

Little things matter

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Summary

Through the use of a structured quality improvement programme, GSTT wheelchair service have empowered the entire multi-disciplinary team to streamline processes, remove waste from the system, and engage with service development.

Aims and objectives

This paper aims to outline how a quality improvement programme helped with bringing about changes and an increased sense of engagement within a wheelchair service team.

The paper will share some of the successes of the programme from the staff perspective – what was delivered and how they felt. It will also demonstrate some of the improvements achieved.

Background

The service used a formal quality improvement programme, supported by the team at Lean-Enabled to bring about service improvements. The team came in with no preconceived ideas of how the service should be run, and very much used a bottom up approach where everyone's ideas mattered equally.

GSTT was introducing the quality improvement programme, and the wheelchair service was chosen as one of the pilot services, with the expectation that we would build and test the programme, creating a system for other services within the trust to adopt.

At the outset, it was acknowledged that, whilst we had a great multidisciplinary team, we were sharing an office, though not necessarily working together. There was variable morale, with some staff not feeling they had a voice.

Once the service had identified what it ultimately wanted to achieve, in this case meeting the 18-week referral to treatment, the formal programme was implemented. The service started by process mapping each component of the service in detail, breaking down the steps, and identifying waste in the system. This helped with identifying where the service needed to focus its energies.

Daily 'huddles' were put in place. These allowed the team to come together regularly to:

- focus on the aim
- look at relevant data in real time, review and modify what needed to be collected
- monitor ideas for improvement, focusing on 3 at a time
- hold ourselves to account
- celebrate our achievements

Discussion

Through the use of the structured quality improvement programme, everyone in the service was given a purpose and sense of responsibility to put forward ideas and develop the service in a way which was felt to work for our clients. It didn't matter how small an idea was; they were all significant in bringing about change and improvement.

What we found was that by focusing on the little things, the big ideas miraculously got done as well, as we were not overwhelmed and bogged down in the detail. There was also improved morale

within the service as everyone had a role to play. Even those who were sceptical to begin with have joined in and engaged with the process.

Front sheets for our notes are now digitised; there are stock boards in each of the stock areas to assist with monitoring; spreadsheets, including the waiting list, are all shared documents; and we had our first hugely successful Christmas lunch in 2019!

The service is now using the skills learnt to instigate redesign and improvements in the wake of COVID 19. It has empowered us to take control. As therapists, technical instructors, administrators and rehabilitation engineers who work within the service, we are best placed to design and develop the service.

It has also put us firmly on the radar in a large organisation.

No idea was too little or silly - it is the weird and wonderful that matter most!

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The Lean-Enabled Group is a management consultancy company offering bespoke continuous improvement support within the NHS. The team consists of highly experienced improvement experts (formally NHS transformation directors) who are passionate about improving quality, safety, and staff engagement within the NHS.

They work on the premise that “those who work in the process know how to improve the process”. The company supports the leadership at all levels to apply a systematic improvement process that aligns, empowers, and engages the workforce to improve together. They work closely with staff at the front line to help unlock their potential and support them to make small, incremental improvements to help increase staff and patient satisfaction every day.