

# GUY'S AND ST THOMAS' NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



In the two most recent staff surveys for the NHS in England, Guy's and St Thomas' had the highest overall staff engagement score of all trusts.

This case study discusses how organisational values have been identified and embedded at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, and how, over ten years, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) has been the organising principle for a range of interventions. The result has been a shift in culture leading to high levels of staff engagement and to high quality, safe and efficient services for our patients.

Guy's and St Thomas' is among the UK's busiest NHS foundation trusts. We provide a full range of hospital and community services for people in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham, as well as specialist services such as cancer, renal and cardiovascular for patients from further afield.

Evelina London Children's Hospital is part of Guy's and St Thomas'. It provides many specialist services, including treatment for complex heart conditions, general services for local children, and children's community services in Lambeth and Southwark.

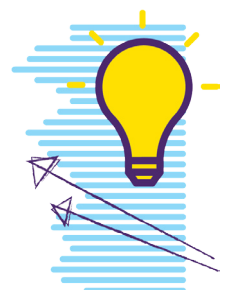
St Thomas' Hospital has one of the largest critical care units in the UK and one of the busiest A&E departments in London. Guy's Hospital is home to the largest dental school in Europe and a new £160 million Cancer Centre.

Our adult community services teams are at the heart of our local communities, working closely with other healthcare organisations, GPs, local authorities and voluntary and community groups. They provide a range of services across Lambeth and Southwark in many locations including in GP surgeries, clinics and health centres and in patients' homes.

In 2006, our NHS Staff Survey results showed that the Trust's staff were disaffected. Only 54% of respondents said they believed that the care of patients was the Trust's top priority and only half said they would be happy for a friend or relative to be treated by the organisation. This was very much at odds with the kind of organisation that Guy's and St Thomas' wanted to be, or felt it was. At the same time, the Trust was financially very challenged.

As part of our response to this, it was agreed that the Trust should identify its values. In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins identified that the long-term success of an organisation requires clarity on core values.

Rather than inventing a set of aspirational values, the Trust "discovered" them through a process of engaging with staff, patients, members, union representatives and others to identify what values the organisation already held. This led to five values being identified:



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- Put patients first
- Take pride in what we do
- Respect others
- Strive to be The Best
- Act with integrity.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) challenges our dominant problem-solving paradigm of trying to fix what is not working, which can actually amplify and exacerbate problems, and instead recognises the best in people and systems, and affirms past and present strengths. As a methodology, AI does this through involving people in discovery of the best of the current system, imagining the best possible future and co-creating what should and will be done.

AI is often described as having four phases: Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny.

From the outset of our work on values, the approach has been to work with what is working (e.g. the values that can already be felt) to co-create a better culture for the Trust.

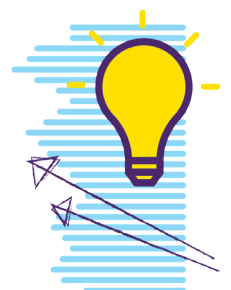
Having identified and publicised the five values, after the initial enthusiasm, there was little follow up. In fact, having a set of values that were publicised but not always experienced by people actually led to new dissatisfaction.

Therefore, in 2008, we used the Discover phase of AI again, working with 200 staff who exemplified our values in order to discover what living them actually meant. This led to the identification of many examples of behaviours or actions that staff did when living the values. From all the examples collected, we created our Values and Behaviours framework. The framework sets out behaviours at four different levels:

- **Everyone:** Lives the values using the behaviours
- **Specialist/team leader:** Leads others through specialist knowledge or through supervising a team
- **Expert/department manager:** Leads at a department/service level through expert knowledge or managerial role
- **Strategic leader:** Leads and directs at Trust level

The behaviours are cumulative, so a specialist/team leader aspires to the behaviours at the first and second levels of the framework. Managers and leaders are expected to role model the behaviours for the staff they lead.

At the end of 2008, the Trust established a small Organisational Development (OD) team with an explicit remit around embedding the Trust values. After initially trying to embed the values through a structured process in every directorate, it was agreed to follow where the energy was and work with the willing and with the



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opportunities that arose.

Over time, the values have been integrated into

- Leadership programmes
- Corporate induction
- Recruitment
- Appraisals
- Day-to-day performance management
- HR policies
- Other development programmes

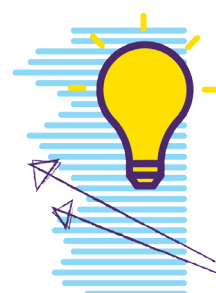
One of the most powerful interventions has been the creation of a very simple self-assessment which staff can use at any time, but are particularly encouraged to use as part of appraisal preparation. Staff use coloured stickers to self-assess each behaviour, rating their performance as red, amber or green, and then discuss this with their manager in the appraisal conversation.

Within the appraisal scheme, equal weighting is given to meeting objectives and the demonstration of the values.

In 2011, we used AI as the mindset and methodology for merging two local community health organisations with the hospital Trust. By focusing on the best of all three merging organisations, we helped create a positive culture in the newly-formed organisation. We adapted our Values and Behaviour Framework using AI Discovery; asking community staff to identify how, at their best, they lived their current values and mapping these to the framework, which was revised and re-launched in 2012.

In 2013, the Trust's transformation programme "Fit for the Future" was created with a focus on quality, safety and efficiency. The programme was as much about culture change as about hard deliverables, and the leadership needed to embrace different ways of thinking and working. AI was a counter-cultural process to use with the leadership, and enabled a creative space for the whole team to work together in a different and collaborative way.

Our 2013 and 2014 Listening Exercises were large-scale examples of using AI principles to engage staff with the implications of the Francis Inquiry report. Instead of asking questions like 'what stops us listening to patients?' we asked staff 'what do you do now to listen to patients?' and 'what should we do to listen to patients all the time?' This helped remind staff of the good practice already in place, bolstering confidence and trust in the organisation, and enabling them to be part of shaping what needed to change.



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Our third Listening Exercise, in the winter of 2016/17, had an emphasis on improvement. It tied previous Listening Exercises together with both Fit for the Future and the Trust Values, especially 'Put Patients First' and 'Strive to be the Best'. Once again, AI questions were used, starting with 'What change for the better have I initiated or been involved in?' The exercise enabled individuals and teams to learn from what makes improvement happen and to commit to further action.

In summary, over the last 10 years Guy's and St Thomas' has:

- Worked to create a more engaged workforce by identifying its values
- Developed a Values and Behaviour Framework with the expectation that staff are involved and that leaders create engaging settings for staff
- Used the process of AI to underpin all of this work, generating energy and momentum

Once we stopped trying to roll out the values in a systematic, top-down way, we have faced few challenges from the organisation. AI builds on what is working and looks for opportunities to integrate the values into what we are doing, so the energy for change is constantly renewed. There are champions throughout the organisation, at every level, for the Trust Values.

AI provides an uplifting way into many conversations. Occasionally people have felt that it avoids dealing with problems. However, in the Design and Destiny stages of the process AI considers what would enable what is working well to be amplified, which can involve dealing with obstacles to success without having started from an emphasis on problems.

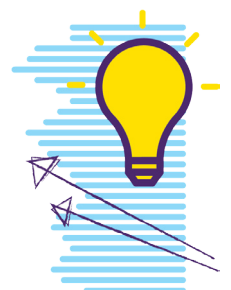
The Trust's overall score of staff engagement (introduced to the NHS Staff Survey in 2010) has steadily improved and has been the highest of all NHS trusts in England for the last two years.

Staff views about safety and quality have significantly improved. The percentage of staff believing that care of patients is the Trust's top priority has risen steadily from 54% in 2006 (slightly above the national acute trust average), to 90% in 2016 (the most recent survey).

In 2016 the Trust received a rating of 'Good' from the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with Evelina London and the Emergency Department rated 'Outstanding'. The CQC inspectors observed that:

*'Staff we spoke with were aware of the trust's vision and how their work and individual service strategy supported the trust's overarching strategy. They were aware of the values and we observed them translated into practice across the services we visited.'*

While the NHS is under pressure, with rising demand and tight finances, the Trust has made significant savings each year as well as reductions in infections and of length of stay in hospital.



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One member of staff who witnessed the introduction of the Values and Behaviours Framework says:

*'It is much clearer what is expected from us to provide the best patient experience and to be the best colleague. The biggest change for me was becoming really clear about what respecting each other looks and sounds like.'*

Our recommendations to other organisations are:

- Beware of amplifying problems in the way that you work on them
- Having a behaviours framework that is built on the best of what people are doing, rather than built on what some people would like some other people to do, is very powerful
- Be patient. Organisational Development expert Edgar Schein said that culture change takes seven years. With this in mind we have used all the opportunities that presented themselves to us to change culture over the last 10 years but without pushing where there was resistance.

