



# Organisational resilience

## Supporting staff at times of restructuring and change

### Background

Changes in the NHS and decisions concerning Primary Care Trusts and GP commissioning have produced major uncertainty, significant potential change, and the loss of staff – whilst needing to maintain the quality of service delivery. The actual and potential impact on morale is acute. **NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale** (NHS HMR) recognised that personal and practical support is required to support people and organisational resilience in this challenging time.

### What we did...

In partnership with NHS HMR, Appreciating People developed, designed and delivered a staff resilience support programme, in response to staff requests for support at a time of restructuring and change.

AP trained a core group of NHS HMR staff, who co-designed the project with them and ensured that the programme met staff needs and requirements. The core group was drawn from across the organisation, representing a variety of different roles and seniority levels. The group received basic AI training and co-designed the course – their continued involvement also meant they could take the work forward, ensuring its sustainability.

Over 130 HMR staff participated in the programme. Participants began by taking a strength finder assessment to identify their five key strengths, using Gallup's Strengths Finder. The group also spent time identifying key factors that promote and support resilience, exploring how they might strengthen their own resilience, and looking at opportunities to increase their prospects.

*“Appreciating People are pioneers in the field of Appreciative Inquiry using the process and philosophy in situations and places where no one else has...”*

Appreciative Inquiry co-founder  
Jane Magruder Watkins

As a result, staff involved increased their personal resilience and wellbeing; HMR's organisational social capital increased at a time of stress, and staff were able to take time to reflect on the best next steps for themselves, individually, in a time of organisational change.



NHS Heywood Middleton and Rochdale staff create their personal vision boards

#### Participants were asked 'What has been your most important learning from today?'

- I'm not alone in my thinking
- The renewing of focus was invaluable
- Thinking about my aspirations
- Everyone is feeling the same about the challenges (in different ways)
- Learning to value myself
- I can do it!!
- My strengths and how to develop them further
- Challenges/opportunities and how to embrace them
- Understanding my strengths in detail and how I apply them
- What my five strengths are
- Visualising the future as if it has already happened
- Taking steps now to achieve it
- Recognition of new strengths through different ways of thinking
- That I'm comfortable with uncertainty

## Participants were asked 'what are you going to do differently or act upon?'

- Make my own future happen
- Encourage others to look to their futures
- Be more positive
- Seek out shadowing/project management course opportunities
- Reflect on how I have used my strengths in my daily role as part of my appreciative journal
- Take all new opportunities that come my way
- A clear focus
- Speak up - 'you don't ask, you don't get'
- Not to react - take deep breath and reflect
- Follow up aspirations; fewer meetings and more people/me time!
- Arrange to shadow the person I worked with to gain some staff management insight experience
- Think of things to be grateful for, rather than focusing on what has irritated me
- Focus on my strengths and utilising them more
- Give people more time and feedback
- Relax and have some 'me' time
- Learn a language

## Training and resilience

**Appreciating People** delivered the HMR work in two parts - planning, preparation and AI training with a core group, and a series of resilience workshops across the organisation.

Part one involved the formation of a core group drawn from across HMR, that would co-design the process with AP. The core group also co-facilitated the second part of the workshop programme and ensured delivery within the agreed timescale.

It also included delivery of an **Appreciative Inquiry (AI)** workshop to train 20 staff in the basics of AI. This involved a two-day course plus two half-day action-learning sets.

Part two - the resilience workshops - included a number of one day and half-day resilience workshops, plus some one-to-one support sessions. Content included intensive personal development assessment of options, and identification of next steps, so involved a maximum of 15 staff per workshop. Workshop participants were either identified by the Trust or specifically requested them.

The monitoring and evaluation process was ongoing with the core group, and a project review session was also held with the core group, plus a number of participants. **Appreciating People** also provided a report to the board on how findings could be used in the future to help create better communication.

## Outcomes

**Appreciating People** were tasked with delivering a number of outcomes:

- Encourage confident, resilient staff, able to deliver a high quality service
- Strategies for staff to reduce fear of change and ways to deal with loss
- Creating ways to find common ground in GPCC developments
- Tools and techniques to support staff and the organisation to recognise their achievements, strengths and successes, and to be able to build on them
- And to embed this approach within the organisation



(Below) HMR staff work on their vision boards, and a finished board (above)



*“The work AP did helped to put individuals back in control of their own futures. It supported them in recognising their strengths & aspirations for the future, & designing individual action plans to get there...”*

Sandra Croasdale, Head of Performance: NHS Heywood, Middleton & Rochdale

Sandra continues: 'This had a real impact on people by helping them to see that this was an opportunity to do what they wanted to do, rather than it being something that was being done to them. It didn't work for everyone. It took some people too far out of their comfort zone that they didn't get the benefit from it. The majority of people though really engaged and benefitted on an individual level. We have also seen some changes at an organisational level. For example, trying much harder to learn from good practice rather than focusing on what has gone wrong.'