

Releasing Capacity for Nurses to Engage in Research; an organisational development approach

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Background- Research is defined as a 'core function' in UK health service organisations. Current evidence suggests that there is an association between the engagement of individuals and healthcare organisations in research and improvements in healthcare performance (Boaz et al 2015). Clinical management involvement, especially professional and service management is key to achieving the improvement and the new research capacity (Fowler Davis 2014). A coordinated participatory method is used to release the organisational capacity to engage nurses in clinical academic research.

Method - Using the Academic Directorate research strategy to engage senior nurses a process of continuous organisational improvement was co-designed, involving; individual applications to pre masters and pre doctoral awards, team and service level research initiatives to develop new ways of working and organisational planning associated with joint clinical and academic posts in nursing. Leadership engagement and support was characterised by senior nurses identifying; research-ready staff, critical issues for service development where research would stimulate improvement and providing permission and access to the existing research infrastructure within the NHS Trust.

Discussion - A strategic commitment to organisational research, is aligned to the commitment from the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) to achieve clinical academic careers for nurses, midwives and Allied Health Professionals. The commitment from service managers and senior nurses, motivated by the drive to achieve clinical service improvement is an important factor and is supported by a partnership using academic partners to support organisational learning and commitment to research activity. The alignment of research learning and development with clinical planning and patient benefit has the potential to address the capacity gap, engaging nurses as researchers.

Conclusion - Supporting nurses to climb, in parallel, both clinical and academic career ladders (Westwood et al 2018) is having an important effect and will impact on improved health outcomes and patient benefit.