

## Quality healthcare through an engaged workforce

### ***Workplace Innovation - helping NHS Trusts to improve performance and patient care***

The NHS has made tremendous progress in raising standards of patient care in recent years. And according to the King's Fund, targets have made a significant positive impact on NHS performance.

**But targets are not enough.** Indeed there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the current performance management regime distracts management effort from sustainable change and innovation. Many NHS managers talk of "quality assurance without quality improvement".

As Darzi points out, there is much more to be achieved in improving patient safety and patient satisfaction, all within a climate where more will have to be done with less. Further signposts are to be found in *High Quality Care for All* which emphasises local innovation rather than central direction as the driver of quality improvement: "If we get it right, the quality agenda has great potential to mobilise and empower clinicians across the system. And, conversely, we will get nowhere without clinicians on board."

**Successive policy reviews stress the importance of staff engagement in achieving effective and sustainable change.** Many Trusts have created exemplary initiatives to ensure that the knowledge, commitment and creativity of staff at all levels are fully developed and utilised. A 2008 survey undertaken by the NHS Employers Organisation found that 73% of respondents in Trusts felt that staff engagement was more important to their senior managers than it had been a year ago. But overall the picture remains patchy. Recent press reports suggest that one in six doctors and nurses are actively considering working abroad.

**Workplace Innovation can help NHS Trusts achieve sustainable improvement through staff engagement. For example:**

- **Continuous quality improvement.** Most frontline NHS staff lack systematic opportunities to share their knowledge, experience and ideas for improvement with anyone else other than long-suffering partners at home or friends in the pub. Many line managers do not welcome suggestions for change or questioning about established practices. ***Workplace Innovation has developed innovative approaches to stimulating trust-based dialogue, leading to practical ideas for improvement with buy-in from managers and frontline staff alike.***
- **Learning from adversity.** Clinical errors and organisational failures risk expensive litigation costs and require immediate remedial action, but they also offer an invaluable resource for learning and improvement. ***Workplace Innovation can facilitate learning from errors and root cause analysis using non-threatening techniques such as theatre and action learning.***
- **Are your staff engaged?** Staff surveys typically paint a broad brush picture of workforce morale without pointing to concrete areas for improvement. ***Workplace Innovation's online Resilience questionnaire probes deeply into ten key dimensions of working practice, enabling comparison against evidence-based practices and the degree of discrepancy between management perceptions and frontline employee experience. Based on a traffic light scoring system, it also signposts decision-makers to appropriate tools and resources for improvement.***

- **Building effective multidisciplinary teamwork.** “Teamworking” is talked about more often than it is practiced in the NHS. Real teamworking involves significant changes to working practices, with tangible benefits for staff and patients alike. ***Drawing on the outcomes of multinational action research, Workplace Innovation can deliver a comprehensive package for the implementation of multidisciplinary teamworking based on a clear set of practice standards.***
- **Partnership for change: bridging industrial relations and quality improvement.** Many Trusts have entered into partnership agreements with their Staff Side representatives, but how effective are these arrangements in stimulating employee engagement or quality improvement? Experience from Kaiser Permanente and many European countries suggest that partnership can play a vital role in engaging staff in quality improvement – but there are few cases of exemplary practice within the UK. ***Workplace Innovation can help Trusts and unions to strengthen their partnership arrangements in ways which achieve positive outcomes for staff and patients alike.***
- **Enhancing the role of Staff Side as knowledgeable participants in strategic decision making and change.** Staff side representatives in most Trusts rarely get an opportunity for the teambuilding, reflection or shared learning that could improve their performance and effectiveness as partners. ***Workplace Innovation can deliver bespoke timeout and training sessions to help Staff Side representatives, individually and collectively, enhance their contribution as informed partners in addressing difficult challenges and facilitating change.***
- **Mergers and restructuring.** Many mergers and restructuring initiatives in the health sector are driven by a strong business or clinical case, but fail to realise their potential in practice. Often this reflects an inadequate focus on the integration of frontline functions and teams including relationship building, knowledge sharing and the joint design of new protocols and procedures. ***Workplace Innovation’s experience in managing dialogue and teambuilding can play a key role in helping resourcing integration – both before and after the event.***
- **Stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour.** Faced with the need to meet targets and achieve specific outcomes, different managers will behave in quite different ways. Some will appear to succeed by addressing the relevant performance measures – in short by “ticking boxes”. Others will seek sustainable change and improvement, often by working between formal organisational structures in creative and entrepreneurial ways. What makes the difference? ***Workplace Innovation’s research has identified a series of individual and organisational practices that can lead to sustainable improvement rather than mere compliance with targets.***
- **Middle managers: barrier reef or resource for change?** Middle managers are often cited as a significant obstacle to innovation and improvement, and there is plenty of evidence to support this view. However Workplace Innovation’s research reveals that such managers often receive little leadership or guidance from above, leading to lack of prioritisation, poor communication, inadequate opportunities for learning and aversion to change. While the answer may in part lie in competence development for middle managers, it may also lie in the redesign of wider

organisational structures and practices. ***Workplace Innovation can support Trusts in creating an environment conducive to effective management behaviour and capability.***

- **Learning from exemplary practice.** While the NHS is unique in many ways, it can nonetheless gain valuable lessons from other healthcare systems across the world and from other sectors in relation to challenges such as quality improvement, employee engagement, organisational change and productivity. ***Drawing on an extensive network of partners, Workplace Innovation can facilitate exchange of knowledge and experience with a wide range of organisations in Europe, the US and Asia including benchmarking reports, seminars and conferences, and learning visits.***
- **Sharing experience and supporting each other.** NHS managers and leaders enjoy surprisingly few opportunities to meet each other for peer learning and the exchange of experience. ***Workplace Innovation can create learning networks designed to share problems and to knowledge of what works in meeting health service priorities.***
- **Developing frontline managers.** Many staff acquire management responsibility as their careers develop with little opportunity to gain the skills and behaviours which get the best out of their teams. ***Workplace Innovation's portfolio of accredited courses is specifically tailored to meet the needs of new and experienced frontline clinical and service managers in the NHS.***

## **WORKPLACE INNOVATION'S EXPERIENCE IN THE HEALTH SECTOR**

Workplace Innovation's team has considerable experience of working in the healthcare sector including:

- international action-research projects;
- involvement in large-scale change initiatives relating to partnership and quality of working life in the National Health Service;
- the development of innovative resources to support change such as forum theatre;
- strengthening key areas of practice such as multidisciplinary teamworking and clinical governance;
- trade union support and training;
- co-ordination of the *European Hospital Network* including researchers and practitioners from eight countries;
- lead delivery partner for *Irish Hospital of the Future Programme*, a national initiative to promote employee engagement in organisational and clinical performance.

Our approach builds strong bridges between research and practice, and actively facilitates learning between organisations. The network structure of Workplace Innovation Limited enables us to create bespoke teams for each project, drawing on a wide range of available expertise and experience. We

have active partnerships with organisations in some 20 European countries, many of them with a healthcare focus.