

Effective teamworking during the Covid-19 crisis

- **Multi-disciplinary teamworking is crucial**
- **Teams are being set up rapidly**
- **Big challenges lie ahead**

Time is pressured, demands are intense and large numbers of people are working alongside colleagues they have never met before, often in environments that are new and complex.

It is a context which requires us to build and change teams quickly in support of key services.

This is the moment we need to do all we can to enable these newly-formed teams to function as effectively as possible and minimise excessive stress, conflict, exhaustion and errors.

Working with **Professor Michael West**, our Advisory Consultant, we are sharing key principles to support emerging teams and effective team working during this time of uncertainty and ambiguity.



By paying attention to these 8 principles now, we can support teams of all types, in all sectors and at all levels during the immediate crisis and into the recovery phase.

8 key principles for quickly and effectively building new teams and integrating new team members:

1. **Teamworking competencies** – Don't let the tendency to focus on technical training take over – place as much focus (if not more) on teamwork competencies.
2. **Compassionate support** – Encourage kindness and compassion for each other during these challenging times – checking in, listening, understanding, empathising and helping. Recognise that everyone is different and avoid making assumptions.
3. **Purpose and priorities** – Agree a clear statement of the purpose of the team's work that everyone understands and is repeatedly reaffirmed. Ensure regular setting of a few (3 or 4) clear, shared, outcome-based objectives for the work so everyone is clear about priorities. Provide feedback/data on how well the team is doing in relation to those objectives.
4. **Roles** – Ensure everyone is clear about their role in the team and each other's roles. Ensure shared understanding of who is responsible for different types of knowledge during the work.

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5. **Inter-professional respect** – Minimise hierarchy and boundaries between professionals and, when possible, encourage social interaction (eating together, having coffee together etc.).
6. **Review** – Set aside regular time to plan and review – at least daily in a critical care situation, but possibly at the beginning and end of shifts. Schedule longer reviews whenever possible. Working in crisis requires improvisation – responding to real-time experiences to inform actions and future behaviours. Carry out regular reviews of communication – what is communicated, by whom and how.
7. **Trust** – Have faith in each other’s integrity and competence. Trust other team members to perform at their best.
8. **Cooperation** – Cooperate with and support other teams in this crisis and acknowledge the shared, collective responsibility. Competition and conflict will be disastrous for patient care – everyone in the team should be clear about that.



Contact details

For more information or support on any aspect of team based working or training, please contact Sarah-Jane Dale, Chief Operating Officer, AOD on 01252 727270 or helpdesk@affinaod.com

Key research references

Effective team working leads to higher levels of innovation in the delivery of patient care - *The effectiveness of health care teams in the National Health Service West*, M., Borrill, C. S., Carletta, J., Dawson, J., Garrod, S., Rees, A., Richards, A. & Shapiro, D. 2001 Birmingham: University of Aston

Good team working is associated with lower levels of errors, stress, injury, sickness absence, intention to quit and turnover, harassment and bullying from colleagues, and harassment and bullying from service users.

- <https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hsdr/hsdr02500#/abstract> Staff Satisfaction and Organisational Performance: Evidence from a longitudinal secondary analysis of the NHS Staff Survey and outcome data

Specialists in team based working

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