



EVERYTHING **DiSC**
A Wiley Brand

Better Healthcare for England Begins with Better Leaders

A success story featuring: NHS Health Education England

The National Health Service (NHS) in the UK is among the world's top five largest employers, with around 1.4 million employees to date. As an arm's length body of the NHS, Health Education England (HEE) is a dedicated function that concentrates exclusively on implementing and promoting national workforce strategy, training programmes and leadership development to healthcare professionals within England's healthcare service.

DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S HEALTHCARE LEADERS TODAY

Traditionally, the education of healthcare professionals in primary care has focused almost exclusively on technical training with little time set aside for the development of skills such as interpersonal development, management and leadership training. And yet, General Practitioners, Practice nurses and the wider primary care workforce within the NHS are being asked to not only be a patient's first contact of care, but also to step up into leadership roles that steer the healthcare system.

For this reason, over the past 5 years the NHS Leadership Academy has been focused on developing competent and skilled leaders among the system's nearly 41,000 General Practitioners who provide over 1.3 million consultations to patients each and every day.

"One of the current policies taking shape within the NHS is for Primary Care clinicians to become more involved in leading healthcare. This means that we need to increase the confidence of our Primary Care Leaders," explains Sue Harris, Director of Leadership and Organisational Development at Health Education England. "And that's our job. We're here to enable our medical and clinical staff to step up and become increasingly prepared to lead."

As the West Midlands Local Leadership Academy (WM LLA) began working to expand and deepen the Academy's emphasis on leadership development for their Primary Care leaders, they quickly recognised the need for a different kind of framework; one that would deliver a consistent approach and a common language of leadership across NHS' very large and extremely diverse system. With the NHS primarily funded as a public sector organisation, efficiency, sustainability, and the ease of ongoing implementation with internal Academy staff were key priorities in the development of primary care leadership interventions.

SIMPLE—NOT SIMPLISTIC: THE POWER OF EVERYTHING DISC®

Throughout England today there are hundreds of medical practices of varying sizes—from solo practitioners to part-timers, small practices with as few as three employees to much larger groups employing 10–20 staff. It was clear that no one-size-fits-all version of a leadership development programme would work. The Academy needed a model that practitioners could grasp quickly and begin implementing immediately back on the job.

"In response to these challenges, we needed to develop a keep-it-simple model to bring different perspectives of leaders in primary care together, to develop them as leaders of change, and give them the confidence to transform their organisations and step up into leadership," remarked Harris.

"The simplicity of Everything DiSC was what really resonated with us when we developed the programme, and ultimately with all of our participants," commented Lynda Austin, Deputy Director of Leadership for Health Education England. "There's real clarity in the DiSC four-quadrant model: D for Dominance, i for Influence, S for Steadiness, and C for Conscientiousness. It's a very easy-to-implement and easy-to-remember framework that defines the different priorities, preferences, and values that drive our behaviour in relation to others. The Everything DiSC assessment hands us a mirror and asks us to look from the inside out. Then the invaluable report provides clear and actionable steps on how we can build stronger relationships by stretching and adapting our own style in various situations."

The team called this programme Triumvirate, to represent bringing three diverse leadership perspectives together. Everything DiSC was integrated into the course as a key enabling component. As Harris explains, "It also works well alongside the other development opportunities we integrate into the Triumvirate programme to help people understand themselves and inclusively connect to others." In its first stage, the Triumvirate programme brought together 21

“Everything DiSC enabled me to learn about myself, and how I relate to others effectively. I’ve enhanced my relationships with colleagues.”

participants in seven independent General Practices across the West Midlands, including each group’s General Practitioner, nurse, and business manager.

DEVELOPING LEADERS AT EVERY LEVEL TO BECOME AGENTS FOR CHANGE

Working with these initial triumvirate teams; medical, clinical, and business management staff in-house, Academy trainers and educators focused on creating greater understanding, collaboration, and cooperation. They began building the capacity of each individual to more deeply understand themselves and others. They learned to appreciate and value what makes each of us unique. The Academy led full-day face-to-face sessions which included various activities, exercises, and learning components that helped participants dive deeper into understanding their own preferences and behaviours and allowed them to place their strategies and Everything DiSC concepts into practice.

The Academy knew that to impact change they would need to impact behaviours and keep them alive in the organisation long after the training was over. HEE Academy staff reached out with monthly activities and learning opportunities ending with a “Graduate, Celebrate, and Sustain” initiative that celebrated everyone’s success and worked to reinforce a sense of comradery and community that would carry the learning forward to others, as well as sustaining their change projects.

EXPANDING THE POWER OF DISC®

To date, nearly 200 developing leaders have completed an Everything DiSC assessment through a variety of the Academy’s development programmes. “Everything DiSC has become a go-to tool for a number of leadership initiatives,” Austin said. “We love its versatility. And that we can use it alone or in conjunction with other tools in our toolbox delivers much greater value as we strive to always be good stewards of the public’s trust and of public funds.”

“Positive evaluations and feedback have been great,” Harris added. “The results of the assessment were so spot-on! For many they’d never been given a chance to reflect on themselves before; this was a first and it made a profound difference. In addition, the programme itself built a framework for engagement. It really allowed team members to connect, to understand the world a bit better—to me, that made the greatest impact of all.”

The Academy’s Triumvirate programme has since earned praise and accolades from far beyond the halls of the Academy. The Royal College of General Practitioners has recognised the power of this programme to make significant strides forward in reaching the goal of developing tomorrow’s healthcare leaders today. They have also scaled and spread the programme nationally in England and across all of the healthcare system, diversifying the programme outside of its roots in primary care.

“With increasing enthusiasm and support for Triumvirate, we hope to continue to expand this programme and reach out to even more healthcare professionals throughout the UK,” Harris concludes. “With DiSC as a key component for this unique leadership development initiative, we can make even greater strides equipping our leaders with the skills and knowledge, deep insight and understanding, and attitudes and behaviours required to continually improve the services provided to our increasingly diverse communities with enduringly complex needs.”