**Why an analyst thinks demand and capacity is about so much more than numbers**

Analysts, finance and operational managers are most commonly the people who make up a demand and capacity team. Barbara, who is Head of Information, Clinical Coding and Medical Records at Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, discovered that demand and capacity is a lot more than simply data and numbers – it’s the softer skills and intelligence that makes the biggest difference.

Typical to many trusts, Barbara is working towards delivering change.

Barbara recognised she couldn’t do this alone and booked a place on the national Demand and Capacity Trainer Programme.

This is part of the Demand and Capacity Programme which was established in 2016 and jointly sponsored by NHS England and NHS Improvement to support the NHS to better understand demand and plan sufficient capacity so that patients do not wait unnecessarily for treatment.

Like so many other people, Barbara thought it would be very analytical and data-driven. However: “It was a surprise to many of us on the course that it’s more than just numbers.

“We focused on the softer skills – how to talk to people, how to help an organisation cope with change.”

The national programme provides trainees, which has included clinicians, analysts, finance managers and operations managers, with the tools they need to champion demand and capacity in their own organisations. Anyone can be a demand and capacity champion if they have the right data combined with a strong case for change, this programme blends the two skill-sets to empower individuals.

“I’ve learned new skills I didn’t know I had and I’ve learned how to deal with things I don’t like. Four months ago, I wouldn’t have been able to stand in front of a camera and talk about myself, but this training has given me that confidence. I can now speak confidently in front of clinicians and directors.”

Building confidence is one of the main skills trainees learn. Data will provide the evidence; however, it is often the softer skills that will inspire clinicians and directors to prioritise demand and capacity in their busy schedules. Understanding the basics of culture change are essential to tailor messages to different audiences, encourage co-design and participation from clinicians, and deliver tangible results that directors need.

Barbara said: “I’ve already thought about where I want people to do work, or where I want to speak to people and learn about different pathways, so I can take the model out to them and improve. I know how busy our frontline staff are day to day, and this course will help me to find the right channel, message and approach to encourage their participation. Importantly, this is about long-term cultural change and I know it will require a different approach for every audience.”

Building the right support network with a range of experts is a key theme that came through the course, and one that Barbara intends to take forward in her own trust.

“It is exciting to think about how this will all be used in our organisations. We’re going to have to get everyone together, build on the skills I’ve learned so that it is useful and others can take it forward with my support.”

What are Barbara’s next steps?

“I see this as a developmental role. The tips and tools have been really interesting and useful, the challenge now is to take it back into the trust and deliver results.

“I’d encourage any trust who has not participated to identify a champion who is passionate about improving care for patients. It doesn’t matter which area of the business they work in, this course will give you best practice tools and scenarios, and importantly the confidence to deliver change – no matter how small in the beginning.

“This whole process has helped me build better emotional intelligence. Realising people react differently to hearing the same thing and working on the different ways to share any message are critical skills. The work we did around voice, different presentation styles and different ways people learn has been really useful.”

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

The national Demand and Capacity Programme, established in 2016 and jointly sponsored by NHS England and NHS Improvement, has been introduced to support the NHS to better understand demand and plan sufficient capacity so that patients do not wait unnecessarily for treatment.

The team delivers a national training programme to embed knowledge and expertise within local health economies, working with system leaders to support them in the development of local capacity, capability and confidence in demand and capacity modelling and reduce reliance upon external or central expert resources. Demand and Capacity planning supports

the production of robust activity plans at a local organisational level and place-based unit level as required for future planning rounds.

In the last 18 months, over 47% of trusts have engaged in Demand and Capacity Training in some form.

Their core offer is the Demand and Capacity Trainer Programme, creating a pool of 300-400 graduates and embed their knowledge in local health economies. They won’t just be given the skills to develop demand and capacity models, but will also be equipped with the confidence and tools to take back to their organisation and train and support other colleagues from other disciplines.

To find out more about the Demand and Capacity Programme, go to [www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/demand-and-capacity](http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/demand-and-capacity)