

DonnaOckenden

Case Study

Date: 2015

Region: South of England

Overview:

Review of the management and leadership of the Pharmacy department at an NHS Trust.

The details:

Donna Ockenden was invited to carry out an in depth review into the management and leadership of the pharmacy department at a South of England NHS Trust in 2015. Initially, four full day site visits to the Trust were carried out between August and November of that year. A wide range of Pharmacy staff, senior leadership, management and nursing and medical colleagues at the Trust were interviewed. All of the staff spoken to had either recent and/or regular contact with the Pharmacy department.

Over the course of the interviews and extensive background reading it became apparent that there were some clear areas of concern for the Trust. These included, but were not limited to:

There had been many years of poor performance within the department (including prior to the Chief Pharmacists arrival at the Trust). Most interviewees recorded that the leadership team was dysfunctional, unprofessional and showed little respect for each other. They were unable to work together, showed poor communication, and harboured some resentment, which was apparent to the rest of the department. This poor leadership behaviour impacted on middle management, and expert support and facilitation was required to set expectations of acceptable behaviours throughout the department. There was also extensive evidence of unacceptable behaviour at more junior staffing levels including favouritism, undermining staff and on occasion, spiteful behaviour.

It was obvious that some staff did not have the right skills for their roles and the Trust were advised to act urgently to review the job descriptions and what needs to be delivered versus what is actually being delivered. Recruitment and retention difficulties added to the pressures. Staff interviewed (in the main) were very concerned that there could be repercussions if comments were tracked back to individuals which suggested they felt they were working in an environment of fear. A member of staff seconded temporarily from another Trust acted as 'glue' for the team but was only interim. A recommendation was that the role be filled as a matter of priority.

Key staff didn't appear to have the skills to deal with issues caused by colleagues behaviour and lacked any senior NHS experience which was critical to the role.

The recruitment process for very senior leadership roles required an urgent review. It was clear that the most recent senior appointment had inherited a department in long term disarray and there was evidence of firefighting in the Pharmacy Education and Training department.

Finally, an urgent review was required of the Governance systems around policies and procedures in the department and adherence by all to training requirements.

Outcome:

Donna Ockenden made a large number of recommendations to the Trust all of which were accepted. The review and its recommendations enabled the Trust to review the senior team within its Pharmacy service and create a senior team and leadership structure that was fit for purpose now and for the future going forward.