other developments included promotion to the role of general manager of a health centre which included a practice with a list size of 23,000 and other community services, and becoming a 'partnership manager' to provide the strategic perspective of the practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall the programme was considered to be of great value to the participants who have continued to recommend the course to others. The selection of topic areas and speakers were appropriate for the needs of the practice managers and it was considered a good starting point for those working in primary care at that level.

This has generated a desire to know and understand more about being a practice manager and the different levels at which they can work. There is the view that with the development of CCGs putting primary care into the driving seat, there is a requirement for two types of practice managers in the system; one functioning at an operational level focussing on the day-to-day running of the business and the other working at the strategic level driving the wider vision for the practice and being involved with the work of other practices (localities) and at the CCG level.

An article on the results of this evaluation has been accepted by the Health Service Journal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Practice Manager Leadership Programme should continue to provide the leadership skills and knowledge to equip practice managers to gain the competence, confidence and motivation to lead practice teams and enhance practice performance.
2. There is a need to consider the wider strategic development of practice managers to enable them to work better with other practices and within the CCG and other NHS bodies.



Appendix A

NHS Thames Valley and Wessex Practice Manager Leadership Programme Evaluation Questionnaire

- 1a. Which aspect of the programme was the most useful to you personally (e.g. specific topic areas, networking etc)?
- 1b. Why?
- 2a. Which aspect of the programme was the least useful to you personally?
- 2b. Why?
3. What skills or knowledge have you acquired from the programme which you have been able to apply in your practice? (Please give examples in terms of effect on improved delivery of services/customer care, new services, better income for the practice, working with others etc)
- 4a. Has the course helped you in your career development? (Please tick relevant response)
- YES NO TO EARLY TO SAY
- 4b. If yes, how? (e.g. new responsibilities, promotion, greater autonomy, new post)
- 5a. Could the programme be improved? (Please tick relevant response)
- YES NO
- 5b. If yes, how, (e.g. are there any areas that are missing, activities that could be done, etc)?
6. Any other comments?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

ALL RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY.

Please return this questionnaire to t.swage@btinternet.com by FRIDAY 17th January 2014.

