

Heather Darlow

Governance Lead, Leicestershire Partnership Trust

Clinical Audit Experience:

Graduating in 1994 I was fortunate to get my first job at Great Ormond Street Hospital supporting quality and clinical audit for the intensive care units. I then moved to Hackney Community Trust to develop the Trust's Quality and Audit delivery. My interest in developing and supporting staff in improving the care they deliver to patients grew from there. Having moved to Leicester in 1998, I completed De Montfort University's Clinical Audit Skills Course, which gave what I was doing a name and my interest in clinical audit and quality again grew. I have since then taken many different quality and governance roles, always with clinical audit in my portfolio and have previously managed a Clinical Audit Team.

I have always viewed clinical audit as the tool it is – a quality improvement tool. The process of identifying key standards, review, action planning and measuring change are fundamental to delivering safe care and I have always had a passion to help and support front-line staff to deliver the best possible care they can.

Where are they now?

I am currently a Governance Lead for Community Health Services with Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and though I no longer lead the Audit Function I work closely with the team and Chair the directorates Clinical Audit and Effectiveness Group. My role oversees the delivery of the quality strategy for the Trust within the directorate including the management of risk, patient safety, patient experience and QI.

I have found that my facilitation, communication and reasoning skills honed whilst working in audit have stood me in good stead for the wider remit of quality, governance and assurance and these really are transferable skills that can support a move outside of clinical audit into the wider governance/quality arena. Graduated in Public Administration and completed the Clinical Audit Skills Course in 1999. Has since completed the Mary Seacole Post-Graduate Leadership Programme and is currently nearing the end of her MSc in Quality and Safety in Healthcare from the University of Leicester.

Words of wisdom:

I think all staff working in clinical audit have a fantastic opportunity to embrace the current profile of quality improvement and the skills needed for delivering clinical audit effectively, are totally fundamental to delivering best practice through the wider quality improvement agenda.

My suggestions for how to improve clinical audit are:

- 1) Find your local champions and harness them
- 2) Bring the need for change to the teams delivering the service – action plan with those that know the reality
- 3) Take a chance on offering your skills to support wider quality improvement initiatives. You never know where it might lead you!



Meet Heather...

We have known Heather for over 20 years and worked with her in Leicestershire on various initiatives and projects.

She is an extremely positive person and possesses exceptional skills in clinical audit and QI.

We are grateful that Heather has shared her story and words of wisdom as part of Clinical Audit Awareness Week. As a community it is important we listen to those who have worked in our profession and take on board their advice.

#CAAW18.



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