June 2014

TEAM BUILDING AT
BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

Background

In the wake of the Francis Inquiry, which highlighted the need for improved compassion in care and stronger healthcare leadership, staff at Birmingham Children’s Hospital (BCH) identified a need to improve team work both within and across teams.

This became the focus of BCH’s annual InTent week, which draws on staff feedback and the NHS Staff Survey results to focus on a different staff issue each year.

More than 600 staff attended interactive workshops and leaders’ masterclasses under the theme of ‘Building Team BCH’ and Professor Michael West of Lancaster University Management School, presented some of his research into the impact team working has on patient outcomes. Throughout the week, staff views were captured and developed into an action plan.

Sara Brown, associate director for education and organisational development said: “The staff workshops were all focused on what makes a good team, what would an ideal day be like, what works well, what needs to be better and what roles we all play… We also had stations where staff could tell us what they needed from their leaders.”

She said the high attendance at InTent events was because staff saw changes happening as a direct result of their involvement. The InTent event was also taken out to teams where it may be difficult for them to attend. It was important to keep sessions short but meaningful, providing a real opportunity for feedback and thought sharing.

“Keep the language simple and based on what staff have said. Don’t just do something once a year, make it part of the way things are done,” Sara said. “We have also learned that you cannot communicate enough.”

As a result of the week, tools and guidance were developed to support staff as team members or team leaders and the Team Maker programme for managers was launched. Shadowing schemes, mentoring and further InTent to Listen events were organised to keep feedback going.

“We recognised from feedback that many managers just didn’t have some of the basic tools to help their teams work well” Sara said.

To address this, they introduced the Team Maker programme that helps team leaders to understand the way that teams work.
Team Maker

Team Maker is a two-day facilitated workshop based on Michael West’s research and staff feedback on what makes a good boss. Delegates leave with a practical workbook of tools to work through and implement with their teams over a four-month period. These include communication tools, role clarity and objective setting. They then return for a masterclass and to assess progress. A before and after evaluation shows where progress has been made and leaders are awarded with Team Maker status, receiving a badge and T-shirt.

“Staff are the eyes, ears and feel of an organisation. If they are not feeling listened to, supported, valued, then this impacts on how they work and on patients. We want everyone at BCH to feel part of the ‘family’ and to live our values every day.”

Key points

— Senior leaders need to give visible and sustained support to staff engagement. Visible leadership includes being present in wards and creating conversations with staff.

— Seeking staff feedback on a regular basis is a key element in successful engagement. It needs to go beyond the annual NHS Staff Survey and can use a variety of methods.

— Well planned engagement events help create a collective understanding and commitment to the staff engagement. They are a chance for staff to raise issues and develop ideas.

— It is essential that events are delivered in an engaging way with a clear focus and involvement of senior leaders.

— It is also vital that the organisation responds to points that are raised at events so that participation is seen to have an impact.

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Published June 2014.
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Ref: EINF35901