

NHS North West Leadership Academy (COOs)

A “Centre for Excellence” in senior leadership and strategy development, the Leadership Academy supports the region’s senior leaders and their Boards to deliver the most effective healthcare to their local populations.



Project background

The Leadership Academy provides a wide range of programmes aimed at supporting individual development of senior leaders and members of the Board, as well as talent management and access to bespoke, high-quality leadership tools and resources to support innovation and thought leadership.

Having already designed two programmes for HR Directors and Directors of Nursing, the Strategic Health Authority identified the need for a similar development programme for Chief Operating Officers (COOs) responsible for delivering the region’s primary care services.

Originally intended to help COOs to

address the challenges of fully embedding a patient-centred approach aligned to the NHS’s World Class commissioning agenda, the programme’s needs radically changed when a new NHS Operating Framework was introduced which involved the re-structuring of the 24-strong PCT network, ultimately leading to major changes to the COO role.

The proposed development approach had to be quickly revised to respond to the new and pressing need to support a group of key managers who were not only directly affected by the change, but were also being asked to take the lead in implementing it.

HEALTH SECTOR

Business needs

- Support for COOs after a restructure
- Exploration of goals and career advice
- Enhanced leadership behaviour

Psychometric tools used

- 16PF

Benefits

- Higher self-awareness
- More clearly defined ‘next steps’ for participants
- Renewed strength and energy of COOs

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*Deborah Arnot
Deputy Director*



The solution

The Leadership Academy was keen for COOs to experience the programme as a source of vital individual support during a time of change and great stress – as well as an opportunity to explore their skills as transformative leaders, irrespective of the form this might take in the future. In order to achieve this, OPP offered a development centre targeted at addressing individual goals in an informal and supportive, but constructively challenging, setting. It was imperative that the ‘look and feel’ of the event reflected its aims, so OPP provided a two-day residential programme that also allowed time for relaxation and individual reflection.

In order to meet the needs of both the participants and the Leadership Academy, OPP created a solution that would combine a practical and objective focus on current performance with an exploration of each individual’s goals and future career choices. Less emphasis was given to testing and benchmarking, and more focus to ‘in the moment’ feedback, personal discovery, individual coaching and goal setting. All of the data gathered was kept entirely confidential and used purely for the purpose of enhancing self-awareness.

The first day saw different workplace simulations framed by sessions which looked at the psychological concept of ‘self-talk’ and its impact on leadership behaviour – a concept that performance can be enhanced or restricted by a naturally occurring internal monologue. By reducing the interference from negative or inaccurate self-perceptions, an individual can unlock their potential and improve their performance. Throughout day one, OPP’s consultants facilitated touch-base coaching sessions that reviewed key themes from the day’s activities, as well as the impact of any unhelpful ‘self-talk’. This provided a basis for the following day’s work.

The second day consisted of a 16PF feedback session, and a three-hour one-to-one coaching session structured around the competency set designed by OPP. The previous day’s activities were explored, drawing out any links with psychometric data, key competencies, ‘self talk’ themes and self-evaluations. Each coaching session concluded with goal setting and action planning, assisting participants to develop concrete plans for the future. Based on the information gathered during the event, a confidential individual feedback report was subsequently drafted for each participant by OPP’s team of occupational psychologists.

Results

OPP’s flexibility was really important to the success of the programme, as Deborah Arnot, Deputy Director of the Leadership Academy, explains, “Our relationship with OPP and their ability to adapt and flex their approach was invaluable in this particular situation.”

“Rather than focusing on a defined future role it was necessary to consider the development offer on a much more individual basis,” Deborah says. “OPP undertook this with great skill and sensitivity, both in the design and the delivery of the programme.”

Feedback from participants who attended the development was very positive, with 80% stating that the event would have a positive impact on their performance at work, and every participant highly rating the levels of self-awareness it had helped them achieve. All participants said they would use what they had learned in the workplace “frequently”, and when asked what they had learnt from the programme, participants expressed that OPP’s work had helped them to be open to new ideas about their own success.

“It can be un-nerving to put oneself to the test in the present climate, and the programme fully recognised this in its development structure and execution,” says John Harrop of Manchester Community Health (part of NHS Manchester) who took part in the programme. “The psychometric tests and other outputs were coordinated through the Academy in a way that worked almost on a ‘need to know’ basis, and this kept the ownership and ‘power’ with the individual.”

Participants went away from the programme with more concrete plans for ‘next steps’, as well as a clearer idea about how to re-shape their career path. Crucially, the programme gave them a sense of empowerment, helping to re-frame the challenges faced and tackle their current situation with renewed strength and energy.

Established in Oxford in 1989, OPP is one of Europe’s largest providers of business psychology solutions. Its products and services are used by SMEs and multi-national organisations in more than 25 countries. OPP develops the 16PF personality assessment and also distributes many of the world’s leading psychometric instruments, including the MBTI, FIRO and TKI tools.

To find out how OPP can help your organisation with talent identification, teambuilding and leadership development, call +44 (0)845 603 9958 or visit www.opp.com.