

## TALKING HEALTH

**"IN THE NHS BEST PRACTICE FROM THE COMMERCIAL WORLD SHOULD BE EMBRACED NOT SHUNNED"**

TRANSFORMING A HOSPITAL ONCE CONDEMNED BY THE CQC, MARK ILIFFE OF EXECUTIVE SEARCH EXPERTS TYZACK TELLS HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT MAGAZINE ABOUT THE INSIDE STORY OF THE SUCCESS OF WEXHAM PARK HOSPITAL IN BERKSHIRE



There are some striking elements to the NHS' recent success story concerning the turnaround of Wexham Park Hospital in Berkshire. While it was only two years ago that the organisation was condemned by the CQC, Sir Andrew Morris, together with his team from Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, led a takeover which has resulted in a dramatic turnaround in performance. Sir Andrew was clear from the outset about the order in which they wanted to perform the recovery. By focusing on getting the culture and the safety right, closely followed by the performance and staffing, he left finances to the last. Sir Andrew pointed out that had money been the prime driver the results would have been quite different. This approach reflects the type of philosophy majoring on great leadership, employee engagement

and the development of robust process that has seen countless companies in the commercial world succeed. Yet it was a bold approach given the obsessive paranoia within the NHS that anything with a hint of the business world is evil. The well-worn phrase: "creeping privatisation" is constantly wheeled out, when in fact best practice from the commercial world should be embraced, not shunned. Certainly the make-up of the board at Frimley indicates a team of Non-Execs with a wealth of experience from leading blue-chip corporations and their considerable influence is demonstrable in the swift and effective turnaround of the hospital.

**What Were the Key Learnings?**

There are a number of key learnings that can be drawn from the Wexham Park Hospital turnaround. The first one is that it is not impossible after all to run an NHS hospital in a commercial way. Secondly, rather than obsessing about the amount of money required to fix problems, which must feel like pouring water into a leaky bucket, the answer has to be to plug the holes first.

The third important point is the value of giving leaders time to be successful. If we were to view NHS Chief Execs as disposable as, say, football managers, Sir Andrew is firmly in the Sir Alex Ferguson league. Sir Andrew is a revered NHS personality who has led Frimley for over 25 years. If more CEOs were given the time and support to make changes occur we would doubtless see better results.

The evolving healthcare landscape requires more leaders with Sir Andrew's kind of vision and corporate approach, who can break through the 'business as usual' mindset that occurs when organisations are geared towards operating highly polished repeatable processes.

Sir Andrew managed to break down those walls and bridge the gap between the aspirations of all the stakeholders and the people impacted by the change by flipping the model on its head.

The success of Wexham Park Hospital speaks volumes for a leadership steeped in sound commercial expertise.

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## DIARY DATES

**Hospital Innovations**  
26-27th April  
Olympia, London

**Naidex**  
26-28th April  
NEC, Birmingham

**LaingBuisson Social Care Conference**  
Delivering Quality in Challenging Times  
12th May  
Birmingham

**NHS Confederation Annual Conference**  
15-17th June  
Manchester Central

**The Commissioning Show**  
29-30th June  
ExCeL, London