

# Case Study: A Postgraduate Diploma recognising the learning of healthcare leaders

This project is a bespoke approach enabling clinical and non-clinical staff to consolidate and extend their Cumbria Learning & Improvement Collaborative (CLIC) leadership learning (see Background section). The programme culminates in the delivery of a range of clinical leadership and improvement work-based projects and participants are awarded a Postgraduate Diploma.

After establishing a range of leadership and improvement programmes responding to emerging needs of team leaders working to achieve improvement in health and social care across Cumbria, it became apparent that there was an opportunity to build on this learning and achieve accredited qualifications by working with other providers within Higher Education (HE).

Supported by funding from Health Education England (HEE) working across the North West, CLIC approached CETAD, Lancaster University's Centre of Excellence in Work-Based Learning, to help create a progressive development initiative linked to a HE qualification. CETAD was able to design and deliver a postgraduate leadership and improvement programme for a wider range of clinical and non-clinical leaders whilst recognising the different experiences of individuals.



It became apparent that participants from CLIC workshops could be awarded a number of credits to recognise their level of leadership learning gained. Participants were invited to enrol on the bespoke CETAD module, the Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning (RAPL), to reflect on their learning, experiences, and demonstrate their learning in practice. The completion of this module determined the start of their Post Graduate scheme. It was expected participants would achieve 30 credits towards a postgraduate Certificate but these expectations were exceeded and all participants achieved 60 credits, these were recognised at Masters level and gave them an opportunity to 'spring-board' onto a Diploma pathway.

A programme was designed around participants own and organisational objectives, with an option to undertake CETAD modules to underpin personal learning goals. The programme involved interactive workshops, online learning, Action Learning Sets (ALS, a form of facilitated group-coaching), coaching, mentoring by a CETAD team member and CLIC sponsors and an opportunity to create a community of practice across the North West region.

The programme also supported participants to learn about practitioner enquiry which enabled them to plan and apply their learning to a relevant work-based project. Participants identified key projects (see Appendix 1) to meet their own development needs in their specific professional areas, and had to deliver benefits for their trust or community service that demonstrated their commitment to the NHS leadership and improvement agenda such as; improved patient experience, service improvements, community care initiatives and increased staff/stakeholder engagement and well-being.

Throughout the programme participants consolidated and extended their evidence-based practice by sharing, reviewing and reflecting on their learning.

The pilot programme ran from February 2017 to January 2018 with the participants' work-based project outputs and learning presented to a wider CLIC and NHS community.

## Key Outcomes

- The programme exceeded expectations and scope. Once work had begun with the group to accredit their learning, it became clear the extent of learning reflected in the module exceeded initial expectations. All participants were able to demonstrate learning which awarded them 60 credits at Level 7 (Masters level). It was then possible to change the programme to focus on a Post Graduate Diploma rather than a Post Graduate Certificate.
- Projects (see Appendix 1) made a real organisational impact making a difference on patients and services.
- The reflective work completed by the participants showed clearly the impact the learning had on them. The following examples illustrate how the module helped give them the foundation to progress with their studies and achieve successful project outcomes.

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**I passionately believe in the connections between personal development, organisational development and benefits to both patients and staff. This programme and the participants work has hugely validated this belief. The obvious connections between a disciplined approach and great project outcomes shined through everyone's work. Combining practical problems with time for real thinking and rigor of method makes large and rapid gain so much easier to achieve. It has been a most enlightening event and a privilege to present a CLIC Gold Pin award to all participants.”**

Stephen Singleton, Director of CLIC

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**Fabulous to hear about the work achieved and how the group of participants have developed personally. The work based projects and improvements they have enabled will be of huge benefit to the CLIC system and wider NHS community. It has been a pleasure working with CETAD and our group of leaders from across our system. Their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to see their workplaces improve and their teams, and those they work alongside, develop have been very encouraging. For CLIC it has been very useful to understand better the impact our programmes can have. We have also learnt that enabling staff to reflect and consider what they have learnt and how it really does become useful to them in their workplaces is something we need to think more about in the future. The support CETAD has offered our team of participants has been excellent. It has been a really successful partnership with CETAD and I took a lot of useful information to take forward with in CLIC from the presentations and listening to the participants' final reflections. They have achieved so much with their projects, all very useful to CLIC as a system: I am certain some of this really valuable learning will now be shared across the CLIC community.”**

Rachel Fleming, Clinical Programme Manager, CLIC

"Whilst completing the CLIC Cumbria Production System (CPS) course would have given me the relevant skills to implement the project, the coaching course complemented my learning and gave valuable insight into delivering it to the team and giving them ownership as a whole. Completing the CETAD RAPL module brought this to the fore and has given me further reflective skills which has strengthened my professional practice."

"I have found myself using my past experience as a manager, which I feel was undertaken in a particularly poor way, but having now completed the CLIC Leadership course and the CETAD RAPL module and learned to reflect on experience, I can discuss issues with staff in a more professional manner. I use my coaching skills to encourage them to come up with a solution to their issues rather than me providing the solution. This encourages and makes me feel proud of the staff I manage and I also feel I am helping them to progress professionally."

"Doing the Reflective (Recognition) Account of Prior Learning (RAPL) module gave me an appreciation of CLIC learning and how I had applied it in my workplace to benefit the practice and patients, which in turn resulted in:

- o more confidence in my ability
- o my appetite to learn more
- o an inspiration to apply for a Practice Operations Manager role
- o doing a gap analysis initially but then gained confidence to go for it - after second interview offered job and took a big step to my further career! This had a huge influence on the basis for my work based project"



## Background

### Cumbria Learning & Improvement Collaborative (CLIC)

CLIC, learning and improvement collaborative, is a shared “umbrella” initiative which exists to drive a positive transformation in health and social care across Cumbria and the Morecambe Bay area by leading and embedding a culture of collaboration for continuous learning, continuous quality improvement, and living within our means.

Having adapted learning from Jönköping, the North East Transformation System, Virginia Mason Medical Centre, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, the NHS Leadership Academy, and NHS Improving Quality, and pooled knowledge from all members in Cumbria and the Morecambe Bay area to devise a joint and common way to talk, think, learn and practice leadership and continuous improvement.

CLIC’s first three key priorities relate to:

1. Learning together in teams to improve services and save money
2. Agreeing and adopting a common improvement methodology, called the Cumbria Production System
3. Developing leaders at every level

CLIC originally brought together everyone working in health and social care in Cumbria and the Morecambe Bay area, including people who use services. Currently CLIC supports the North Cumbria population footprint but founding partners include:

1. Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
2. Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
3. Cumbria County Council, in particular Health and Care Services and Children’s Services
4. North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust
5. University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

Three strategies are the current focus to achieve the CLIC purpose:

- Education and Learning Strategy and Objectives  
*Transforming learning through collaboration*
- Cumbria Production System (CPS) Strategy and Objectives  
*Developing and implementing a common improvement methodology, the Cumbria Production System*
- Developing People and Teams Strategy and Objectives  
*Embedding talented leadership in all staff*

In addition CLIC works to support the development of all staff in the CCG.

### CETAD, Lancaster University Management School

Established in 1990, CETAD operates as a successful Work Based Learning centre, with expertise in work based learning, leadership, organisation change, innovation and improvement. The centre is located in the Management School at Lancaster University, with sound knowledge of the NHS improvement agenda and HEE expectations for workforce and organisation development, enabling the centre to support both individuals and organisational development through a broad range of CPD modules, accredited programmes and innovation and improvement initiatives. CETAD’s Work Based Learning approach ensures programmes of learning are practical, relevant and focussed on applying extended and wider learning into workplace practice. Staff are experienced in working with employees at different levels across the NHS, with sound knowledge and understanding of the challenges and issues facing professionals in the context of their roles and the NHS agenda.

In 2016, when CLIC had been in place for two and a half years, the team started thinking about how they could understand more fully the impact the development programmes were having on the system, and those who attended them. CLIC has consistently captured satisfaction levels from participants on completion of the programmes but were keen to understand more about the ongoing impact of learning. There was also recognition that for some individuals it was important to gain academic credit for the learning they had achieved. Having been asked by participants if this was possible, CLIC approached CETAD, Lancaster University, to explore if the process they used to accredit prior learning could be a useful way to measure this impact, and whether there was a route that could offer individuals the accreditation they sought.

## Key Aims

Cumbria Learning and Improvement Collaborative has established a range of leadership and improvement programmes to respond to the emerging development needs of system leaders working to achieve improvement in health and social care across Cumbria.

The key aims of the CETAD and CLIC Partnership were to:

- Offer an opportunity for participants to gain recognition for their learning from CLIC programmes and recognise how their learning and development has been applied and embedded into their workplace practices
- Develop aligned academic knowledge and skills for leading work based improvement projects

- Establish a culture committed to clinical leadership learning and development supported by both practical and academic accreditation
- Facilitate application of learning into real workplace practices
- Create a community of best practice across the CLIC network



## Key Stages of Set-up

When setting up and running this project Jan Metcalfe, Director of Collaborative Partnerships at CETAD, liaised closely with the Clinical Programme Manager for CLIC, Rachel Fleming, to gain a fuller understanding as to how the programmes delivered by CLIC could be accredited with postgraduate credits through the University Accreditation of Prior Learning process. The emphasis was on a collaborative working relationship between CLIC and CETAD to deliver an innovative, bespoke programme based on recognising the learning from CLIC workshops namely:

- Cumbria Production System Practitioner
- Improving Leaders
- Coaching Skills for Leaders

A range of clinical and non-clinical staff applied and were a mix of team leaders working to achieve improvement in health and social care across Cumbria and Morecambe Bay. Each identified and submitted a wide and interesting variety of projects to complete which had to fulfil both university and CLIC criteria.

It was agreed from the outset that a dedicated CETAD Programme Leader would deliver the postgraduate module element of the programme to ensure consistency and align the prior learning and needs of each individual to the appropriate target award. CLIC agreed to support with venues, access to support resources and project sponsorship as appropriate.

In collaboration, CLIC and CETAD set the criteria for evaluating the impact of the programme at key stages of delivery and completion, to monitor the individual learning development, the outcomes of participant learning activities and the impact of work-based learning activities, including the project and reflection on their building on the initial CLIC workshops.

## How it Works

Following the selection process where participants had to demonstrate their commitment to improvement projects and personal development, the successful participants enrolled onto a Lancaster University Post Graduate programme in Professional Practice. The first module enabled participants to reflect on their learning from CLIC workshops in order to identify and determine the starting point of their Post Graduate Scheme. All participants achieved 60 credits, recognised at Masters level, allowing them opportunities on Diploma pathways. Following this initial module a programme of further modules, including optional workshops and modules that met personal development needs were completed, culminating in a 20-credit work based project.

The range of modules covered by participants included:

- Models for Planning Change
- Organisations: Culture, Values and Behaviours
- Leading Others through Change
- Understanding Leadership and Management

Optional themed workshops alongside other CETAD MA students supplemented these namely:

- Leading and Influencing People
- Planning and Leading Organisational Change
- Succeeding with Post Graduate Study

These modules further underpinned their knowledge and understanding from CLIC workshops and gave them the theory and practical awareness to apply to their learning in their professional practice. The programme sessions were delivered at venues in Penrith, Carlisle and Lancaster University.



A designated CETAD tutor delivered underpinning perspectives on developing as a Professional Practitioner, developing self as a learning leader; work-based project models and frameworks and recognising the importance of understanding leadership frameworks, culture, values and behaviours: engaging and influencing others for change within their organisation and the importance of reflection. Both CLIC and CETAD staff supported the wider aspects of evaluation in terms of measuring outcomes and impact together with delivery of planning and organising the final project presentation and reflection event for a wider stakeholder audience of funding partners, CLIC representatives, participant's managers and interested senior leaders within the health sector.

The CETAD nominated mentor/tutor worked with each individual to support project development and delivery and help participants find a balance between the demands of the workplace and study requirements. CETAD also carried out university assessments that simultaneously met the requirements of the Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Practice, and met the workplace requirements for an effective work-based project delivery for CLIC and their individual organisations.

At the end of the programme presentation event, held at the CLIC headquarters in Carlisle, participants shared the findings and outcomes of their projects and demonstrated how these real work based projects had made a difference to aspects of the patients' experience, service improvements, cost efficiencies, community care initiatives or increased staff and stakeholder engagement.





## Resources

On agreeing costs and the criteria for meeting outcomes with CETAD, CLIC secured funding through Health Education England (HEE) working across the North West. Offers of the opportunity to work with CETAD were made to CLIC members who had shown interest in gaining an accredited academic higher qualification, and had completed one or more of the following CLIC programmes:

- Cumbria Production System Practitioner
- Improving Leaders
- Coaching Skills for Leaders

As part of the application process participants also had to identify a work-based project they would complete as part of the process to demonstrate impact and return on investment. In-kind contributions in terms of time and expertise were provided by the individual project sponsors and venues, resources and support given by CLIC.

## Key Challenges

### CLIC key challenges identified:

- What was offered at the outset was not as clear as it could have been to potential participants – there was a need to articulate more on paper and clarify the process and engagement needed. This was overcome by CETAD reviewing and making compromises on day one and ensuring that everyone understood what the programme entailed before making a full commitment.
- That CLIC Manager's own time to participate and contribute to the group, from CLIC perspective, was curtailed throughout. This was overcome by the CETAD Programme Lead keeping the CLIC team informed with regular contact and sharing of feedback with group.

- Making best use of the programme as an opportunity to build on the learning for the CLIC system ensuring there is continued benefit and impact. This will be resolved by sending out newsletters and case studies for the wider audience. Participants will also be Learning Ambassadors for CLIC, for example taking opportunities offered at the Learning Organisations Collaborative (LOC) event.

### CETAD & Participant Challenges:

- Keeping programme participants on board with work for a postgraduate qualification and a work-based project when their everyday jobs are very demanding. This was resolved through ALS participation, mentoring, informal feedback to university and CLIC staff and formal feedback via the evaluation process. The pressures and strains participants were working under were always under consideration. Where appropriate individual support for work-based projects was provided and personal and professional support to individual participants when needed. Despite setbacks, and with every reason to give in, participants successfully completed the programme without any extensions or late submissions.
- Not having protected time to carry out projects and assessment work meant participants had to juggle competing demands on their time, especially when initial expectation was a postgraduate Certificate programme. Times scales changed with the added 'upgrade' to a Diploma. Due to the small supportive group the CETAD mentor was able to support additional independent ALS sessions, the group set up a support and buddy network and Zoom (videoconferencing software) sessions as appropriate. This was in addition to the scheduled university sessions and Action Learning Sets.

The following shared challenges were identified at the final evaluation session and addressed in situ:

- More time could have been planned for submission of assignment - time between taught session and hand in was challenging
- Finding time to think
- Having the self-belief and confidence
- Going out of comfort zone
- When is good enough, what does 'good' look like
- Using online materials and Moodle was an initial challenge but support given as appropriate

## Key Learning

### Lessons learnt by CLIC and sponsors who supported the programme and projects show they understand that:

- There were some early leavers in the initial stages so in future more informal information inductions with CLIC, and having CETAD input at outset, will be of benefit to everyone and would save time, money and effort in the longer term.
- Enabling staff to reflect and really consider what they have learnt and how it becomes useful to them in their workplaces needs more thought and support. Programmes in the future need to have time planned in to make sure the participants have sufficient time to do this.
- There is real value to the CLIC system of 'smaller' projects being undertaken when seen as a whole.
- Sponsors value the real feedback from participants conveying just how much they took from the CLIC and CETAD programme collaboration.

As an observation it was also recognised that there was a shared ethos for learning between CLIC and CETAD including:

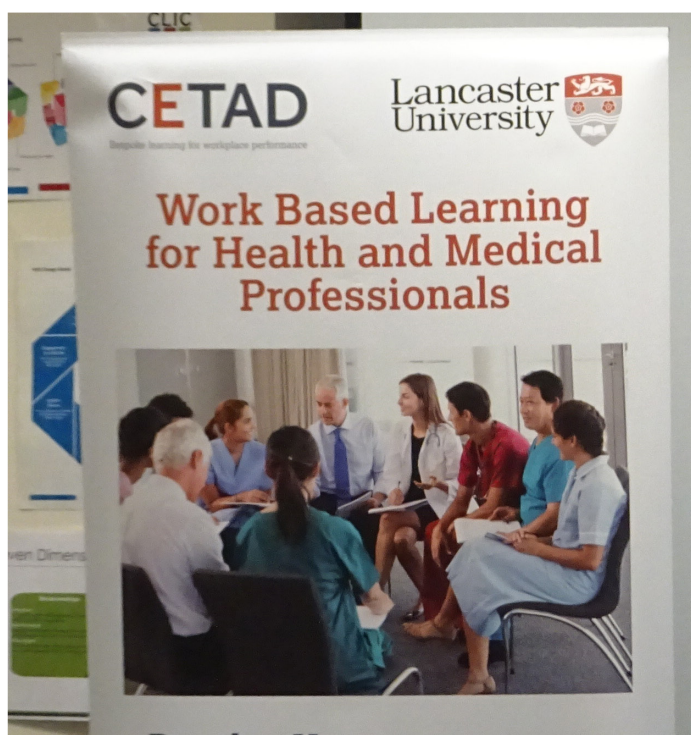
- Developing Leadership Skills
- Enriching Multidisciplinary working
- Improving Patient care
- Enhance your career (coincidentally proven with three participants being promoted during the course of the programme)

### Overall lessons learnt as agreed by participants at final presentation:

- Action Learning Sets are great experiential learning opportunities to be used and applied to work more often, sharing/networking support important and helps resilience, which is key to being able to shape and influence organisations
- Benefit of academic research underpinning work in practice; utilising models/new toolkits to help develop critical thinking
- Continuously monitor the outputs of projects, and staff commitment to new ways of innovation and improvement, and adapt as appropriate, as results will fluctuate and outcomes may not be as expected
- There is a need to get all staff and stakeholders on board to make a difference, which takes time and effort
- Asking for help and feedback is okay, not a failure
- Reflection, Reflection, Reflection – in, on and for! (see Appendix 2)

## Lessons learnt by CETAD:

- The importance of ensuring from the outset that participants and tutors expectations and timescales for programmes are understood by all parties. Marketing information and programme content need to be clear and induction time/initial launch on this occasion would have been of benefit, and probably encouraged more applicants, as there were some confused messages about level and timeframe for programme.
- To evaluate new programmes throughout and adapt timescales and learning content to meet the need of participants in very demanding job roles. For example, additional coaching support was provided by CETAD to aid the resilience of the participants with their course programme and projects when Diploma was identified as the target award.
- Effective collaborative with employers with committed participation on both sides and good communication ensures flexible, adaptive working practices that meet the needs of course participants and their organisations.



## Sustainability

Both CLIC and CETAD appreciate the importance of relevant workplace development activities and the opportunities for organisations to work closely with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to enable the experiential learning to surface and, where appropriate, be aligned to university qualifications.

The intention is to review an individual case. Evaluating one or two of the work-based service improvement projects in three to six months' time will illustrate how learning from the projects has been embedded in everyday practice within the organisation.

Ongoing discussions are taking place to explore possibilities of scaling up the opportunities to work on projects which not only improve services but are clearly seen to improve personal growth, critical thinking and resilience.

A mini case study will be undertaken in due course; some participants are already progressing onto a Masters Degree when they will be able to undertake a 60 credit project and, should they wish they may review, implement and evaluate the next stage of their completed 20 credit project. This will be a good opportunity to measure for impact on personal and organisational expected outcomes.





## Next Steps

- Participants are to disseminate their learning through presentations, meetings and sharing good practice with other CLIC members
- Set up a system to follow up case studies of the work-based projects. Projects did not finish at the end of the university programme but continue to develop and be driven by the participants and promotion of their project posters at Learning Organisations Collaborative (LOC) event in March 2018
- Participants will be CLIC Learning Leaders/Ambassadors and will contribute to ongoing service and quality initiatives through the CLIC network
- The established relationship forged between CETAD and CLIC from this programme opens up opportunities for further innovative projects. CETAD is continuously improving and responding to NHS needs, currently providing workshops on innovation, improvement and change management across the North West and will attend the LOC event to further support the work of CLIC and the collaboration partnership
- Several participants have now taken the opportunity to extend their Diploma to a Masters Degree in Professional Practice with CETAD, and are aiming to graduate in December 2018

## Supporting Material

### Relevant websites

CLIC: [www.theclic.org.uk](http://www.theclic.org.uk)

CETAD: [www.lancaster.ac.uk/lums/cetad](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/lums/cetad)

### Appendix

For more information contact:

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Appendix 1 – Work-Based Project Outcomes  
Appendix 2 – Participant Reflections

**Published March 2018**

