

CASE STUDY

Communication Skills



NHS
West Hampshire
Clinical Commissioning Group

Background

The formation of Clinical Commissioning Groups to succeed Primary Care Trusts in the efficient procurement of NHS services on behalf of tax payers presents new communication challenges. The CCGs have not only to do their job well but be *seen* to be doing it well. This means communicating efficiently with a range of audiences through various media, including “Town Hall” type meetings and other public fora. CCG members, while highly skilled and professional in their chosen fields, do not always have this kind of experience and at a time when there is intense public interest in how the NHS spends its money it’s vital that key facts are accurately communicated.

Challenge

The West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group spends £560 million each year on planning and buying health care for its population of nearly 600,000 people, covering an area of 800 square miles ranging from Andover to Lymington. The possibility of a major change in how hospital services are provided for the most critically ill patients raised public concerns about the potential reduction of services in Winchester. The local MP called for a public debate on the issues. How should members of the CCG, keen to engage with the discussion, position themselves as the holders of the purse strings? Should they be advocates of change? If so what line should they take? How could CCG members ensure they spoke consistently on the issue? How could they avoid giving hostages to fortune?



Dr Sarah Schofield – Chair
West Hampshire Clinical
Commissioning Group

The Aziz Programme

The Aziz Corporation ran a one day session with the Chair, Deputy Chair and CEO of the West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group with the CCG Communications Director sitting in. We helped participants identify what it was they wanted to say and agree a common approach. More importantly we identified areas it would be inappropriate for the CCG to get into and agreed responses to leading questions in those areas. The day was practically focused and helped participants hone their communication skills under pressure.



Programme Details

- Theory of effective communication
- Discussion of key messages

Practical Exercises

- Two minute opening statements
- Handling difficult questions and follow up
- Retaining the high ground
- Dealing with conflict
- Summing up

Flexibility

All Aziz programmes are driven by individual client needs. Whilst there is a skeleton timetable Aziz consultants are able to flex their input to ensure that particular areas are covered.

Benefits

Each delegate was encouraged to discover their own personal persuasive style. Using video to show what works and what doesn't work builds confidence. At the end of the day delegates not only knew what they could and couldn't say about various issues but also were fully confident of holding their own in challenging environments.

Said Dr Sarah Schofield, Chair of the West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group,

"This programme proved invaluable to us. Not only did it equip us to handle the very specific need of a forthcoming debate on the future of hospital provision in our area but it also gave us the skills and confidence to tackle other contentious communications challenges. We were so impressed we are now engaging Aziz to run more programmes for senior colleagues in the CCG"

What did the delegates learn?

"How to simplify complex messages"

"What language works and what doesn't"

"How to avoid "no go" areas"

"Dealing with conflict and under informed stakeholders"


**West Hampshire
Clinical Commissioning Group**