Leadership: A Team Approach

Introduction

Leadership is increasingly on everyone's agenda and clinical leadership has become one of the "buzz words" in 21st century health care. Clinical leadership is not a modern concept. Quite the contrary: leadership has existed since the inception of the NHS. However, the health and social care landscape is changing, and at an unprecedented rate. Role transformation, increasing complexity of care, an ageing workforce, difficulties in recruitment and retention and rising patient expectations are the reality of primary care.

Health and social care are delivered by teams, comprising people we currently work closely with, whilst others in the team may operate out with our workplace. Primary care has undergone a significant evolution and many practices consist of inter-professional and multi-agency teams. Team-working is central to the future of primary care yet enabling these teams to function effectively is complex.[1]

A range of leaders and leadership styles is needed for our new primary healthcare teams. The traditional style of command and control leadership: where seniors make executive decisions then direct the actions of their team, reflecting a hierarchical NHS culture, is no longer appropriate for day-to-day practice. However, in crisis situations, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, this approach is necessary in co-ordinating a response, allocating resources effectively, and providing rapidly evolving information and guidance in a consistent and prompt fashion.

Many clinicians and non-clinical staff exercise leadership as part of everyday practice, but may not recognise it, and may believe that their ability to influence others is minimal.[1] This module will focus on leadership issues within the primary healthcare team but the authors recognise that other leadership opportunities exist within clusters and Health and Social Care Partnerships in NHS Scotland.

This module has the following aims:
- To present and discuss different leadership styles
- To consider the range of attributes and skills of different team leaders
- Help with the leadership of conflict arising in team-working
- To introduce different ways of thinking that may help teams to work better than before.