

Appreciative enquiry into the development and evaluation of a ‘train the trainers’ approach towards cultivating compassion within the healthcare workforce

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This paper will report on the findings of a one year project funded by Health Education Kent, Surrey and Sussex. The aim was to design and roll out a sustainable programme of ‘compassion awareness training’ to staff within several identified health care organisations in the region. The impetus for the bid was in response to the Francis reports (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-mid-staffordshire-nhs-foundation-trust-public-inquiry>).

Key early decisions by the project team were made in order to foster a sustainable product; the project design would be based on an appreciative inquiry stance, the training initiative would be marketed as *cultivating* compassion and would be generated initially through a train the trainers model, thereby, acknowledging existing compassionate practices within the workforce and fostering ownership. A key product of the project has been the development of a cultivating compassion tool kit with digital stories and values based indicators generated by the health care staff in each organisation through focus group activity. The role of the compassion tool kit was to provide a specifically designed, coordinated set of ‘user-friendly’ learning tools that enabled the compassion trainers and attendees of training activities to cascade compassion awareness within the workforce.

The findings from this project indicate that exposure to the ‘toolkit’ stimulates a shift in thinking about compassion from one of compassion as a given “*I am a nurse therefore I am compassionate*” to expanding the horizon of compassion, raising awareness of and the desire to acknowledge the acts of compassion of others and the confidence to talk about compassionate practice with their colleagues. The tool kit didn’t however, fit all organisations. For example, it didn’t thrive in the business world of the GP practice. Where the ‘toolkit’ did prove successful in sustaining compassion training a combination of the following were evident:

- senior management level recognition and support
- creative integration of compassion training with other training initiatives
- alignment with streams of values based initiatives in the organisation
- well supported teams of trainers