

# Utilising Appreciative Inquiry Approach to Support Development of a Culture of Continuous Improvement in Child Health

Dr Kate Pryde<sup>1</sup>, Suzanne Quinney<sup>2</sup>

1- Consultant Paediatrician Southampton Children's Hospital, 2-Trainer Appreciating People

## Background

Like much of the NHS, Southampton Children's Hospital is looking for solutions to combat high staff vacancies, poor morale and significant numbers of staff suffering burnout and stress-related sickness. Evidence suggests the **appreciative inquiry (AI)** approach facilitates conditions which enable improvement to occur without it being a burden to staff. AI is a versatile asset based approach (see figure 1 below). It supports more positive conversations/interactions which foster a culture of care for each other, and of sharing learning. AI develops emotional intelligence and leaves behind a legacy of learning and social capital, equipping staff and management for culture change.

## Aim

This proposal wasn't to bring about a specific change so creating a typical SMART aim statement doesn't fit. Our aim was to trial the use of appreciative inquiry training in equipping staff with tools to help support development of culture of continuous improvement and improved staff morale and wellbeing. More specifically we proposed to develop a group of front-line staff and ward leaders by designing and delivering teaching on using appreciative inquiry approach to facilitate continuous improvement to them as part of our development programme. We also planned to adopt a train the trainer approach to develop capability for making this a sustainable approach.

## Method

We partnered with an external company "Appreciating People" (<https://www.appreciatingpeople.co.uk>) to deliver the training as a mix of bespoke open sessions and as part of planned development days for certain groups of staff. Ultimately there was a mixture of half, whole and two day programmes. We utilised a PDSA approach to the training, adjusting the programme significantly, including invites, to feedback and our reflections.

## Appreciative Inquiry

Asset Based

Look at what we've got!!  
Look at what we're missing!!

Deficit Focused

© J. Logan 2012

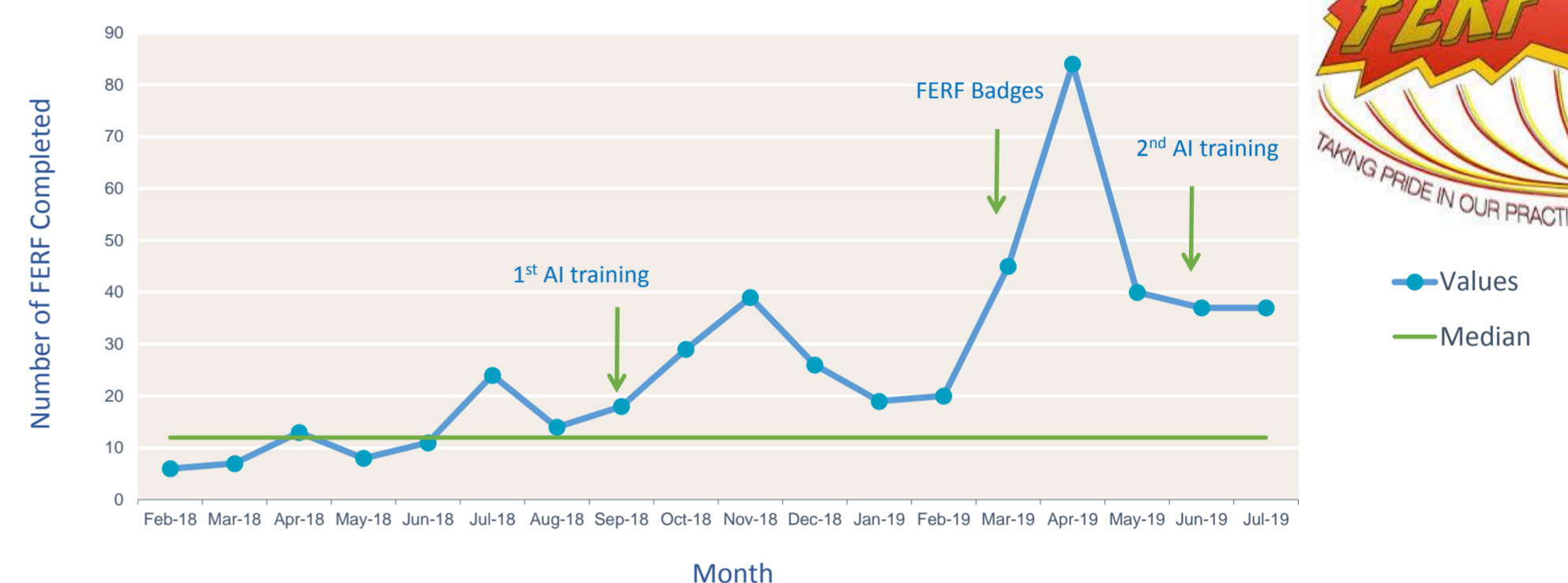
Figure 1: Pictorial representation of Appreciative Inquiry

## Results

We ran a total of training 7 sessions, ranging from 4 hours to 2 days. Training over 100 staff of multiple backgrounds and grades including doctors, nurses, AHP, managers and admin staff. Feedback was unanimously positive, with staff saying there was immediate small changes they could make in their day to day work and interactions. There has been a significant increase in number of Favourable Event Report Forms (FERF) completed (see figure 2 below). Staff sickness and turnover have shown no significant shifts. Culture survey occurs annually and this will be in the autumn 2019.

"Ok, I admit I was hugely sceptical about the AI course and wasn't particularly looking forward to it. But how wrong was I? It was FAB and actually felt like achievable steps we can all make to drive improvement that not only benefit patients but staff morale and well being!" Staff member feedback

Figure 2: Run Chart of Number of FFERF Completed



## Conclusions & Spread

The training was extremely well received despite some initial reservations. The "off shoots" as a result (that we know about) has included:

- Gratitude boards, shout out's too and what went well reflections.
- The Appreciative Approach has been used with Band 7's (and feedback was it was the best training day ever)
- Ward leaders have used tools on ward training days. Several clinical areas are planning to hold a 'perfect day'
- General Paediatric consultants and epilepsy team have both utilised SOAR (a strength based SWAT) at an away day with brilliant effect

Word has 'got out' about the training – other areas in trust utilising appreciative inquiry training, HEEW have commissioned Appreciating People to deliver several AI courses

## Learning to Share

- As Albert Einstein famously said "Not everything that matters is measurable and not everything that is measurable matters" – the impact of this piece of work is really challenging to measure. Small conversations, kind gestures, subtle (& not so subtle!) changes in structure of training days are all helping to build a sense of staff feeling valued
- Team training rules! Achieves a much bigger impact than uni-professional.
- Administrative staff really appreciated the training – a group so vital to the NHS but often under valued & rarely given training opportunities
- Positivity breeds positivity. "The words you speak become the house you live in" Hafiz. Just do it in your organisation.

Contact [kate.pryde@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:kate.pryde@uhs.nhs.uk) for more details

## Acknowledgments:

Dr Clare Smith – data collection  
Jill Thistlethwaite & Abbie Green for Education team