



Jan's Weekly Update

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Do you have weeks where you think someone is just trying to make it a bit harder? Well I've had one of those weeks – a busy schedule peppered with small difficulties which just make the day a bit harder. These include -

getting soaked to the skin TWICE in an April shower resulting in having to wear my gym kit out in public because it's the only dry clothes I had; getting locked out of my house; forgetting my glasses which these days means I can't see very much at all and having to blag my way through a meeting (that's why you always need to read the papers beforehand – I had!); spending 2.5 hours doing a 45 minute journey on the M6 car park; getting caught up in the Tube strike (I haven't been to London for months and they pick that day!) and got chased by a Jack Russell and more importantly his friend, a big black dog, 9 miles into a 12 mile power walk (training for my Moonwalk).



However despite all that it's been a productive week.

Last Friday – Board Development

My weekly brief had gone to press before the Board development meeting on Friday but you might remember I said that we were going to discuss strategy (what's our long term plan) and culture (how we behave and do things around here). I also mentioned that we invited a group of leaders to come and talk to us about their experiences – to listen to their views on what it's really like in the organisation. I heard on the grapevine that some of you were curious how they got “picked”. In all honesty it was by invite from me based on individuals who I thought represented a cross section of leaders in the organisation who would not be shy to say what they think (good or bad) and who were available for a couple of hours on a Friday afternoon of the Easter holidays. It was a bit of an experiment – I didn't know how it would go – but it was really good. The Non-Executives in particular thought it was one of the best sessions we had ever had. It gave them the opportunity to hear first hand what it's like to be a member of staff and a leader in the organisation and to ask searching questions. I have to admit I was very proud, but not surprised at how the staff conducted themselves in front of the Board members – honest, articulate, professional and solution-focussed!

Some of the key messages we heard were: “it feels like we're getting on the right track”, and that some staff don't really understand what the Board does. Both the Board and the staff group were pleasantly surprised by each others' level of engagement, understanding and enthusiasm for the future and that the Board were sighted on the key issues for staff. We committed to doing more of these sessions – with different groups of staff. We heard and agreed that improving IT systems needs more impetus behind it, we agreed to ensure we clarify what the priorities are and stick to them, moving away from crisis management, and that we would continue to get out and about but think of ways to make it less of a Royal visit!

Cath Molineux, Karen Taylor, Caroline Salisbury, Mark Donovan, Dee Radford, Alison Parkinson and Narinder Kular were the individuals that joined us on the day – you may want to ask them yourselves what they thought and what they brought away from the session. I think some of them thought they may do something similar with their own teams.

Feedback from Director Restructure

Last week I shared with you my proposals for changes within the Director team and asked if you had any thoughts or comments. I haven't had much feedback directly but I have heard a couple of questions. It is clear for some of you in the organisation that you're not sure what a Director does or why it might be important to you or impact on you. On a daily basis Directors shouldn't probably impact on your work unless you work with them directly of course! However between them they are responsible for everything that happens in the organisation – which includes planning for the future, delivering services, performance and resources, managing and supporting staff and setting the priorities – all of you will be able to track your line management back to a Director - and there shouldn't be too many people between you and them. So we will think about how we make sure all groups of staff understand who “their” Director is, how they can and should influence them and what they are responsible for. In return if you have a leadership role or are involved in something you really want to change at work, get to know your Director – they can and should help!

I have also heard a few comments from clinical staff that their clinical profession is not recognised – only Nursing and Medical staff are represented at Director level. This is a conundrum – firstly be reassured that all non-medical professional staff are represented through the Director of Nursing role – as they always have been – and it is in their job description that proper representation and leadership are in place to represent all of our clinical professions. We are by law required to have a Director of Nursing on the Board who not only has professional leadership responsibilities but is also the Director with responsibility for clinical quality. I have committed to ensuring that clinical leadership is embedded throughout the organisation and will expect that any changes to the structure beneath Director will promote that. I want clinical leaders to influence any of those changes.

On a personal note I aspire to the day when the clinical roles on the Board are about skills and competencies, and reflect the make up of the organisation rather than being from a prescribed clinical background and could therefore be a nurse, psychologist, physio or social worker who would provide professional leadership at that level. However that doesn't stop us developing that leadership within the organisation as long as professionals are prepared to represent each other and contribute to leadership of multi-disciplinary services – as I know many of you do now.

London – Tube Strike Day!

Chairs and Chief Executives from around the country were asked to attend a one day conference with the Trust Development Authority (the organisation responsible for us) so they could share their expectations of us over the coming year and give us a chance to share some of challenges and concerns. There were a number of speakers including Jeremy Hunt the Secretary of State for Health – who was both insightful and dare I say entertaining.



A key message for us is that he named one of his top three priorities for this year as the development and growth of community services – that is really important as it will develop into commissioning policy and have significant focus. He told us that he visits a service in the NHS every week – although it quickly became apparent that this was mainly hospital based – maybe we should invite him to spend a day in one or two of our community services!!! What do you think?

He also told us that he starts every working day by reading a complaint from a patient – to remind him we haven't got it all right yet. I gave that some thought – I do read all of our complaints but we don't get one every day – I wonder if those of us who aren't involved in direct patient care (but are responsible for making sure it is safe and good care) should make sure we have some form of contact with patients and carers every day – not just complaints though!

Meeting with Local Authority Colleagues

I have seen quite a lot of local authority colleagues this week – discussing such things as the development of the Integrated Community Service and their aspirations for Health Visitors and School Nursing. All very positive! Senior leaders from Shropshire Adult Social Care and ourselves met yesterday to discuss how we could work better together to provide seamless services to patients and carers – it was a good session and we committed to meet again in 3 weeks to build on the ideas we had. We will also ensure that those of you who work much closer to patients are involved to understand what's really possible – how we can get the best out of partnership working for patients.

So to finish where I started there is now a man outside my door drilling and hammering so I think I need to move.....

Until next week

Jan Ditheridge
Chief Executive