

WHEN STEPHEN RAMSDEN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF **LUTON AND DUNSTABLE HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**, HIRED EXPERIENCED NHS HR DIRECTOR PAUL BEAL AS AN INTERIM EXECUTIVE, HE GOT A LOT MORE THAN HE BARGAINED FOR

**impact**  
executives

HARVEY NASH GROUP

Luton and Dunstable Hospital **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# A healthy legacy

**NEXT MONTH [MARCH]** Stephen Ramsden, Chief Executive of Luton and Dunstable Hospital NHS Foundation Trust for the past 12 years, will leave his job for a new career. When he decided to leave last June, he set himself the task of ensuring that his legacy to the Trust would be an executive team that was as fit as it possibly could be to deal with the future challenges – not least financial challenges – facing the NHS over the coming three years.

“I had a difficult summer,” he recalls. During his tenure the leadership of the Trust had been relatively stable, but he felt that some roles and skills sets within the executive team needed developing significantly in order to fulfil the requirements of a Foundation Trust in the 21st Century. Overall, he felt the Trust needed to adopt a more commercial and modern approach.

A review of the team led to a restructuring and the departure of three of the six executive directors (including the Personnel Director) at relatively short notice, and Ramsden decided to bring in interim executive cover while he recruited permanent replacements.

But the interim executives would not be merely caretaking. “There were some big issues to get into, and functions to be developed accordingly,” he says.

One newly-created post that needed to be filled urgently was the Director of Organisational Development (including HR), and Ramsden turned to Impact

Executives for help.

Impact Executives fielded Paul Beal, an experienced NHS HR Director and interim manager, who joined as Interim Director of Organisational Development (OD) at the beginning of August.

**‘Paul’s professionalism, drive and enthusiasm to deliver this change programme for the organisation, while taking people with him, impressed me and the rest of the board,’**

“One of Paul’s attractions was the fact that he could bring in people with various different skill sets that we realised could be very useful to us in the change we wanted to bring about,” says Ramsden. “That added real value.”

But perhaps even greater added value derived from the fact that Beal’s early

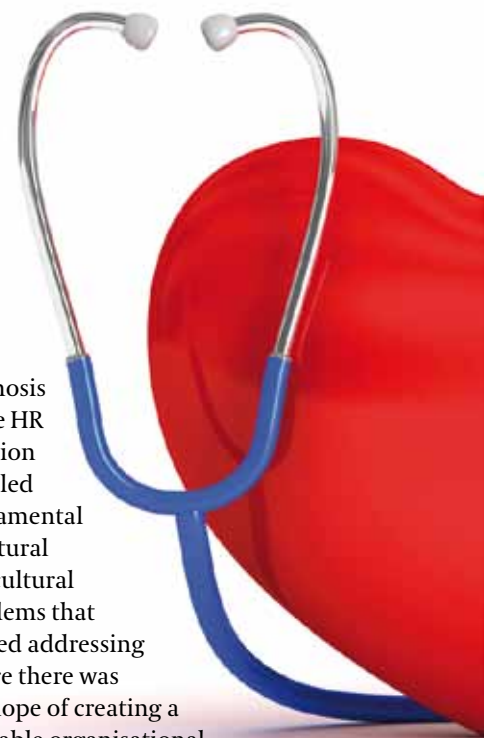
diagnosis of the HR function revealed fundamental structural and cultural problems that needed addressing before there was any hope of creating a workable organisational development plan or achieving the transformational change Ramsden was looking for.

“Within a month he had conducted a comprehensive review of the HR function and persuaded me and the board that we needed to radically restructure it,” says Ramsden. “That meant that his assignment was going to be even more demanding than it might have been. Instead of developing an organisational development plan for the Trust, we asked him to restructure and rebuild a 32-strong HR department.”

Beal’s review had involved talking both to members of the HR team itself, and to the Trust’s internal customers.

“Customers were very enthusiastic about the idea of having a more responsive, supportive, service-oriented HR function, but many in the department itself were resistant to change,” he says.

It wasn’t surprising, as he admits. “Twenty-three people were at risk, out of a department of 32, and many of them



had worked in the same way for 20 years.”

A six-week consultation period ensued (finishing on November 16th), during which Beal worked with the key stakeholders, including internal customers (principally managers and clinicians), members of the HR team and the unions. Unions were persuaded of the need to change by the NHS productivity agenda, which requires big workforce savings while sustaining the highest-quality patient care.

Beal explains: “Around 70 per cent of a Trust’s costs are related to its workforce, so you need robust workforce planning systems and high-level support for

managers in managing their people. What came out of the diagnostic was that managers felt they weren’t getting the right support.”

At the heart of the changes Beal proposed was an HR Business Partner (BP) model, whereby HR people work at a higher, more embedded level within the

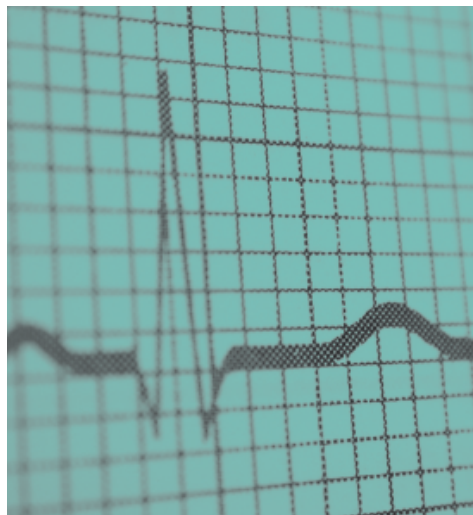
organisation to support the managers. A critical criterion for selecting people for the new more skilled roles was whether they could demonstrate that they could, with support, develop themselves to work at the required level by April.

The selection process was robust. Beal brought in associates to help create job

### THE INTERIM

Paul Beal has worked in the NHS in acute, primary care trust, community and mental health settings. His executive roles include Director of Workforce and OD at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Director of HR & OD at Brent PCT and Deputy Director of HR at St Mary’s Paddington NHS Trust. His interim assignments have included Associate Director of Workforce and OD at NHS South West Essex, Associate Director of HR at NHS Leicester City; and OD Consultant to NHS Direct.

He is a Fellow of the CIPD and has leadership development, coaching and counselling qualifications.



“We are much better organised to deal with future challenges than we would have been without Paul’s input ,”

evaluations and descriptions, devise and conduct competency-based interviews and assessment tests, and coach people for the interviews and to deal with the subsequent change.

Beal and his team were helped in the selection task by the appointment of Clare Edmondson as the new Director of OD. Before she joined full time, she spent one day a week during a month-long handover period helping Beal to select staff for the new posts and to write six new fit-for-purpose HR policies, covering performance and conduct, managing attendance, managing change, grievance procedures, bullying and harassment, and recruitment and selection.

By the end of December, the change programme was completed on time, within budget and with a comprehensive handover to Edmondson.

“Paul’s professionalism, drive and enthusiasm to deliver this change programme for the organisation, while taking people with him, impressed me and the rest of the board,” says Ramsden.

Edmondson has now taken the baton, embedding the new HR structure and getting the HR team used to new ways of working. But Beal believes the biggest challenge will be to educate and equip line managers to take responsibility for managing and developing their people,

### THE ORGANISATION

Luton and Dunstable Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was recently rated the best Acute Care Hospital Trust in the East of England. The Care Quality Commission’s Annual Health Check has rated the Trust as ‘excellent’ in the areas of quality of service and quality of financial management.

In 2009 the Trust was judged ‘best in class’ for tackling infection after halving its MRSA and C.difficile infections the previous year. Last year the Trust was also voted ‘the eighth best NHS Employer in the UK’ by the *Health Service Journal* and *Nurses’ Week* for its ability to attract top staff and clinicians.

and to this end Edmondson is creating a management development programme.

Beal describes the work that he and Edmondson have done at the Trust as “the start of the OD journey.” He explains: “I put the building blocks in place to allow Clare to focus on the OD agenda. You need to get the transactional basics right before you can move on to transformation.”

When Ramsden leaves next month he will have fulfilled his ambition of leaving behind a strong executive team. But his legacy will also include a much stronger HR department – one of the hospital’s most important functions, as he explains.

“The NHS will face severe financial pressure over the next three years. In our Trust alone we are likely to have to reduce our 3,500-strong workforce by about 20 per cent, and we would never have been able to do that, while sustaining our commitment to the best patient care, without a strong, highly effective modern HR department. Paul has made an enormous contribution to helping us achieve that in a short space of time.”

### THE CLIENT

“We rate our suppliers on the basis of the quality of the service, product or people they supply, and with Paul Beal and Impact Executives, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. What’s important to us is the calibre and contribution of the interim executives Impact Executives fields, and Paul has delivered far more than I originally anticipated we might need. We are now creating a strong commercial business partner approach – a very new concept for our organisation – and will be much better organised to deal with future challenges than we would have been without his input.”  
*Stephen Ramsden OBE, Chief Executive, Luton and Dunstable Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.*