

This report evaluates the NHS NW R&D team’s “Leading Cultures of Research & Innovation in Clinical Teams” leadership programme delivered in 2014/15.

NHS Research & Development North West.

Evaluation of “Leading Cultures of Research & Innovation in Clinical Teams” Development Programme.

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# Introduction

This report evaluates the first three programmes of “Leading Cultures of Research & Innovation in Clinical Teams” leadership development programme run by NHS R&D NW between November 2014 and April 2015. This programme was funded via Health Education England North West Forerunner Funding and awarded by the Cumbria and Lancashire Local Workforce Education Group.

The programme was evaluated on an on going basis throughout the period it ran with immediate feedback collated after each workshop. The purpose of the report is to offer a more detailed insight into the benefits and impact that the programme had on participants and to identify any areas for improvement.

It is derived from interviews conducted with 7 participants who participated in the programmes. The participants were interviewed via telephone using a semi-structured interview with an external researcher. (The questions forming the basis of the interviews are in appendix one.)

## Background

Work undertaken by NHS R&D NW during 2013-14 identified a strong commitment from service managers to the integration of research and innovation into their teams but also highlighted limitations in knowledge regarding the research and innovation landscape and policy agendas and lack of personal confidence in providing leadership on this agenda. A full report of this work can be found at <http://www.research.northwest.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Joint-RI-Event-Oct-2013-Evaluation-Report.pdf>?

Therefore the “Leading Cultures of Research & Innovation” development programme offered a novel and innovative programme of leadership development informed by this stakeholder engagement

The programme design was informed by the domains of the Healthcare Leadership Model (<http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/resources/healthcare-leadership-model/>) and delivered via four one day workshops, held at monthly intervals.



Inspiring shared purpose

Sharing the vision

Leading with care

Evaluating information

Connecting our service

Engaging the team

Holding to account

Developing capability

Influencing for results

The workshops aimed to combine increased knowledge of research and innovation with leadership development to enable participants to confidently lead cultures of innovation and research.

The programme also offered participants the opportunity to join 3 action learning set meetings, one of which was facilitated, to consolidate their learning and support each other’s development.

### Programme aims

Completion of the programme aimed to support participants in their leadership of a culture of R&I within their service and increase their service engagement with and contribution to organisational and regional R&I agendas.

By participating in the programme it was hoped that they would:

* *Develop knowledge & understanding of national, regional and organisational R&I agendas*
* *Explore and increase individual understanding of how organisational cultures are formed and shaped by leaders*
* *Explore and develop skills and expertise to facilitate and lead cultures of R&I*
* *Spend time with a commercial sector organisation to explore how R&I is facilitated within this sector and transferable skills and expertise*
* *Have the opportunity to develop and benefit from a community of practice within their health economy with the potential to become self-sustaining.*

### Participant profile

The programme was aimed at service leaders within Cumbria and Lancashire LWEG health economy. 20 participants attended the three cohorts, though the size of the cohorts varied, with 10 on the first cohort and only 5 on each of the subsequent cohorts. Not all participants completed all four workshops comprising the programme. Reasons for non-attendance at workshops included ill health and personal circumstance but was due most often to conflicting clinical priorities.

There were a variety of organisations and disciplines represented on the programme and a full list of participants is included in appendix 3.

# Evaluation themes

## Participant aims for the programme

The reasons for attendance were varied. Most of the participants were interested in research and had either undertaken a PhD, or were interested in doing so. They wanted to understand more about innovation within the NHS and how they could create a culture for both innovation and research. They wanted to ‘demystify’ research and enable their teams to understand how to access and participate in research. One participant described research as a “scary concept” that she wanted to understand more fully and develop a greater confidence in.

They also wanted to find new ways of working and being innovative to meet the challenges ahead.

Participants reported a variety of reasons for attending:

 *“With a keen interest in innovation already, I wanted to explore how to develop it further and understand what others are doing..”*

 *“With increased pressure there is a greater need to innovate and I wanted to understand how to do it as well as having an interest in research.”*

 *“It seemed like an innovative programme and I was interested in both the R&I and leadership aspects.”*

 *“I want to make R&I accessible to everyone as I see it as such an important element of the work we do..”*

## What participants valued about the programme

Participants valued many aspects of the programme as highlighted below:

### Relevant content

For many of the participants, the content was seen as both relevant and important to the work they do. They valued the reference to the NHS Healthcare Leadership framework and one participant has used the framework for structuring their PDR meeting and was very clear that they wanted to be able to use the programme to develop projects within their own service (some of which are described in more detail in the section on impact of the programme).

Participants also valued the knowledge and expertise of speakers and that content was pragmatic, with tools they could use in their own teams. Sending content out beforehand seemed to work well for those who like to read ahead.

### Opportunity to network with other professionals

The opportunity to develop regional networks was of great value as was the opportunity to meet others and hear different perspectives and to understand the regional support networks that are in place around research and innovation, for example the AHSN’s and the research hubs.

### Benchmark R&I practice against others

One participant valued the opportunity to…

*“assess where we are as a team in research and innovation and develop a team research strategy to support further development. I realised that we do innovation all the time, it’s part of business as usual for us.”*

### Space to think

For most of the participants, one of the greatest opportunities the course gave them was the time and space to think away from the pressures of daily life described as the “opportunity to mentally create.”

### The tutors

People valued the knowledge and approachable style of the tutors running the programme.

*“The tutors were fantastic, they put us at ease and offered support between sessions if needed.”*

Another commented that there was a good balance between the two tutors in terms of their knowledge – between them they knew both organisational development and research really well.

### The venue

The venues were chosen specifically to create a relaxed and creative space and people valued being at a quiet venue, near to amenities but with a relaxed and contemplative atmosphere.

## What participants gained from the programme

### Increased understanding of research and innovation

Participants reported they developed an understanding of both research and innovation. For several of the participants, it has ‘demystified’ research and enabled them to share this with their teams. One participant described how she intended to...

*“pull together staff with an interest in research at all levels and actively support those who want to study, involve people in action research and use action learning sets to explore concepts and approaches to research and innovation.”*

For another it provided an opportunity to think about how to create ‘research curious’ and ‘research active’ groups and is looking at how to structure the workforce to support research and innovation.

For other participants there was the realisation that they already were innovative but they hadn’t previously connected what they do to the term innovation.

### Greater confidence leading cultures of innovation and research

Participants recognised their leadership development through the programme and found the NHS framework a useful reference point and development aid especially those new in the leadership role who found the programme useful to establish how they want to lead and understand more about their leadership approach.

### Developing networks

Spending time with colleagues was of great benefit and moved people away from “thinking in your own bubble.” The experiential approach supported participants sharing their knowledge and expertise and learning from each other in a safe environment. Participants were able to share their challenges and techniques that work and commented how much they learned from each other.

### Time and space to think

Participants all reported very busy working lives and that having structured reflective space once a month helped them to identify how they want to work alongside input to develop strategies for the changes they want to implement.

### Strategies to encourage R&I in their own environment

All the participants had identified areas where they wanted to develop R&I. They described various strategies and projects that would support R&I, some of which are highlighted in the impact section of this report. Actions included:

* Establishing research champions in teams
* Sharing tools such as the leadership model with teams
* Setting up research interest groups
* Establishing innovation as ‘business as usual’
* Developing a team research strategy
* Reigniting enthusiasm for projects that had stalled.

## What got in the way of the participants learning effectively

### Group size

Participants commented on the small number in the groups, especially for cohort 2 and 3. When some participants were unable to attend workshops the opportunity to share practice and hear from others was reduced and the dynamics of the groups changed as well.

### Internal pressures

Several participants reported that they found it difficult to honour the time for the programme and to find time to reflect on the learning between the workshops.

For one participant, there was a recognition that the day-to-day operational pressures meant that they didn’t feel they had the time to be innovative and it happened in a ‘silo.’ Another felt they didn’t have time to ‘look up’ when back at work.

### Action learning sets

For many of the participants, the action learning sets didn’t work as well as they had hoped. One commented that the Action Learning set lacked ‘direction and purpose’ and the group size was too small with only three attendees attending each action learning set. Others were also unclear as to their purpose and remit.

### 360 feedback tool

One participant reported that they couldn’t access the 360 tool which was part of the programme and that when they contacted the office, they didn’t get a response so they didn’t do that part of the programme.

### Resources for linking with research departments were limited.

One participant was disappointed not to have the opportunity to spend time in a research department because there were insufficient resources.

## Opportunities to transfer learning

Participants identified areas where they felt able to transfer the learning and what was or could get in the way.

### Senior management sponsorship or support

One participant was keen to implement a research strategy within her own organisation but was struggling to get time to meet her CEO to explain the strategy and get their commitment. It seems a crucial element of learning transfer is that both attendance and transfer of learning is supported by senior management for participants.

### Course materials

Participants valued the course materials and concepts that were used and said that they were going back to them for reference and sharing them with others within their organisations.

### Focus on targets and numbers

One participant recognised how their behaviour could stifle innovation as a senior manager if they focused too heavily on targets and numbers rather than on enabling projects and ideas to flourish.

## Future programme improvements

### Clarify purpose and process of action learning

The action learning component of the programme was the most mentioned element that people felt could be improved. They were unclear on how it could benefit them and the process they were expected to engage in. Several suggested that for it to be useful, there needed to be greater explanation of how to do it and potentially have it facilitated all the time. The sets would work better with larger group size, with at least 6 or more participants.

### Offer greater structure and direction for the programme

Several participants commented that they were unclear who the course was aimed at and felt that more detailed joining instructions with information on the type of participant who would benefit would help. Some participants also wanted a clearer programme/sense of direction through the programme.

### Ensure group size is adequate

When the group size was less than 6, participants felt that the opportunity to learn and share best practice was diminished. It also made the action learning sets harder to manage. For future cohorts, a minimum number of 8 would help to manage this.

### Encourage application of concepts

Some participants felt that the programme content could have been strengthened if it included specific stories or case studies on where and how people have changed their culture.

### Ensure adequate resources

A key part of the programme was spending time in a research environment but one participant had not been offered that opportunity because of insufficient resources.

### Managing the balance between R&I and Leadership input

For some participants they would have liked the balance to shift more to research and innovation with less on leadership development. As one participant commented: *“if we’re already at band 8 or above, most of us have done quite a lot of training on leadership already.”*

However, this was not the case for everyone as another participant said she would have liked more time on leadership development and felt there was an *“assumption that everyone was already experienced leaders.”* Overall, the balance appears to be about right, but it is probably worth understanding the different experience levels on each course and having the capacity to flex content to suit.

## The impact of the programme

There was evidence from all of the participants interviewed that the programme had been useful and impacted on their practice. Below are two case studies of how the programme has supported individuals and how they are using it within their organisations and beyond.

### Senior Manager 1

The programme was chosen to increase knowledge about the research process and potentially explore the possibility of doing a PhD. Research until the point of starting the programme was a slightly ‘scary concept’. The programme was completed in April 2015 and the manager is now in the early stages of applying the learning. She described the programme as..

*“one of the few programmes that I’ve attended that I feel I have really learnt something, I’ve benefited from this and there’s something I can take away and do something with.”*

She is engaged in various activities as a result of the programme:

1. Having conversations with her own teams around innovation and how they can come up with ideas to improve the experience for service users. She recognises that within the teams there are more conversations about innovation than previously.
2. She also intends to establish ‘research champions’ within each team that can source research and keep up to date and share this.
3. She is setting up a project to create a culture where R&I can flourish by:
	1. Meeting the CEO to get commitment on R&I
	2. Establishing research champions and clarify the role for those people
	3. Looking at how to become part of research trials
4. She is also exploring doing a PhD herself.

### Senior Manager 2

This person manages 14 teams of around 100 people. The Trust already focused on innovation and he wanted to understand what it meant for the Trust. He was clear before he started what he wanted to get from the programme and saw it as a programme where you had to participate and engage. As a result of the programme he has established a number of projects. These include:

1. Looking at how innovation is promoted within teams – what it is and how the service does it? Then look at how they can develop capacity through innovation within teams.
2. Commissioned an external consultancy group to take the senior team to walk and talk about innovation
3. Created a new project around employability in partnership with an external organisation
4. The team are presenting two papers at a national conference
5. The team has co-worked an early intervention programme with ward staff to divert people away from the ward
6. Creating a ‘mental health selfie’ campaign to create positive images of people with mental health problems as they recognised the images are often negative
7. Using the techniques from the course such as mindfulness to create a space for innovation and see if ideas spring to mind
8. Looking at how to get accommodation for people so they can move off a ward into secure housing environment more quickly. Keith has established a link with a housing partner and adult mental health along with corporate services and they are looking at how they put together a joint bid for funding of up to £125m to be able to offer accommodation.

Keith recognises that it is early days for many of the projects but he is optimistic about the difference it can make. On a personal level, he is using the NHS 9 dimension model for leadership to consider his own development.

# Conclusion

The participants spoken to as part of this research report a huge value from having attended the ‘Leading cultures of innovation and research’ and are all able to identify many benefits from attending. They valued the experiential programme approach which needs high level of participation from those attending to maximise learning. The balance between leadership and innovation/research appears overall to work, although for future programmes it is worth considering the experience of attendees and flexing the emphasis accordingly.

The main areas which can further strengthen the programme are:

* Explain the purpose and process of action learning more clearly and support with early facilitation
* Ensure the group size is a minimum of 8 participants, ideally 10-12.
* Ensure potential participants are clear on what the programme offers and who it is aimed at

One participant also suggested that the programme can link clinicians and research hubs as some people didn’t know that research hubs existed.

The overall view of the programme can be summarised with the following quote from one of the participants:

*“I learned a lot. It was quite innovative and a breath of fresh air, a programme that combined leadership concepts with change management and with a purpose around R&I was really nice. You’ve got people coming on the course who were keen to embed some kind of process in their own organisation and I had the opportunity to learn with and from some really experienced people. I guess the difficulty now is that I’ve had the learning, now I need to go away and do it...”*

# Acknowledgements

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# Appendix One. Interview questions

* Can you describe a little about your background and role please?
* Why were you attracted to the programme?
* What was the experience like for you?
* What impact has the programme had on you/ your team/your work?
* What has had the most impact for you?
* What got in the way of your learning?
* How was the balance between leadership development and innovation and  research
* What will help you to apply your learning?
* What can get in the way of you applying the learning?
* What do you think could improve this programme?
* What are you telling colleagues and managers about the programme and the learning from it ie a sort of friends and family test?
* What are your next steps now following the programme.
* Any other comments?

# Appendix Two - Overview of the programme

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| Day 1 | Will focus on exploring the role of leadership in shaping and influencing culture, examining what is meant by a culture of research and innovation and the current policies which are shaping the national R&I agendas within the NHS. Skills relevant to facilitating action learning sets will also be explored. |
| Day 2 | The focus of the second day will be on your role as a leader in developing a culture of R&I and working strategically to develop and expand your networks. You will increase your understanding of the major regional R&I networks including the Academic Health Science Network, the Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care and explore how your service can engage with them. The day will include a facilitated Action Learning Set |
| Day 3 | The third day will explore the organisational cultures of R&I which exist currently within NHS Trusts, the factors which influence and shape them and the key stakeholders. The development of an R&I strategy will be covered as will skills related to influencing and negotiating. |
| Day 4 | The final day will provide you with the opportunity to explore the culture of R&I within your service/team, potential areas of development, opportunities and challenges. |

The programme comprises:

* 4 inter-linked one day workshops  (1 per month)
* An external organisational visit organised in collaboration with North West Coast Academic Health Science Network.

The programme will utilise a range of methods with an emphasis on experiential learning and will include factually based content, external speakers and interactive group work.

Some work will be set prior to and during the programme to enable you to situate your learning within organisational and service contexts.

The programme is free of charge and will run in 3 locations in Cumbria and Lancashire starting in November 2014.

Outline Programme

**Day 1**

 9.30 Welcome & Introductions

 10.00 Providing authentic leadership for research & innovation

 10.30 Making the case for research & innovation

 11.00 Refreshments

 11.15 Cultures and how they are created

 11.45 What do we know about cultures of research & innovation

 Rich picture exercise

 1.00 Lunch

 1.45 The leader’s role in creating cultures of research & innovation

 2.45 Introduction to action learning sets

 3.15 Refreshments and action learning sets

 4.30 Next steps and evaluation

**Day 2**

 9.30 Introductions and setting the scene

 10.00 Sharing our Visions for R&I Elevator Pitches

 10.45 Why strategic working in R&I

 11.15 Refreshments

 11.15 Leading Cultures of R&I through effective relationships and connections HCLM. Community Mapping

 12.30 The Regional Perspective: Dr Sally Spencer Lancaster and Cumbria Clinical Research Hub

 Lunch

 1.45 Strategic Working and Networking

 2.00 Collaborative working in R&I

 2.35 Effective Networking – tips and tribulations

 3.00 Refreshments

 3.15 Action Learning Sets

 4.30 Next steps

**Day 3**

**Day 4**

 9.30 Leading teams and holding to account

 10.00 Leadership style

 11.00 Refreshments

 11.15 building capability in R&I

 12.00 Skills synthesis network

 12.30 Leading the team

 1.00 Lunch

 1.45 Leading the team contd.

 2.00 Your R&I plans and holding to account

 3.00 Refreshments

 3.15 Next steps

 3.45 Evaluation