



Jan's Weekly Update

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“Workforce Workforce Workforce” -

That's the message I heard at a national meeting held in London on Tuesday. Chief Executives from around the country gathered together to hear from Ian Dalton the new leader of NHSI (our Regulator) and Simon Stevens the leader of NHS England (CCGs and Commissioning Regulator).

They are concerned that we have shortages of certain staff groups particularly nurses, and GPs which is and will continue to have an impact unless we all do something different.

Some of the London hospitals are reporting vacancy gaps of 30% - we have had our challenges in teams but no where near those figures.

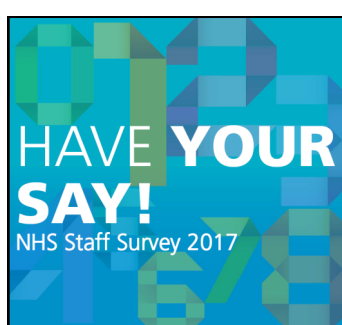
The other area that is impacting on staffing is retention - staff are leaving quickly after joining a team. Locally I've seen that. The Wellington team told me that some recent recruits haven't stayed very long and we talked about why that is and what we can do to change that.

What does the staff survey tell us?

I heard that at national level there is definitely a direct correlation between good staff engagement (people feeling part of decisions, knowing who their manager is, being able to approach them and knowing what's going on generally) lower rates of absence, recruitment success and lower agency bills.

That won't surprise you but it needs constant attention from all of us to make sure we all keep talking, even when we don't know all the answers we need to say that!

Our staff engagement scores have steadily increased over the last few years which I'm really pleased about - no massive change but year on year more and more of you feel communication with people like me, the Board, the Execs and your team leader is getting better.



A couple of staff have contacted me this week because things aren't going right for them - I'm pleased they did - I can't and shouldn't directly solve their issues but I can support their managers and our corporate experts to communicate and work it out, and hopefully next time they won't need to tell me because they will feel able to sort it out with their manager. It won't always be the outcome we want but we always should understand why and be involved in the decision if it affects us.

Communicating in different ways

As I was in London I joined the Exec meeting by phone. If you haven't ever done that try it - I found I focus more and everyone has to be clear about discussion and action because you can't see reactions! We talked at length about what our staff survey is telling us - we have all the detail which is broken down into service areas and it's clear that there are different challenges in different teams.

A couple of things that keep popping up are that many of you don't have clear work objectives as part of your appraisal and some of you don't think you can access training appropriate to your profession or to help you do your job. All of my team have objectives which we review regularly to ensure they are still relevant, we need to reprioritise or they need any help to achieve them. I know that the people who report to them have objectives and so it should go on through the organisation. We all deserve that clarity.

Having objectives helps you plan your year, know when you've achieved them and when things get confusing and murky (because they do) reprioritise and agree what's most important. Of course these objectives should also include personal development objectives and a discussion about our values. All of this will help you structure your day, your week and your year. It works for me!

I know it can be tricky to work out objectives and make them doable so we will help you do that and we also agreed to focus on team level training and development plans (thank you Wellington team) to ensure a joined up view of the training you need and we should support. Many of you access training but it could be more joined up so we reach everyone.

I'd be interested in what you think - I am meeting with staff side next week and I'm curious to know what they think will be important to work on.

100 Years 100 Women

I stayed in London because on Thursday I was invited to an event at the House of Lords. You will know that this year is 100 years since the first women in this country got the vote. This occasion marked that - 100 women working in leadership roles at Board level (like me) from all sectors including the NHS but also the private sector.

I sat next to a woman who is a Managing Director for a national bus company who started her career as a junior cash counter - and was told at interview they weren't looking to appoint a woman because she wouldn't be able to manage all the men!

On my other side was a woman who works in the metal industry - if I'm honest I didn't really understand what she did but clearly very technical.

Interesting fact - about 10% of people on the Boards of the big private companies are women, 41% of Chief Executives in the NHS are now women. This drops dramatically in Acute Trusts. We have come a long way, however when we looked round the room there were only 2 women of colour. The host Clive Lewis, himself a man of colour, was asked why there was so few women of colour in the room - the answer - because so few are on Boards, he had no-one to invite. It is the same for men too! More to do....

Every woman I spoke to had started their life "on the shop floor" and like me had taken more senior roles because they thought they could help, change things and make a difference. I'm not sure why I got an invite but I really felt privileged to be there.

One of our health care assistants asked me the other day how she could become a non-executive Director because she thought she could bring fresh ideas to the Board - there is plenty of evidence that diverse Boards make a bigger difference. I pointed her to someone who can advise her to help her get there.



After the lunch do I met Philip Dunne MP for Ludlow. He knew I was in the House of Lords and invited me into the House of Commons - he took me on a small tour and we had a cup of tea in the MPs cafe - it was fascinating and a great opportunity to fly the flag for Shropshire and community services. You won't be surprised that I took the opportunity to bend Philips ear about the importance of what we do!!

So an unusual and fascinating week - important things to think about.

Interestingly, although a week possibly about women I spend much of my time thinking about how we encourage more men into many of our clinical roles. About 80% of the NHS workforce is female, that increases to over 90% in nursing - we need to rebalance. Men have a great contribution to make in nursing.

Until next week

Jan

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