

CASE STUDY

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust

NHS Professionals Academy successfully delivers phase one of leadership programme

- ✓ 70 senior Trust leaders complete leadership course
- ✓ Additional departments at the Trust request training for 150+ staff
- ✓ Psychometric testing data improves understanding of senior leaders' individual work styles and behavioural trends at team level

The Situation

After a competitive procurement exercise in 2022, the NHS Professionals Academy was awarded phase one provision of a leadership course for University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust. The course aimed to develop and align senior leaders' ways of working following the merger of two legacy Trusts (Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust and Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), forming the new University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust. This involved a full restructure of corporate and frontline operational teams comprising c.17,000 FTE staff.



The Solution

In February 2023, we began to collaborate with the Trust to inform the design of the course modules, making sure they best suited the Trust's specific needs. We used our expertise to offer ideas for content tailored to meet a mixture of clinical and non-clinical senior leadership staff. It was key that the course was adaptable for different areas across the Trust. Examples of sessions we delivered on the course include:

- championing Patient First values and behaviours (the Trust's improvement methodology)
- team coaching to achieve a cross-functional goal
- developing self-awareness and awareness of others' behavioural preferences

The Academy team were on hand to manage the project and help with administration, including proactively organising the courses. We adopted a flexible approach in order to accommodate senior leaders' busy diaries and urgent priorities.

To fully tailor the course content, we utilised the Insights Discovery® evaluator and reports. This psychometric tool helped senior leaders to understand more about their own personal communication and behavioural preferences and their preferred management style. It created an awareness of their strengths and approach to work and how they could adjust their own behaviours to enhance relationships and improve teamworking. Additionally, when groups of individuals from the same department or senior leadership group completed their Insights Discovery®, a 'team wheel' was produced. This helped to illustrate any potential behavioural gaps, overlaps, challenges and opportunities at team level.

The course consisted of two plenary days with the full group of 70 senior leaders; these sessions focused on individual preferences and learning, team coaching, skills and experience sharing.

The plenary days were supplemented with four half-day sessions in smaller groups of three or four people for divisional leadership teams, and sessions for corporate and executive teams based on the Trust's reporting structures. These groups supported the leadership teams to apply learning from the plenary days among the newly-formed leadership teams, and share experiences and best practice.

We were also able to accommodate senior leaders who joined the Trust after the first plenary days. These new starters were given the opportunity to complete an Insights Discovery® personal profile, with a 1:1 discussion with an accredited facilitator, to support their development and enable them to join the programme.



The Results

Some 70 senior clinical and non-clinical leaders at the Trust have now completed the course, including the chief executive, chief people officer and other executive members of the Trust Board; the clinical divisional triumvirates (including chiefs of service, directors of operations and directors of nursing) and corporate directors (including people and HR functions).

This was the first development programme run for senior leaders since the merger of the two legacy organisations, presenting a unique opportunity to build personal networks and collaborative working practices.

Use of the Insights Discovery® tool provided valuable learning about individual management styles, likely responses under pressure, and opportunities to develop leadership skills. It also provided understanding of any potential gaps across the senior leadership team, and ways diversity could be used to encourage improvement.

We have now begun work to provide leadership courses for other departments at the Trust, starting with capital and property, which has held a one-day leadership course for 26 senior leaders across two hospital sites. Content included how leaders can continue to develop themselves and engage with their direct reports; avoid siloed working; and build teamworking. Bespoke courses for senior leaders within neonatal services, surgical and critical care, medical group and leadership and organisation development are also set to be delivered later in 2023.

“The arrangement with the NHS Professionals Academy as contractor and local provider delivering the training and facilitation worked well. Contract management and communication was seamless, but we benefited from the additional perspective when navigating the inevitable challenges of delivering a structured leadership programme in a busy, complex operational environment.

Quality of the training was high, and feedback from participants in the plenary events and facilitated small groups has been positive. The Academy team were proactive in forward planning the programme with us, very accommodating in managing our tight deadlines, and highly responsive in communicating. We felt they were a trusted partner and a genuine pleasure to work with.”



Nick Groves

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