Effective Team Work

Working in the NHS will inevitably involve being a part of a team. If the conditions are right; this can be a positive experience. However, we don’t exist in an ideal world and teamwork can at times be a testing challenge.

What is Teamwork?
Working in groups to meet challenges, pooling resources and skills has been fundamental to our success as a species. Teams exist to complete a task, to get a job done. Effective teams are primarily clear about this task, but are also aware of relationships between team members.

Effective Teamwork
An effective team understands what team working involves. It is made up of people with different skills who share ideas, challenge one another and respect each other’s contribution to the task. When we work in a well functioning team, we feel we belong, we feel valued, motivated and deliver a good service.

Some Helpful Ideas
There are no simple “top tips” for effective teamwork, however, from our experience, these are a few ideas we’ve found helpful:
- Regular team meetings - to ensure information is shared and communication is prioritised. Such meetings are an important part of the consultation process and ensuring that people have the opportunity to discuss and contribute to decision making is crucial. They work best if there is an expectation of attendance and an agenda is followed.
- Planning/away days - these give the team an opportunity to reflect on and explore ideas, clarify priorities (both short and long term), make collective decisions, develop shared values and ensure there is a shared understanding of the tasks.
- Team support - The more that team members support each other the more cohesive the team becomes. Emotional support can be as simple as encouraging others to offer their views in a non-judgemental way. Being polite to each other, taking time to show interest and concern about the lives of others in the team.
- Last but not least, set time aside to have fun and keep a sense of humour!

Conditions for Effective Team Working
There are a number of conditions, which help to make our work within teams more effective. These include:
• Feeling integrated into the team which can be achieved by being kept up to date with developments as well as being informed of and involved in decision making.
• Receiving feedback on a regular basis about how the team is doing and how you are performing as a team member.
• Feeling able to use your skills and being encouraged to develop your role within the team.
• Feeling clear about individual/personal goals as well as the team/shared goals and being able to see the outcome of your work.

In effective teams the more mundane tasks are divided equally and everybody is consulted. All effective teams also need a team leader who can be there for backup in times of difficulty and provide direction and advice to the team.

Remember
Teamwork is all about participation, co-operation and taking responsibility for team strategies and processes. Good team working doesn’t always happen naturally and takes some practice!

Staff Support and Leadership & Development services have a valuable role in helping teams explore their tasks/remit and priorities. The Staff Support Consultancy Service has facilitated a number of successful planning days with various staff teams.

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