



Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Self directed teams (SDTs) are pivotal to the Trust's vision for empowering front line staff to use their skills and knowledge and have a greater say in how resources are allocated and services are developed to the benefit of patients and other service users.

"The SDTs promote real involvement, deliver flexibility, create a climate of innovation and bring decision making closer to the patient"
Adeline Hunt, facilitator and staff side representative

The Trust made a commitment to develop SDTs in the vision, mission and values contained in 'Together We Can – Partnership with Employees' a partnership agreement signed by the recognised staff side trade unions in 2003. With active support from the staff side, the Trust has developed a number of new approaches to employee involvement and leadership development in order to manage change more effectively. See IPA case study series 4, number 7.

SDTs are defined as "a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks and hold themselves accountable to their goals and commitments." They are also physically defined by their capacity to identify themselves, and be identified by others as an intact "social entity" capable of managing relationships across organisational boundaries.

Forty-three teams have been established since November 2003, covering over 1000 employees, or about a fifth of the workforce. Currently, the smallest team covers 4 people and the largest 180 people. Teams include both professional and ancillary services, covering main sites, residential services and community based employees.

The SDT model

Any group that considers itself to be a social entity or distinct group of employees may apply to become self directed. SDTs need to have a clear mission and purpose, and be able to identify specific benefits from becoming self directed. They must also identify a recognisable leader, team members and relevant partners, including: patients, carers, Trust departments and relevant external agencies.

New teams are selected in competition by a panel and successful teams are taken on in cohorts of about 8 to 10 teams at a time, every 6 months. Each new team is appointed an STD Trust Facilitator from a new SDT Service whose role it is to promote new behaviours and leadership styles within and between the teams. The Facilitators' role is also designed to ensure that new ways of

Business information

Company:	Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
Business description:	Mental healthcare and learning disability NHS Trust
UK headquarters:	Nottingham
Staff:	6000+
Sites:	Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Leicestershire

working are grounded in benefits for patients, clear frameworks for performance management and budgetary control.

Each new SDT is required to complete a 6 month development programme and produce a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate:

- A clear purpose, grounded in benefits for its service users
- A teamworking approach within an open culture which brings high levels of staff satisfaction
- Strong leadership with accountability and responsibility that is shared amongst all team members
- Efficient use of team resources and a record of continuous improvement in team performance
- An excellent relationship with partner agencies, demonstrating the ability to be a good partner and to influence and negotiate on behalf of the service user
- A commitment to reflective practice and team learning which has qualitative benefits for service users
- Service users and carers are full partners in the work of the team, including decision making and performance monitoring at all levels
- All team members are committed to working together as a way of improving services.

The SDT Facilitators, together with the SDT teams have developed a range of tools, including a competency framework, to assist teams in diagnosing their current performance level and give them a pathway for further improvement. The teams are involved in workshops and master classes designed to support their development. The SDT Trust Facilitators are also available to provide them with day-to-day support.

Making it work

SDTs are required to operate strictly within the policies and procedures established by the Trust. They also are empowered to make many operational decisions without having to refer them to senior management.

Under the guidance of a leader, team members are expected to take greater responsibility for scheduling their own work, to look for innovative ways of improving patient care, and communicate directly with patients, partners, stakeholders (both internal and external) and other departments within the Trust. They are also expected to evaluate existing practices and identify new ways of improving the service provided to service users.

In return, the teams become more autonomous in identifying their own priorities and long term business plan. Teams also become responsible for agreeing their own budget including both staff and non-staff investment. Individual teams are supported centrally by their directorate and other departments including Personnel, Finance and Clinical Governance, as well as by the full time SDT Facilitators.

Measurement and benefits

The Trust recognises that self direction is an iterative process and that both staff and managers will take time to develop new ways of working. Once teams have completed the development programme, they are required to

continue to update their portfolio and to resubmit it for review after 12 and 24 months. All new teams are regarded as pilot projects for the first 12 months.

The SDTs have become an important component in the Trust's commitment to empower staff at all levels in making operational decisions. This is achieved by reducing the management hierarchy and encouraging more local involvement in both day-to-day and longer term service planning.

As a result, the Trust believes that teams have become more flexible and responsive to the changing needs of service users and better able to meet both clinical and corporate governance obligations.

The high performance workplace

This case study forms part of a project entitled 'Adaptable Enterprises'. The project includes educational and networking activities on: high performance working, healthy working and performance, the future of work and organisation, and intellectual capital. The project is conducted by the UK Work Organisation Network (UKWON), coordinated by the IPA and supported by the European Social Fund. Further information is available from juliet.webster@ipa-involve.com

Other case studies in this series include:

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- Bromford Housing Group
- School Trends
- Westinghouse UK Fuels Business
- Westland Transmissions Ltd

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This case study was researched and written by Robert Stevens, Research and Information Manager, IPA. The views in this case study are those of the participants and may not reflect those of the IPA.



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