

# Canterbury District Health Board

## THE CHALLENGE

The Canterbury District Health Board is a workplace full of compassionate, caring and clinically dedicated professionals. It also has many leaders with clinical expertise but limited leadership experience. A lot is expected of them however they often don't receive much leadership development and can feel isolated within their own clinical service. Health leaders have previously accessed ad-hoc leadership learning. While this is valuable in principle it also meant that the organisation had no common framework or language with which to talk about leadership.

Our challenge was therefore threefold:

- To better support and enable our health leaders to enhance their current leadership effectiveness to maintain consistent and high-quality compassionate patient care
- To create connections across the health system to reduce leaders' sense of isolation and utilise shared experiences to enable high-performing teams and service improvement
- To develop an overriding framework with supporting models and tools to create a unified approach to leadership across the CDHB

## THE APPROACH

A number of in-house leadership programmes, campaigns and resources were created. One that's had a significant impact is the *Enhancing Leadership Programme*. This is a one-year programme that includes individual leadership coaching, a residential workshop and regular Action Learning Groups. The core content focuses on:

- Demonstrating key elements of leadership and personal characteristics that determine leadership effectiveness
- Leading others effectively via greater self-awareness and clarity of roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Enhancing team and organisational performance

The entire programme is underpinned by the Leadership Circle Profile (LCP). For most participants, this was the first time they've had significant feedback from other staff and they valued this immensely. There's plenty of health sector research that illustrates the impact of how a leader 'shows up' and how this can have a direct impact on the delivery of clinical care. The LCP, therefore, was paramount to ensuring our participants recognise the strengths they bring to their leadership roles and what aspects may be holding them back. In our final evaluation, 81% of participants rated the impact of the LCP coaching as either significant or extremely significant.

## THE IMPACT

The *Enhancing Leadership Programme* has now been running for 10 years and is always oversubscribed. For many of the participants, this is the first time in their clinical careers that they've had an opportunity to stop and reflect on their leadership. For some it's offered 'light bulb' moments for how others view them as leaders and for others it's been a precious opportunity to receive confirmation that they're doing a great job. For all of the participants, it's provided a unique opportunity to connect with other leaders across the health sector, to form collaborative connections, and to recognise that their leadership challenges are shared by others.

From an organisational perspective, we've seen a demonstrated improvement in leadership ability by those attending the programme. In particular, leaders are more deliberate with clearly articulating their strategic vision and priorities; they recognise and promote the importance of acknowledging and valuing their staff; they have more skills in navigating a better work/life rhythm. They feel more confident and enabled to lead their services with a clarity of purpose and the support of their teams.

*“I have much more confidence in my ability as a leader. The 360 feedback was incredibly useful and having an understanding of how others see me was very enlightening. I'm more grateful and appreciative; I have reduced my stress; and am better with growing relationships and supporting my colleagues”.*

*The Canterbury District Health Board provides health care services to the population of Canterbury. It has a staff of roughly 10,000, combining clinical, administrative and support services. It provides healthcare through community providers, public health networks, hospitals, and a range of other services.*