Developing future leaders across the healthcare sector

CHAIR

- Prof Dean Fathers, chair, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust

SPEAKERS

- Chris Hopson, chief executive, NHS Providers
- Martin Hancock, national head of talent management, NHS Leadership Academy
- Dr Navina Evans, chief executive, East London NHS Foundation Trust

SESSION SUMMARY

- Chris shared his perspective as one who spends roughly half his time with NHS trust leaders and half his time with national system leaders. What is key is that leaders at all levels take the decision to give the appropriate time to leadership development and equality and diversity despite how squeezed things have become. There is now an agreed framework for improvement and developing people and NHS leaders at all levels have a collective responsibility to make its vision a reality. At the national level. At the level of groups of trusts. And at the individual trust level.

- Martin presented the agreed framework of the Developing People Improving Care (DPIC), which distils a number of reports on leadership in the NHS. An update on the implementation of DPIC will be published shortly. The NHS needs an approach that is both inclusive and selective. Inclusive in that all staff are supported to fulfil their potential. Selective in that future senior leaders are identified and supported to become compassionate and inclusive leaders. NHS system leaders and trust boards need to make talent management a top level priority, on a par with quality and finance. Talent management needs to be fully resourced and take place on a level wider than individual trusts. A pilot talent management board has been established for the Midlands and East region to test out new approaches at the regional level, and the initial indications are promising.

- Navina shared her leadership journey. Navina grew up in a Commonwealth country and looked to the NHS as one of the distinctive aspects of Britain. It has been wonderful to first work in and now lead an organisation within that NHS. Navina pursued a rewarding career in psychiatry before her CEO took an interest in her career and pushed her to develop further. This chief executive, and others at each stage of Navina’s career have acted as mentors and have been an invaluable part of her leadership journey. She decided to take part in the aspiring chief executives programme, which helped her reflect on her own leadership behaviour, clarify that she really did want to be a CEO, and also made her a part of a cohort of people with a positive outlook. For Navina’s trust the three well established targets for the trust’s leadership are patient satisfaction, staff satisfaction, and financial viability. For aspiring leaders Navina says – go for it. For current leaders Navina says – please mentor, and remember it’s your responsibility to develop future leaders (and perhaps it should be in your objectives!). For those with power – please treat emerging leaders with respect.
• The chair asked delegate tables to discuss and agree a key word or phrase about which to push the speakers for further clarity.

• **Quiet talent:** This concept suggests that some potential leaders tend to be more reflective, more considered, and less likely to put themselves forward for leadership development. Yet they are often well equipped to provide long-term, sustainable leadership. Quiet talent points to the need for the NHS to not rely only on self-selection and to pursue cerebral diversity within its future leaders.

• **Compassionate and inclusive leadership:** This concept is based on the work of Professor Michael West. It involves listening and paying attention to, and showing empathy, care and respect for the people one leads. The Department of Health and its national bodies create the conditions in which NHS trust leaders operate – do these conditions promote compassionate and inclusive leadership? At the trust level leaders need to act as ‘firebreak’, shielding staff from national pressure to empower them to provide excellent care for patients.

• **Culture:** It’s important to define culture within an organisation. That culture and associated behaviours must then be modelled by leaders at all levels of an organisation and key processes, for example recruitment, must be aligned. Staff surveys are a key tool for monitoring progress on embedding culture within the organisation.