



# REACHING OUT.. ***RUNNING SCHWARTZ ROUNDS ACROSS A LARGE RURAL COMMUNITY TRUST***

## ***Who we are and the challenges we face?***

Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust (DCHSFT) provides health care for patients at 205 sites including 12 community hospitals and 28 health centres across Derbyshire as well as within patients' homes.

We employ approximately 4,500 staff, making us one of the largest providers of specialist community health services in the country and serving a Derbyshire population of about 800,000. The county itself covers a wide geographical area of 2625 square kilometres. Not only is the county large but, due to its mainly rural and rolling landscape, some areas are particularly challenging to access especially when the weather is poor. This is a particular issue as we have some staff groups providing direct care into people's homes (e.g. district nurses and community therapists).

Given the above, amongst the biggest challenges for DCHSFT in setting up Schwartz Rounds was the geographical spread of the workforce. No single location or central site would enable access to all staff and the risk of doing this was that staff might be left feeling disenfranchised or disconnected (a particular concern given the professional and social isolation that is inherent in some community posts).

## ***What staff have to say about their experience of Schwartz Rounds***

A recent survey allowed us the opportunity to find out from staff what they had felt about their experience of attending a Round. Their observations were both moving and encouraging. Some of these thoughts are shared below.

"I feel appreciated, and valued. It has opened my eyes to the people around me, to be able to support and care for my colleagues that might need it also"

"My working day is better for having the opportunity to sit in on these. I feel valued and appreciated by DCHS and my manager. It is important to me that these continue"

"I was heartened and humbled by the stories shared. It encouraged me to think differently about how I may approach similar situations. It also gave me strength knowing I am not facing difficult problems alone and I have colleagues to turn to in tough times for support"

## ***How we have approached these challenges***

With Executive encouragement and support, we made a concerted effort to reach out to staff across the whole county and, during our first year of operation (since October 2016), we have offered monthly Schwartz rounds in 9 different locations.



Finding venues of locations for meetings has been challenging and we have utilised not just health care premises but also a variety of other locations, including church halls. The imperative has always been to reach out to staff and to make Rounds accessible and relevant to all.

With the assistance of our Staff Wellbeing Lead and our Communications team, we have attempted to address the communications challenge in a variety of ways. This has included:

- sending e-mails to all staff

- advertising Schwartz Rounds on our intranet and in weekly electronic newsletters
- tweeting about the events in advance and on the day
- having signature strips advertising forthcoming events on the Steering Group's email communications
- putting up banners advertising Rounds in the weeks leading up to the Round in bases near to the next round
- identifying local champions in forthcoming Round locations to promote the rounds.

Close to 200 members of staff (4.5% of the workforce) have now attended a Round on at least one occasion, an achievement of which we are especially proud given the challenge of reaching out to staff across such a wide area.

And support from our Chief Executive and Executive team has been very important in reassuring staff that the Rounds are truly felt to be important and valued by the organisation. Senior managers are strongly represented within the Steering Group, with four Group members reporting directly to Board and membership encompassing both those responsible for quality clinical provision and also those responsible for supporting the workforce. Indeed, not only have most members of the Executive team been to at least one Round, many have chosen to be panellists to share their own experiences of health care.

## ***What we are doing from here***

Our plan is to help even more DCHSFT staff to be involved in the future. To that end, we have already advertised all meetings for the next year with dates and venues, in order that staff have the time to plan their attendance. We will also further develop our efforts to promote the Rounds locally as well as across the whole county.

Following feedback and discussion, we have decided to consolidate our Rounds into 4 venues, repeating on a 3-monthly cycle. These venues have been specifically located to allow reasonably convenient access for staff on at least a quarterly basis.

We also wanted to ensure that our clinical facilitators felt well supported and that they had sufficient time to prepare and deliver the Rounds, around the many other commitments that they have in their roles. Thus, in addition to the ongoing support from the Steering Group, we have now increased the number of clinical facilitators trained to deliver our Rounds to seven, including our two clinical leads.

As we move forwards with optimism and excitement, we are reassured by the encouraging support of our Chief Executive, Tracy Allen who has commented "I am extremely pleased with the way that Schwartz Rounds have been embedded into the life of the Trust.

There is a very important message for colleagues that the Trust sees their wellbeing as sufficiently important that we commit to running monthly Rounds. I am really impressed that 160 colleagues have now attended at least one round. Given the geography of the area and the number of communities we serve, that is quite an achievement. CQC assessed us Outstanding in the Caring domain – we cannot maintain that position unless we show equal care to our colleagues. We are working in times of unprecedented pressure and colleagues at every level need to know that their emotional wellbeing matters. I see Schwartz Rounds as one of the ways in which we can offer support and provide compassionate care, not just to our patients but also to our colleagues and to ourselves. I am personally committed to supporting the onward development of Schwartz Rounds and whenever possible attending them myself."



**Tracy Allen**  
Chief Executive