

Develop your leadership skills with the Tomorrow's Leaders Programme



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Leading service improvement and trialling innovative ways to deliver healthcare with limited resources is an on-going dilemma in many areas within the NHS. Deploying the knowledge and skills and building the confidence to initiate change can be daunting in diabetes, where new technologies, medications and advances in science can sometimes feel intimidating.

In 2015, Diabetes UK collaborated with TREND-UK and Leicester Diabetes Centre to share their expertise in training and leadership. Together they developed a free leadership course, initially for adult and paediatric diabetes specialist nurses and dietitians. The course leaders and Diabetes UK soon recognised that other healthcare professionals should be included, so podiatrists were added. Shortly afterwards, courses were opened to all diabetes professionals starting their journey as leaders in diabetes care. More recently a leadership course specifically for pharmacists has been added in response to the increasingly important role pharmacists have at the forefront of diabetes care. This short article outlines what to expect, based on my experience of the programme.

The programme

The Tomorrow's Leaders Programme focused on key aspects of leadership and effective communication to help individuals hold more useful conversations (see *Box 1*). The programme also looked at current hot topics in diabetes and the wider NHS environment, and helped identify pressures and barriers that prevent or slow down local service innovation. Appreciating where power and influence lie within the NHS is important, and knowing who the pivotal people are in organisations where you hope to make changes can be very useful.

The programme ran over 3 days in total, with the first 2 days running consecutively, then a follow-up

Box 1. Goals of the programme.

- Develop the skills needed to drive transformational improvements in diabetes care
- Understand your leadership style
- Learn who and how to influence
- Identify barriers and solutions to improving care
- Join a network of diabetes professionals with a passion for better diabetes care

day a couple of months later. Novo Nordisk, AstraZeneca and the Medtronic Foundation worked in collaboration with Diabetes UK to provide support and funding, but had no input into the programme content.

Part 1: Days 1 and 2

Gathering participants' thoughts and ideas

Each participant was asked to bring along an idea for local service improvement or to identify where a change could be helpful in their current practice. These ideas were discussed during the first part of the course. Participants were asked to try and pinpoint how far they had managed to progress and what obstacles they had encountered. With a coach and one or two other participants in a small group, attendees then worked together to plan the steps needed to move forward as part of a service development plan.

Making a pitch

Part of the programme included delivering an 'elevator pitch' to the larger group, who then offered advice and potential ideas for further progression. An elevator pitch is where a participant tries to focus the main points of their idea into three or four key sentences that can be delivered in 2–3 minutes. That is about the length of time you may find yourself in a lift with an influential person with whom you need to engage in your proposed

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work and whose attention you wish to grab with your great idea.

Part 2: Day 3

Review progress

In the follow-up session 2 months later, participants discussed how they were advancing their service development plan. They identified old or new barriers to progress. They also tried to recognise changes in their own leadership and management style or skills that may have enabled them to influence managers and motivate other team members.

Post-COVID: Diabetes UK's *Discovering Leadership* programme

Diabetes UK has recently grouped its Tomorrow's Leaders courses together with other leadership opportunities under the new banner *Discovering Leadership*.

The first 5-month programme began on 18 August. Every 2 weeks, participants are either invited to a live online classroom or are

provided with online content to help develop their leadership skills and projects. Live, interactive classrooms take place in the evenings, lasting no more than 1.5 hours, and recordings are available for those who cannot attend a session. Participants are also encouraged to connect through peer groups, at times which they can arrange. Diabetes UK hopes to open more dates in the future.

The Clinical Champions Programme remains a separate entity. Clinical Champions join the 2-year leadership development programme, during which time they develop the skills to deliver a project to transform local diabetes care. ■

Develop your skills

If you are interested in joining a future *Discovering Leadership* course opportunity, keep an eye on the website, which will be updated regularly to include new materials:

www.diabetes.org.uk/professionals/resources/leadership-programmes/discovering-leadership

Next issue: Successful application in practice

In the next issue we plan to follow a recent Tomorrow's Leaders participant who attended the programme with one idea and came back with a completely different one based on a task they were asked to do on the first day of the course. This idea has grown into a new and exciting initiative for patient engagement and has been well received by service users. It has already secured sponsorship from Eli Lilly to enable other UK diabetes services access and may also be used for other long-term conditions. Watch this space!

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