

**Commercial in Confidence**

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REVIEW REPORT  
The Retreat**

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

**On behalf of  
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE ASSESSMENT LIMITED**

**Assessor: Stephen Hudson**

**Review Identification details:**

Assessor: Stephen Hudson  
Organisation: The Retreat  
Address: 107 Heslington Road, York, YO10 5BN  
Sites: 2  
Senior person: Jenny McAleese, Chief Executive  
Investors contact: Ted Jackson, Head of Human Resources  
Date of pre-meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007  
Assessment date(s): 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007  
Feedback date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008  
Number of staff: 350  
Interviewees: 29

## **Introduction to the Organisation**

The Retreat is an independent charitable organisation, which provides mental health care. The Retreat has been through a period of rapid change in the last ten years.

To the external visitor, The Retreat is clearly an organisation with a totally committed, confident and enthusiastic staff, whose talents contribute to providing a range of specialist psychiatric services. People talk about how they trust, respect and support each other within their Service Teams and how their directors and managers are open and approachable. There is a unique culture of inclusiveness preserving the Quaker character.

The organisation continues to restructure, with newly created positions in learning and development, risk and marketing. The Business Community Board is empowered with decision making in relation to the day-to-day running of the organisation, whilst the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Directors are responsible for the strategic direction of the business.

## **Review visit objectives**

The main objective of the Investors in People review visits was to build upon the embedded good practice of The Retreat, in particular taking account of how the service teams feel that the strategies are working and appropriate to the needs of everyone, including staff and clients, in The Retreat community.

## **Assessor Executive Summary**

This review has confirmed that The Retreat continues to meet all the Principles and Indicators of the current Investors in People Standard, so therefore remains recognised as an Investor in People.

Interviews during the review, supported by a wealth of documentary evidence, clearly demonstrate that previous recommendations have been actioned by the organisation in the spirit of continual improvement. In addition The Healthcare Commission inspection in July 2007 was successful in that improvements were noted across several core clinical governance and environmental areas. The vast majority of people interviewed felt that the inclusive “hands on” approach nurtures an environment where knowledge and skills development sits comfortably with the underpinning values. Staff are aware of relevant legislation, sources of good practice guidance, regularly citing the Intranet (“shared drive”), the Resource Centre, PSI approach and an awareness of work-life balance needs. Although there has been some slippage with the Appraisal process the next cycle of Appraisals will feed information into the Annual Training Plan detailing action points for the organisation as well as for individual professional development (CPD).

## **Strengths and areas of good practice include:**

- Systematic audits of staff training levels
- Embedded meetings and forum structures developing a strong team community

- Clarity of Vision with service teams empowered to deliver excellence
- Improving Briefing processes
- A coaching and mentoring culture which develops staff potential
- On – going development of Policies and Protocols
- The Learning Resource Centre
- Away Days and Team Effectiveness Days
- The introduction of Ward Clerks
- A rigorous Induction process

### **Areas of Improvement for consideration**

- Continue to improve the ICT facilities, Intranet and staff ICT skills (ECDL?)
- There appears to be some capacity and morale issues in a minority of areas, although you are aware of these and are already taking steps to make improvements
- Evaluate Leadership and Management Programmes at a corporate level (work-in-progress)
- It may be appropriate to appoint Investors “Champions” within each service team (to share good practice across the organisation and use the ten indicators in a more overt way)
- Maintain the core briefing process and consider internal workshops to enhance the delivery/presentation skills of the briefing managers
- The Wednesday pm. development sessions are an excellent innovation, do stress to all staff the benefits of allowing time for personal learning, reflection and wellbeing
- Provide holistic care for staff to prevent “burn-out and too much stress” (encourage more use of the gym, massage, yoga, meditation and so on)
- Overall keep your systems simple! (as you are doing with Appraisal)
- All staff should be developed to take responsibility for communicating effectively with their colleagues (i.e. self management and ownership of communications). This means managing their own and others’ communications.

### **Findings from the review visit**

#### **DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION**

**An Investor in People develops effective strategies to improve the performance of the organisation through its people**

#### **1. A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood**

Directors and Managers outlined the strategic vision and corporate business planning cycle. Your Governors and Board seek to consult with and involve staff in the plans which are reviewed quarterly by the SMT. You explained the numerous networks, forums and partnerships, accountabilities, values, strengths as well as weaknesses with clarity and passion. It was pleasing to hear about the achievements made in a number of service areas. At corporate and team level there is clarity of focus with

client care at the heart of everything you do. People spoke about the sense of community which is evolving, with cross-team constructive relationships which reach out across all your community. Appraisal and supervision, regular feedback and support, quality assurance and open two way communications were regularly cited by managers and staff as cornerstones of the approach taken. Fair opportunities are provided for all people with roles and levels agreed to deliver your service models.

## **2. Learning and development is planned to achieve the organisation's objectives**

The Director of Clinical Services and Head of Human Resources explained the organisational structures and processes to support learning and development needs. Established strategies such as Appraisal and Supervision are to be strengthened so that objectives are agreed for all staff as well as giving more personal accountability for CPD. The appointment of a Learning & Development Manager should also impact upon achievement of organisational objectives, for example in delivering at least 90% of mandatory training in 2008. (100% should be a realistic target for 2009). Leadership and management capacity is being developed through your close links with York University; with other evidence based programmes such as NVQ regularly cited as helping staff develop competence and confidence.

## **3. Strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity in the development of the organisation's people**

There is not a shadow of a doubt that The Retreat values the knowledge, skills and talents of all staff equally. The assessor met with a number of people whose aspirations had been met through being nurtured and encouraged through preceptorship, mentoring and coaching to achieve personal growth as well as worthwhile career progression and rewards. Your approach has set the organisation on the road to becoming a true "learning organisation." Everyone spoke about the open culture with staff all aware of the multi-faceted approach to learning. The client focus did however seem to prevent some staff from full participation, for example in the Wednesday p.m. sessions. This would seem to be an issue more about people's own time-management although some corporate discussion about fair access may be helpful.

## **4. The capabilities managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively are clearly defined and understood**

Directors and Managers are genuine and sincere in developing all people within the agreed Principles and Codes of Conduct. They cited the plans in place to make sure managers are consistent and fair in developing their staff, mentioning the close links with York University, as well as the appraisal and supervision processes. All staff have current job descriptions outlining the joint accountability for leadership, with staff being given appropriate autonomy to deliver services effectively and appropriately for their role. Changes of management to some services and wards mean that discussions are taking place on required improvements, taking account of staff and client group views. The assessor felt that the management capabilities described by managers truly reflect the culture and values of your organisation and aligned with the expectations of the people they manage. Respect, accountability and inclusiveness were confirmed as contributing to delivering the best client care.

## **TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION**

**An Investor in People takes effective action to improve the performance of the organisation through its people**

### **5. Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people**

Managers described the various community forums which help to promote a sense of ownership and responsibility, such as Business Community and Local Community Boards. Managers also explained how they manage in a manner which enables all staff to grow and develop within their roles. They try to be as flexible as possible, to take into account individual needs and situations which can of course be difficult to manage when running a 24/7 service. People described the strengthened supervision process and were aware of the plans to simplify the appraisal process allowing for more personal ownership of CPD. Where slippage has occurred in the past staff acknowledged that the organisation has been open and honest in seeking staff feedback through focus and peer groups.

### **6. People's contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued**

Managers appreciate and value the contributions made by all people in the Retreat community to maintaining and improving services. The regular audit meetings and forums were cited as examples of two-way dialogue. In addition the "Away Days," in particular when held off-site were described by staff as "amazing." There appears to be some low level stress at certain points as in any organisation, mainly due to perceptions of capacity and time management issues. Managers are aware of these and this is being looked at. Overall, during the review visits, people confirmed strong professional working relationships, friendships and a real pride in everyone working together for mutual benefit. Without doubt staff are fully engaged in delivering a high quality service at all times.

### **7. People are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision – making**

Many of the findings in Indicator 6 also apply to this indicator. Interviewees at all levels of the organisation confirmed their participation in the communication and decision making forums. The meetings structures, codes of practice, data capture and manager encouragement through supervision and mentoring are common factors in ensuring ownership, responsibility and accountability for such a successful organisation. Mechanisms are in place to learn from lessons of the past so that a "no blame culture" exists. The shared decision making processes encourage staff to reflect upon their own and colleagues practice. It was also good to hear from staff that wherever possible you do try to "have fun" along the way.

### **8. People learn and develop effectively**

As an organisation The Retreat evaluates the impact of its learning and development programmes with reporting mechanisms which link back to business plan goals. The audit process has highlighted a number of training and development areas which require attention and these are being addressed. The “cumbersome” appraisal process is being simplified to allow further ownership and accountability. However, during the review the assessor also identified areas of strength and excellent practice, meeting staff whose knowledge and skills had been nurtured, allowing career pathways to open up for them. People spoke about the clinical supervision meetings, CPD meetings and the team-building days. The Chief Executive has participated in a “back to the floor day” which is always appreciated by staff. Many people are being supported through their learning, with the A1 assessor qualification allowing NVQ candidates to be guided by experienced colleagues who understand the complexities of the roles. The rigorous Induction process, coaching and mentoring were consistently mentioned. Some staff are anxious about the expanding use of IT in care planning, recognising the fact that their current competence will require upgrading. Interestingly, several staff mentioned ECDL to the assessor as a possible way forward and this should be explored.

## **EVALUATING THE IMPACT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION**

**An Investor in People can demonstrate the impact of its investment in people on the performance of the organisation**

### **9. Investment in people improves the performance of the organisation**

The review confirmed the dynamism of the planning and evaluation process. The Board, Directors and Managers continue to invest in all people, supported by established good practice such as Away Days, Appraisals and Supervision. The impact of learning and development included improved capacity to meet service needs and fulfilment of organisational and team priorities. Throughout the visit the assessor could see that you are all working together to establish consistency and accountability as “powerful autonomous professionals.” Staff confirmed their involvement in delivery of therapeutic plans and also about rebuilding their own confidence. Not least staff stated that sometimes performance improvement is gauged by “just making someone smile.”

### **10. Improvements are continually made to the way people are managed and developed**

Positive changes and contributions to the way in which people are managed and developed could be cited and consistently recognised across a range of activities by managers and staff.

Examples included:

- Compliance with Healthcare Commission National Minimum Standards
- The appointment of a Risk Manager
- The appointment of Ward Clerks, reducing administration burden
- The appointment of a Learning & Development Manager

- Newly developed Codes of Conduct
- Revisions to Policies and the introduction of new Policies & Protocols
- The enhanced and simplified Appraisal process and documentation
- Team Effectiveness Days
- Career Support Meetings
- Pilot programme for electronic recording and care planning
- “Feeling heard and feeling safe”

Overall, everyone remains committed to The Retreat and your code of shared expectations. Everyone spoken to, either formally or informally, demonstrated their pride in actively participating in achieving such worthwhile service objectives.

### **Conclusion**

Once again, thank you for making me so welcome. Success is hard won in any walk of life and your community is very special.

**Stephen Hudson**  
**For Yorkshire & Humberside Assessment Ltd**