“Become a care radical who rocks the boat and stays in it”

We often hear about people rocking the boat at work, but how as nurses can we manage to rock the boat and stay in it? How can this make a difference to improving our patients’ lives?

That was a question I grappled with as a nurse leading in a transformational role at Nottingham University Hospitals Trust.

My light-bulb moment came when I heard about how to rock the boat without falling out. It was part of the School for Health and Care Radicals web-based programme inspired by Helen Bevan, chief transformation officer at the Horizons group at NHS Improving Quality.

As health and care professionals, we don’t always approach change in a healthy way. All too often, change is something that filters down from the top and feels imposed, veering to compliance rather than commitment. Does it need to be like this?

In my experience, the best ideas for change come from frontline staff – nurses, porters and domestic teams who are doing the day job. We all can become a leader of change in our own right wherever we are in the system.

The School for Health and Care Radicals was set up to support NHS Change Day, giving people the confidence and skills to make a difference. It is a free virtual learning programme that is open to all, regardless of role, remit, position or location. The school encourages everyone to become a leader on change in health and care by:

» Putting together their own toolkit of powerful approaches for leading and supporting change;

» Connecting with and learning from other health and care radicals;

» Building the confidence, knowledge and skills to operate as an effective change agent.

I came to the programme with lots of experience of traditional improvement methods – and the school managed to turn this on its head. It transformed my approach as a nurse to leading on change to one that’s relational, where change happens through conversations with each other. Last year, Nottingham University Hospitals Trust was seen as the leading trust for the number of individual pledges made for NHS Change Day. I believe that the school helped me to inspire others so we could reach this wonderful position.

As one of its first graduates, I am involved in delivering the programme this month. Last year, more than 1,900 people in over 66 countries took part. I would love to see more frontline nurses and healthcare assistants taking part in the next one. As nurses, we can all inspire others to make a difference and lead in change. The next programme starts at the end of January and you can find out about it at bitly.NHSIQSchool.

I would like to see all nurses come together from all areas of the NHS to support each other in building long-lasting networks and friendships to deliver radical change for the better in this next era. NT

See page 25 for details of the Challenge Top Down Change campaign.

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