



VERITA

IMPROVEMENT THROUGH INVESTIGATION

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Welcome

I am writing this having just given BBC South East a television interview about one of our reports. I surprised myself by the number of occasions during the interview that I mentioned the word 'improvement'. In this case it concerned work we are doing with a trust to improve the performance of a service involved in a particularly tragic safety incident.

In this issue we describe many of the ways we work with providers to improve services and patient safety, ranging from helping them to investigate and learn from serious incidents to resolving disputes between clinicians that threaten the performance and reputation of key services.

As the range of our work grows, so does Verita as an organisation. We have recently appointed Peter Killwick as a new partner. Peter brings a wealth of new skills and experience to the team, having previously worked as a partner for international strategy consultancy CVA. We are also adding to our consultant ranks and Bélène Podmore joins us from Imperial at the end of this month. Bélène has just completed a Masters degree in public health and is the first person to join our intern programme.

Best wishes

Ed Marsden
Managing partner

New patient safety tool

NHS organisations are under increasing pressure to save money, but the impact this can have on patient safety is often unknown until there is a major patient safety incident.

Verita has developed a tool to help organisations test their resilience to things going wrong and compromising patient safety.

Amber Sargent, Verita senior consultant, explains: *"Through our investigation work, we have developed a profound understanding of what factors combine to produce poor patient outcomes. We have collaborated with an academic from Imperial College London to combine this real-life, practical experience with the findings from in-depth academic research."*

The tool is based on the root causes and contributory factors from almost 300 investigations conducted by Verita over the last 11 years. It also takes into account a wealth of literature on resilient organisations, identifying the key components of

organisations that are less likely to experience things going wrong. It also identifies how well an organisation is equipped to learn when things do go wrong.

The assessment process can be done in two to three days with the results fed back to the trust immediately after completion.

"The tool is a quick, cost-effective way to identify any areas of concern within a division, service or across a whole hospital," Amber adds. Verita can then offer further analysis/support in the identified areas if needed.

For more information, please contact Amber Sargent on 020 7494 5670 or email ambersargent@verita.net.

Patient risk allegations unfounded

Verita has found that concerns raised about the management team of a health trust creating a 'climate of fear' that was putting patients at risk were unfounded.

The NHS Trust Development Authority commissioned Verita to establish if there were genuine concerns over the 'ward to board' culture and, most significantly, if there was any evidence that patients were being inadequately cared for as a result.

Verita partner Peter Killwick explains: *"The case highlighted that, in an environment of heightened sensitivity around patient safety, it is imperative to take a dispassionate perspective on allegations and, where possible, allow hard evidence to dictate outcomes – not personal opinion and hearsay."*

Verita conducted interviews of both executive and non-executive directors to establish the priorities and ways of working of the board, while interviewing in parallel senior and middle managers to determine how these priorities were communicated and implemented.

We established that the executive team was placing an increasing emphasis on patient safety and introducing structures and processes to ensure that staff understood and implemented the necessary actions. Board minutes, independent reports and performance statistics confirmed this.

For more information, please contact Peter Killwick on 020 7494 5670 or email peterkillwick@verita.net.

Warring clinicians

A large acute trust has asked Verita to review one of its key departments because of fears that its performance and ability to recruit new staff are being undermined by poor relationships between clinicians.

"Verita's reputation for managing sensitive situations well without compromising the integrity of its work made us the obvious choice", explains partner lead Lesley Sargeant.

Verita has carried out one-to-one interviews with clinicians, managers and board directors in order to get to the root cause of the department's problems and determine whether or not interdepartmental rivalry is affecting clinical leadership, governance and future development.

Our report will provide the trust with practical recommendations on how it can resolve the department's problems and develop its full potential.

Clinical malpractice

Verita has been commissioned to carry out two clinical governance reviews following high-profile cases of alleged malpractice by consultant surgeons. One review is for an NHS trust and the other a private healthcare provider.

Both reviews focus on what systems were in place to prevent and detect malpractice, and their adequacy and effectiveness.

Derek Mechen, Verita partner, explains: *"Regardless of whether it's in the NHS or private sector, faced with serious cases of malpractice involving 100s of patients over many years, senior managers want to know the same thing: how was it allowed to carry on for so long under the radar."*

"Through a process of documentary review and targeted interviews, Verita identifies who knew what when, and gaps in clinical governance systems that need to be addressed."

Care home assessment

Verita has used its new assessment tool based on established best practice to review the quality and safety of a care home in just five working days. The care home provides residential care to 137 frail elderly people, many of whom have dementia.

Kathryn Hyde–Bales, senior consultant at Verita, explains: *"The provider wanted an indepth review of the home, and practical advice on site to address immediate areas of concern. And it wanted it quickly."*

"Using our assessment tool, we tailored our review to meet our client's requirements."

Kathryn and Chris Brougham, who developed the assessment tool, initially spent two days on site, conducting a 'snapshot' assessment of the home. They observed everyday practice, and held one–to–one meetings with the management team. At the end of the two days they reported back to the home manager, outlining where immediate steps could be taken to improve practice.

They spent three days the following week conducting further interviews with staff and residents, observing practice and reviewing written policies and procedures.

At the end of the three days they presented their overall findings and recommendations to the board. In addition to identifying practical solutions to address immediate concerns, they set out practical steps to implement longer–term improvements.

For more information, please contact Kathryn Hyde–Bales on 020 7494 5670 or email kathrynhyde-bales@verita.net.

Peter Killwick joins Verita

Verita has appointed a new partner, Peter Killwick, to join the team in the London office.

Peter has worked in consultancy for nearly 25 years across a wide range of sectors and in numerous countries, for the last five years as a partner in a global strategic consultancy. As part of Verita's ambitious growth plans, he will look to build on our wealth of experience to develop rigorous tools and methodologies applicable to healthcare and beyond.

Peter's initial focus will be developing, in partnership with a well-respected academic

clinician, an approach to determining how safe an environment organisations or departments provide for their patients and identifying areas for improvement. In addition, he will take the lead on growing Verita's presence in the Middle East.

Commenting on his appointment, Peter said: *"After working with Verita on and off over the course of the last two years, it became apparent that I shared a very similar outlook with the existing partners on the importance of quality of work produced and personal integrity in dealing with clients. My more quantitative background is very complementary to the skills in the firm, so the fit feels right."*

Royal Free training event

Verita ran a systematic incident investigation training course at the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust on 7 August.

Chris Brougham led the course for a range of staff including quality, assurance and governance managers and laboratory and clinical staff.

The commissioner thanked Verita saying: *"All those who attended thoroughly enjoyed the day and have benefitted hugely from the wealth of knowledge that Chris has."* A course participant said: *"The programme was very good and covered a huge amount of material in an interactive way that made it easy to learn."*

For more information on Verita's training courses please contact Chloe Taylor at chloetaylor@verita.net.

Project round-up

Verita has completed 15 investigations and reviews in the last four months. Of these, three were independent mental health homicide reviews commissioned by NHS North West, NHS South of England and NHS East of England, and two involved supporting a trust to deliver its own internal investigations into homicides committed by its patients.

We also completed four reviews for acute NHS trusts including helping an acute trust to reorganise its serious incident system in order to comply with CQC standards.

Additionally we completed two reviews for private care home groups, one for the NHS Trust Development Authority into concerns about board governance, one for a local area team, one for a clinical commissioning group and a complaint review for the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Verita's project manager Jess Martin says: *"We are continuing to maintain the momentum of work, with 11 projects commissioned in the same four month period.*

"Our client base is expanding to reflect the changing nature of the NHS. We are pleased to have been able to help so many new organisation so soon after they were established."

Contacting us For more information about Verita and any of the services we provide please contact Scott Robertson on 020 7494 5670 or email scottrobertson@verita.net

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