

Herding cats: a collaborative change approach to team planning

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Background:

Community Physiotherapy South provides local services at 16 different Community Health sites across southern Tasmania. Each worksite has a unique culture, with services historically developed around the needs of each local community. Staff experience a strong affiliation to their local site and have traditionally developed practices and processes in isolation from the whole. While this diversity has strengths, it also poses significant challenges. Shared learning, consistent practice and service development has been difficult to achieve.

Objectives:

A project was initiated to form a team who think and act as one service, by engaging staff in a process of developing a vision statement, values and three year team plan.

Methods:

Project methodology was utilised to develop a ten month collaborative process to answer the questions, 'Why do we exist?', 'Where are we now?' and 'What is our future?' Clients, referrers and staff were surveyed to provide qualitative and quantitative background information. A monthly feedback loop of listening (interviews, surveys, focus groups) and response (presentations, e-mails, structured 'tearoom conversations') was adopted to engage all staff. A team planning day was utilised to consolidate our vision and finalise the team plan.

Results:

While changes in culture and team thinking are difficult to measure, qualitative feedback indicates increased staff commitment to a common direction and future service plan. Quantitative surveys measuring staff engagement will be repeated. Together our team has developed a widely embraced vision statement, set of values and team plan.

Conclusion:

The project developed a collaborative framework to implement positive change amongst a diverse group.