

The Learning Practice: Learning Organisations in Primary Care

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Background

Primary Care today faces constant challenges from changing population trends, and growing patient and governmental expectations. Adaptability and responsiveness may be important characteristics for Primary Care in such a climate. Recent attempts to engender these characteristics in Primary Care have apparently been largely unsuccessful, exacerbating resistance to more imposed change. A series of three academic papers produced by the Centre for Public Policy and Management (in press, *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*) discuss this situation, and propose that one alternative strategy may be to promote the concept of the Learning Organisation, as identified by Senge (1990), as a means of helping Primary Care to innovate to deliver good quality services.

Aims of study

- to study primary care practices to investigate the extent to which (if at all) they exhibit learning organisation characteristics
- to establish whether or not this enhances their adaptability and responsiveness in a climate of changing demands.

Methods of working

Primary Care teams were studied in various practice areas in context, taking into account factors such as location, population, the services they provided (and were expected to provide contractually/socially), links with the wider health and social care community, and if and/or how these factors influenced the way they worked. In particular, the study sought to identify helping or hindering factors to the use of the learning organisation concept in Primary Care. Qualitative research methods were used, specifically the case study methodology.

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For more information about this project contact [Gail Greig](#)