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Conference Abstract

What are the leadership lessons from the integration of health and social care in the Scottish Highlands?

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Abstract

Introduction: In April 2012, the local authority and the health board in the Highlands of Scotland integrated their health and social care functions, transferring nearly £100 million of funding and 2000 staff members across the two organisations. Significantly, the reform outpaced the national integration agenda, legislation having been introduced in May 2013 mandating other health boards to pursue joint working (Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill). Integration in the Highlands was planned and implemented over a period of 18 months, a timeframe seen as ambitious by all participants in this research.

Aims: To identify the opportunities and barriers of this large-scale and fast-paced reform from a leadership perspective, and to identify lessons to be learned.

Method: In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals identified as having had a leadership role to play in the adoption of the lead agency model of integrated care in the Scottish Highlands. Responses were analysed thematically, and compared to those themes emerging from a literature review on the barriers to integrating health and social care.

Results and conclusions: In a number of areas responses concurred with the existing literature on the subject. Leaders acknowledged the importance of articulating a clear vision, of providing dedicated resource, and the value of working in partnership with staff representatives. However, results here suggest a greater focus is required on the “leap of faith” required for such ambitious reforms, and on the levels of trust necessary between leaders across two organisations. In addition, a strong emphasis was placed upon the significance of a supportive but light-touch approach from local and national politicians.

Keywords

Scotland, integrated care, integration of health and social care, leadership style, lead agency

Powerpoint presentation:

<http://www.integratedcarefoundation.org/content/making-transition-towards-integrated-care-driving-change>