### Acute Inpatient Mental Health Services: Building Foundations for Team Effectiveness

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Aims

Effective teamwork is vital for quality of care. The exchange of information, ideas and support, helps with patient safety, patient positive experience, and avoiding the detrimental effects of staff burnout. The aim of this study was to assess the development needs of a 44-member multidisciplinary acute inpatient mental health team and to improve team effectiveness.

Method:

A wide range of questionnaires and activities developed by the NHS Leadership Academy, U.K., was used to focus on seven essential aspects of effective team working: Team Identity, Team Objectives, Role Clarity, Team Decision Making, Team Communication, Constructive Debate, and Inter-Team Working. Team reflection and positive challenging were used to promote critical thinking.

Results

The team's purpose and operating principles were defined and team objectives were agreed. Questionnaires identified Communication and Inter-Team Working as areas for development. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), in areas showing need for improvement, scores were as follows: 3.2 (there is enough information to make decisions about work), 3.2 (effective communication between team members), 2.8 (well-managed time in meetings), 3.3 (planned outcomes achieved in meetings), 3.3 (decisions and actions clearly summarised in meetings), 3.3 (efficient working to resolve conflict with colleagues), and 2.9 (effective processes to quickly resolve difficulties amongst teams). Meeting processes were changed and time dedicated to care increased.

Conclusions:
Teams can improve by focussing on specific factors contributing to their development and effectiveness. Communication and inter-team relationships might be particularly challenging areas that may improve by changing team processes.