

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Micallef, Ricarda and Ali, Ayan (2016) Evaluation of the South London Leadership Development Programme, *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice*, 24(Supplement s3), pp.60, which has been published in final form at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijpp.12289/abstract>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving.

Evaluation of the South London Leadership Development Programme

Focal Points:

- To achieve a comprehensive evaluation of pharmacists' experiences of the South London Leadership Programme and determine the key successes and challenges of the programme
- Community pharmacists were able to apply their learning from the programme to their working practice which resulted in positive outcomes for pharmacy business and patients
- After refinement, this pilot programme should be rolled out to other regions

Introduction: All pharmacists find themselves having to fulfil a leadership role in their workplace and are expected to lead and manage a team, with effective leadership being a new proposed standard for pharmacy professionals¹. The Leadership Development Programme was piloted for 20 community pharmacists based in South London to help improve leadership behaviours of pharmacists. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) produced the programme, it was endorsed and accredited by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) and funded by Health Education South London (HESL). The programme consisted of 10 day long modules and ran on Sundays between March and December 2015. This programme was interactive and discussed a variety of leadership skills, models and theories. The aim of this project is to evaluate pharmacists' experiences of the leadership programme and determine the key successes and challenges of the programme.

Methods: 19 pharmacists completed the course. A survey and follow up interview were created for a triangulation approach to evaluating the programme. All participants were emailed the web link to the survey, with a follow up reminder two weeks later, providing implied consent on completion. For follow up interview they were telephoned to arrange a face to face interview where written consent was given for participation. The survey was made up of 14 questions which were a mixture of free text and Likert scale questions, to understand the most and least useful sections of the overall programme and about individual sessions and application of knowledge. Results were uploaded onto Survey Monkey. Data was collected and all responses were downloaded into Microsoft Excel for thematic and statistical analysis. The follow up interview was a semi structured interview and was made up of 13 questions to gain more detail on the survey questions and gain case studies about the course and application of knowledge. Interviews were recorded and transcribed prior to thematic analysis. Ethics committee approval was obtained from a Higher Education Institution.

Results: 16 participants (84.2%) responded to the survey and took part in a follow up interview. From interviews 100% (n=16) were happy with the course being interactive, with the most positive aspects of the course being interacting, networking, group activities and learning from others. The most useful tools obtained from the course were using a weekly planner for time management, setting clear objectives, effective delegation and leadership styles, all supporting understanding of their own development areas, to further help support their staff. The survey showed the most beneficial modules where these tools were covered. From interviews, the top three skills learnt from the course were delegation, time management and communication. The biggest barrier for application of learning stated was lack of time in interviews. Although personal development was the key learning from this programme, in the survey 12.5% (n=2) stated they would have liked a formalised qualification from the programme. Using the learnings from the course participants have expanded their roles, increasing services, and getting involved in more local committees and organisations to be seen as local leaders. The main limitation of this study is using a small sample size in a defined geography.

Discussion: The South London Leadership Programme was a valuable opportunity for those who participated to increase their personal skills and knowledge and gain personal development. This learning allowed the participants to extend their roles and develop themselves and their teams. However, although beneficial, more help is needed to overcome the barriers of being able to apply the learning into practice. This programme should be reviewed and refined based on the feedback received. After refinement this programme should be rolled out to more pharmacists to allow them to maximise their roles and patient care. This should be supported by ongoing evaluation of the programme.

References:

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