



OUR WORK IN THE NHS

Alenka is a consultant anaesthetist with an NHS Foundation Trust. She was first introduced to Family Links programmes when her children were young. Since then, she has used the Nurturing Programme approach to develop a workplace charter for the Trust's operating theatres, an initiative never seen before in the NHS.

"I initially came across the Nurturing Programme when my children were young and I did the facilitator training to become a Parent Group Leader. The training was wonderful, completely unlike anything else I'd experienced; it was very experiential. It was done in such a nurturing way, and everything was modelled during the training. It's a lot about communication - about feeling heard and valued - and that's really stuck with me and has been the biggest thing that has changed, the way I interact with people.

It struck me that what the NHS really needed was the equivalent of the Nurturing Programme: an emotional literacy programme for staff. Fast-forward to 2019, and I was invited to be wellbeing lead for our department. I got in touch with Family Links and things suddenly started to come together. We've now run four sets of workshops for staff. They have helped, along with the other wellbeing improvement initiatives, in terms of creating that expectation among staff that wellbeing is now an established part of the general cultural agenda.

At a meeting I flippantly said, "What we need is something like a charter for theatres." I was thinking about the Nurturing Programme family rules. We held a meeting with people of all

grades of seniority and different disciplines from across our theatre systems to thrash out what we'd like to see go into a charter. People felt able to say how it really felt for them, how communication was lacking, and how the impact of one colleague's lack of doing something impacted on them.

We drafted six charter items that represent the full range of concerns. A successfully performing team really does mean the difference between safety and lack of safety, and we're all aligned in terms of what we want for our patients, which is the best care. What we're trying to do with the charter is to make everybody aware of how important it is to think about the team rather than individuals, because nobody can work in isolation. It feels like family, with disagreements and some big ones, but it feels like family, which is great.

I don't know of any other charity or business that does what you do - linking everything up so any professional, parent, or child can experience the Nurturing Programme approach. So when we saw that you were running the workplace programme, we said, "Yeah, we need that."

"What I would really love to see is emotional health training for all NHS staff, but particularly for team leaders right across the NHS because I think that would be the one single thing that could really start to change things."

Alenka, Consultant Anaesthetist
NHS