

## Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust use psychometrics to support organisational change

**Business Challenge:** Manage cultural and behavioural shifts aimed at increasing engagement within the NHS, through new processes across recruitment, development, coaching, and team building.

### Background

Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (MCHFT) is a branch of the NHS which provides a comprehensive range of acute, maternity and child health services to a population of 280,000 living in the area. The Trust was established as an NHS trust in 1991, and as a result of its excellent performance, was granted Foundation Trust status in 2008. With over 3,500 employees, there is strong focus on high-quality patient care, team building and leadership. One of the seven key initiatives laid out in the five-year strategic plan for MCHFT is "Developing our staff."

Lisa Gresty is an Organisational Development Practitioner in the Learning and Development team, part of the Workforce & Service Development Directorate who as a team have responsibility for this initiative. Lisa explains that there are "changes that we are trying to manage at the Trust in terms of the cultural and behavioural shift needed as we move to being measured on quality outcomes rather than number of patients". These changes are happening against a backdrop of transformation in the way funding is secured for the NHS. This means that the Trust needs to "get the best quality from our people", in Lisa's words, by improving self-awareness and team collaboration across the Trust.

The Workforce and Service Development team are responsible for developing new ways of working. They knew that psychometrics could act as a foundation block to underpin and help manage this change. They saw psychometric tools as providing a consistent platform across the organisation for development, coaching, and team building as well as improving recruitment and selection practices to hire better fit to role, especially for senior positions. To meet all of these needs, the Trust chose a combination of three of the most widely used, valid and reliable instruments available: the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) personality questionnaire, the FIRO-B® instrument and the 16PF® personality questionnaire.

The Trust wanted its own team of practitioners to implement these tools across the organisation. They chose to work with OPP consultants to deliver in-house qualification training for the three tools. In autumn 2008, the Trust ran in-house training in MBTI Step I and FIRO-B. This was then followed up in January 2009 with 16PF qualification training. Through in-house training, Lisa explains, "we now have a very cost-effective way of using psychometric tools. The Trust doesn't have to pay an external provider every time we want a teambuilding or coaching session or to use a tool in selection - we simply call on one of the trained team."

## How the Trust uses psychometrics to support change

### Increasing self-awareness and learning to manage in new ways using the MBTI instrument

Following the introduction of the MBTI in 2008, the MBTI is now being widely used within the Trust's Management Development Programme (MDP). The MDP is currently a 12-month development programme which includes the MBTI instrument in its early stages. It's aimed at helping mid-level managers enrich leadership skills, and develop awareness of their own impact, effectively increasing awareness of personality differences when working with others.

During the first three months of the programme, participants complete the MBTI and receive feedback so as to learn about their Type and how their personality influences their interactions with team members. Lisa comments that "this really helps raise self-awareness and understanding of team dynamics." In the group of 57 current participants, there is a mixture of clinical and non clinical staff. The MBTI tool helps the participants in the Management Development Programme think about how they work together and make differences positive.

Lisa describes how the MBTI is also used as part of half-day development sessions for various teams across the Trust helping to build a common language to discuss different working styles and ways of interacting. After hearing the 'talk around the water cooler' about the success of the development sessions and an open sharing of Type, many employees are keen to experience one of the half-day teambuilding events. One example of success using the MBTI as a framework for improved team-working is the payroll team. After this team's members went through the half-day MBTI programme, they reported a big difference in team interaction. Lisa says that "it re-stabilised them as a team" by providing a lens which could 'explain' how people are different, and importantly, how to build positive interactions with other team members.

Throughout the Trust, use of the MBTI has enabled managers to improve how teams are put together. An over-riding benefit has been that where before differences were an obstacle, staff now "value and appreciate the differences" within their teams. One of the light-bulb moments from the nursing staff has been that you can't manage everyone in the same way, and tuning one's approach based on Type works. Now, members of staff are actively requesting MBTI feedback so they too can increase self-awareness and work better within their own teams, keeping Lisa and the team of practitioners very busy.

## Senior teambuilding using the FIRO-B tool

In 2009, the board-level executive team of the Trust requested a team building and diagnostics session to help find ways to communicate more productively with each other and members of their staff. They chose to use the FIRO-B instrument, as the tool focuses on what individuals need from others in their interactions with them, and how this might be different from their outward behaviour. Lisa felt that the FIRO-B could be used to uncover the source of tensions within teams working at a senior level and dealing with constant pressures.

Most of the executive team were not aware of the FIRO-B tool previously or how it could be used. To tackle this, the HR/OD teams carefully explained the value that FIRO-B can bring and the role that they would take as practitioners in facilitating ethical use of the tool. Lisa appreciated the personal challenge as a development practitioner in using FIRO-B due to the depth of insight it can provide so she worked hard to gain trust and emphasise that confidentiality would be maintained. Lisa observes that the FIRO-B is a 'safe' framework to achieve some very deep insights into team dynamics and sources of individual dissatisfaction within a team. It ultimately supports teams in enhancing the trust and openness between members, and working towards common goals much more effectively.

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## Improving recruitment processes and outcomes using 16PF

Later in the year, an initiative was put in place across the MCHFT to increase emphasis on cultural 'best-fit' and due-diligence during the recruitment and selection process. The Trust chose to use the 16PF personality questionnaire as part of selection process for higher level positions. The depth and breadth of insight the 16PF can give is especially useful for reducing the risk in major recruitment and selection decisions. Lisa felt that the rounded view of individuals that the 16PF reveals allows managers to select candidates based on a 'full picture' rather than just what is seen on a CV and a few hours in an interview.

Lisa says that, at first, some thought that incorporating psychometrics into the selection process would be deemed "too fluffy". But, when the team persevered in using the 16PF to assess candidates, they offered a deeper level of information which gave key pointers and insights about the candidate that may need extra probing during the interview. Recruitment assessors warmed to the idea of using 16PF results because they soon realised that these revealed potential strengths and risks associated with candidates very clearly beyond what could be uncovered from either interview or CV data. Lisa says that the Trust is still in the relatively early stages of using 16PF in recruitment and will continue to work on embedding it in recruitment practices.

## Business benefits

Feedback from MCHFT employees who have used MBTI, FIRO-B, and 16PF has been very positive. Many have noticed that they are better able to manage interactions with people – both colleagues and patients – who are different than themselves. Programmes are still running so evaluation is ongoing, and Lisa feels that MBTI is now well embedded in the organisation. The Trust is continuing the successful Management Development Programme for 2009-2010 with a total of 32 participants across the organisation. And, due to the ongoing participation in the Programme, employees are continuously using Type as a tool for developing themselves at work and improving the quality and effectiveness of their interactions with each other.

Master-classes are also planned, as well as several senior teams requesting team building and diagnostic sessions using the MBTI and FIRO-B tools. Lisa and the team continue to work to find ways of using all three tools across the organisation to support the cultural and behavioural shifts, enabling teams to perform consistently at a higher level – and keep focused on the ultimate goal of providing the best quality patient care.

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