

# Q&A

**Steven Dilks**, Forensic Services Manager at Leeds and York, recommends the Affina Team Journey



## Tell us about your team

I took over the Forensic Leadership Team at Leeds and York about two years ago. Forensic patients have mental disorders which make them a potential risk to others. They may have a history of criminal offending or be at risk of offending.

## What led you to the Affina Team Journey?

At that time our mental health services were going through a period of significant challenge and change. One ward had been closed, another was on the brink and both the Care Quality Commission and NHS England were voicing concerns. As a result, there were issues of trust and polarisation within the team.

As the Trust moved forward with quality improvement, we were given the opportunity to work with Anthony Owens, an OD specialist and accredited coach for the Affina Team Journey.

## How did you get started?

We had to invest a lot of time in 1 on 1s and bi-monthly away days to reengage the team. Once we had the engagement, our Team Journey started in earnest. We put our cards on the table, exploring what was important to us and to the service users.

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Slowly and surely we created the space for dialogue, acknowledging difference and that differences are OK. It felt very much like OUR team journey and WE wanted to improve the service. It was important that everyone played their part.

## What results did you see?

It feels like a different team, a different service. There’s a buzz around our meetings. We have fun and we generate ideas. We changed the name of the management team to the Leadership Community to reflect a more open, transparent and positive outlook, particularly towards our ward managers. Recently we won the Trust Chair/CEO award for our leadership which was great affirmation for all the work the team has done.



We know that culture doesn’t change overnight and we’re still embedding our approach, but we are making good progress and this has been acknowledged by CQC and others. We’re achieving all our key performance indicators and one of our closed wards has just reopened.

Key to progress is our new clinical model. It articulates the tensions between managing risk and recovery in what we do. Not only is it having a major influence on the way we work and develop but it’s influencing policy too.

## What could others learn from your experience?

Make sure you have the time and capacity to build the good foundations your team needs for high performance. And don’t hold back from asking your OD team for support – developing a team-based culture across the organisation is part of our Trust strategy so there’s plenty of guidance.

Ultimately, it’s about getting people to believe – getting their buy-in and trust over time.

Above: Steven Dilks (second left) with Leadership Community team members at Leeds and York

