

The Culture and Leadership Programme: Case Studies

Working to create a health and social care ecosystem where everybody consciously works together compassionately and inclusively, so every person can perform to their best ability.



The Clerical Officer

“ I would recommend anyone to give the Culture and Leadership Programme a go. It’s given me insight into what I have to offer, and I’ve learned something else about myself: I’m passionate about recruitment and retention. ”

Factfile

Trust:

Portsmouth
Hospitals University
NHS Trust (PHU)

Phase at time of writing:

Scoping
Discovery
Design

Delivery

PHU is an acute hospital Trust on the south coast employing more than 8,000 staff. The Trust’s main site is the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth, with additional sites across Portsmouth and south east Hampshire. PHU is of the largest hospital Trusts working with the Ministry of Defence to provide care for serving personnel and veterans.

Clerical Officer, Oswaldo (Os) De Alva, describes himself as a jack of all trades. But through his varied roles – including nightclub manager, nursery nurse and civil servant – he has picked up a wealth of experience, spanning practical tasks, interpersonal skills and problem solving, making him one of the Culture and Leadership Programme’s most versatile members.

When you’ve worked in lots of different roles and sectors, you have to deal with people from different backgrounds and cultures and you learn that you can’t deal with everyone in the same way. I used to think of my background as a disadvantage but in the change team, everyone’s doing everything, so having a varied work history has been an advantage.

Some people think just because you are in a lower band, you can't contribute critical thinking, but I don't feel my job is less important than anyone else's. One of the things I've enjoyed about the Culture and Leadership Programme has been working alongside colleagues in higher bands. I've learned some really useful things from them – and they've learned from me too.

Being part of the solution

When I heard about the Culture and Leadership Programme, I thought it would be a great way to feel more positive and apply my skills. When I was growing up in Portugal, my dad was a union representative. He taught me that if you want things to change, you need to be part of the solution rather than just doing your job and going home.

When I joined the trust, I could see some problems – there was a lot of micro-management and a reluctance to let people grow, develop and come up with their own ideas. Progression was stagnant and a lot of people were leaving. It's really easy to get disengaged in that situation but I thought 'Maybe I could make a difference.'

As well as my day job, I chair the trust's Equality and Race Network and I also thought the programme could help me strengthen the network and improve the organisational culture in that way. The two roles have fed into each other really well. You can't look at culture without incorporating diversity and race, because if you're talking about understanding and empathy, that means truly seeing the different people who make up our workforce. And if you're truly seeing them, you have to take into account their race or ethnicity.

☞ One of the things I've enjoyed about the Culture and Leadership Programme has been working alongside colleagues in higher bands. I've learned some really useful things from them – and they've learned from me too.



The process

I became involved at the Discovery Phase. This was about getting more information about the problems, finding possible solutions, and then making recommendations to the board. We were given protected time from our main role to do this. I was worried that my colleagues might be annoyed that this was taking me away from my day-to-day tasks, so I had to make sure I wasn't falling behind.

There were 15 of us in the Change Team and we were divided into different groups looking at different areas for improvement. I worked with a team of four, including the Head of Dietetics. Our theme was improving recruitment and retention. We looked at data not only from our trust but from three others, to compare. We met with staff from one of them, to talk through what they were doing and see what we could learn.



Initially, we were trying to find quick wins: ways that we could easily boost staff experience so they would want to work here – and stay here. One idea we came up with was thank-you cards, which patients or other staff could use to thank someone for their work that day. Others included ensuring that recognition schemes, such as the Employee of the Month and annual Pride of Portsmouth awards are more inclusive, through a robust review of the nomination and judging processes. In addition, we introduced a scheme to recognise and thank more than 4,000 staff for their NHS service with a certificate and lapel badge, which we felt was important. We also launched a staff benefits brochure, which provides clarity on how PHU staff can access them and what is involved.

Opportunities for development

Of course, being a Change team member isn't just altruism – there's development for yourself as well. By giving your time to your organisation, and you gain essential experience and skills that you can use personally but also in your substantive role as well.

Initially I was intimidated by tasks like recording data, giving presentations and writing up reports to persuade the board to invest in our suggestions. It's so easy to doubt yourself, but the group was very supportive. Just because you're not very strong in, for example numbers, that doesn't diminish your contribution.

As a Band 2, I never considered myself a leader, but I'm so glad I've developed these skills. When I became the chair of the Race Equality Network, people said that was a leadership role, and when I got involved in the Culture and Leadership Programme, that started me thinking more about this. I like the idea that leadership can come from people at all levels of the organisation. I'd always taken my work very seriously but now I'm more aware of how I interact with people and how I can influence the organisation in positive ways.

I would recommend anyone to give the Culture and Leadership Programme a go. It's given me insight into what I have to offer, and I've learned something else about myself: I'm passionate about recruitment and retention. So, I'm now hoping to use what I've learned on the programme to develop my future career in that area, to help our Trust get – and keep – the very best people.



People Promise links

This case study highlights work in the following People Promise themes:



We are **compassionate and inclusive**



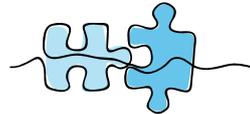
We are **recognised and rewarded**



We each have a **voice that counts**



We are **always learning**



We are a **team**

Got a question or want to know more:

W: [NHS England » Changing healthcare cultures – through collective leadership](#)

E: NHSI.Culture@nhs.net