Question and answer session – North SPF Meeting 20 January 2017

Q. How do you support partnership working in system change when there is a lack of capacity? This includes time for management and staff side and the resilience and mental capacity of staff.

A.

Paul – the NHS is good at adding layers of bureaucracy and there is often too many initiatives going on. There needs to be a focus on what is required and stop strategies that are not essential – this should create extra capacity.

Sue – organisations need to develop a business case which sets out the benefits of investment to create the capacity required to manage system change. A fully funded staff side with clear expectations of their role in the change process and what is expected of them should be of benefit. Due to the complexity of the current change programme, it may be necessary to put in place a development programme for staff side to ensure they can be effective.

Jon – there needs to be a strategic discussion about capacity – to identify priority areas and build capacity to support those areas. Organisations could think creatively about how they release people and be more agile with resources to provide support for system transformation.

Michael – each STP needs someone with the skills to build relationships and make connections between representatives in each organisation in an STP footprint. They would be able ensure that relevant people within the STP work together and have a joined up approach.

Liane – resilience often gets lost during a transition process. In a recent reconfiguration she was involved in, many of those people who had successfully kept their jobs still looked ‘battered’ at the end of the process. Those people who coped well with the reconfiguration reported that they had received good support from their line managers and they also had a clear sense of their role and the value it brought. These staff members were better able to maintain perspective during the reconfiguration and keep their sense of humour. Lianne said she would share the work they had done so far – looking at resilience through this reconfiguration.

Q. What will the impact of regional identities be on new ways of working?

A.

Michael – one size does not fit all. Those areas that have or will have mayors may want to have greater alignment between public services than those that don’t.

Jon – a national package could be developed which allows sufficient flexibility at an STP level. This would prevent unnecessary duplication of effort and help simplify transformation.

Paul – there is often a tribal nature within the NHS. Strong leadership could help change this – with staff having pride for working for the NHS across a place, rather than a specific organisation.

Q. How do we ensure that organisations that don’t currently work with trade unions, adopt a partnership approach?

A.
Liane - trade unions need to proactive with those organisations, who they feel, are not engaging with them. For example, identifying the chair of a CCG – someone who they can build a rapport with. Through working in partnership trade unions will show they can provide constructive support, which benefits staff and the organisation they work for and the STP. This will help persuade, previously reluctant management, of the importance of working with trade unions.

Paul – commissioners need to recognise that staff side should have a place round the table in commissioning decisions. He said that behaviour begat behaviour and that if both commissioners and staff side adopted a partnership approach, this would build trust and lead to meaningful discussions, for the benefit of staff and service provision.

Jon – case studies can be used to demonstrate the benefits of partnership working and the risks of not involving staff and their representatives in system change. He advised that the HPMA Award for partnership working between employers and trade unions provided an opportunity to identify, reward and publicise excellent partnership working.

Michael – trust is critical and partners need to practice what they preach. Partnership working should be used to design principles and test what is proposed to ensure it is the best approach.

Q. What legal authority do STPs have?

A.

All - none

Paul – there is a need under the STP process for individuals to give up their autonomy for the greater good. Services will be redesigned and staff will work differently. Leadership needs to support staff and make the case for change and benefits it will bring.

Michael – as there is no legal authority within the STP, it will be necessary for partners to identify and connect with those people within the STP that have influence.