



# RESPECT

Responsibility | Empowerment | Support | Pride | Equality | Communication | Trust

**NHS**  
Devon Partnership  
NHS Trust

*Together we  
make a bigger  
difference*

## Point of Care Foundation – Schwartz Awards Category - Most powerful Round

*Demonstrations of emotional, behavioural or organisational change*

*Laura Hobbs*

***Devon Partnership NHS Trust Schwartz Facilitator***

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### **About Our Schwartz Round Programme**

The three Devon Partnership NHS Trust (DPT) facilitators are proud members of the DPT / Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust (RD&E) partnership and together we deliver monthly Schwartz Rounds to combined audiences of up to 100 physical and mental health staff. However, due to the disparate geography of DPT staff, the numbers remain low in comparison to the RD&E's attendees.

While the rounds we have run in DPT have been successful, they have been small (no larger than 25/30 people) so we have never felt we have reached a wide enough audience to make a big enough impact.

### **The event that hosted the most powerful Round**

In February 2019, Laura, who is Head of CQC Compliance and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) at the Trust was given the opportunity to run a Senior Staff Forum dedicated to EDI, where up to 150 of the Trust's most senior clinical and non-clinical leaders would be a captive audience for a full day.

The EDI focus for the Senior Staff Forum needed to be approached in a unique way; to connect attendees to the idea of equality, diversity and inclusion in an emotional way, rather than leaving people in the audience with the assumption that *unless* they had a very obvious protected characteristic – such as being from another country – it didn't really connect to them.

The morning sessions therefore repeatedly focused people's attention on how we are all unique and different and at times in all our lives, we have been made to feel left out, victimised, judged, limited or picked on because of our differences.

By the time the Round was about to start, there was a buzz in the audience, as staff began to realise that the four panel members about to speak were colleagues from within their own services.

We carefully introduced the Round in the normal way, particularly as a large majority of the audience had not attended a Schwartz Round before. However we made an effort to specifically highlight how brave each of our panel members were to come forward to share their stories as they were about to.

In order, our four panel members shared extremely powerful, emotional and personal stories, with integrity, grit, nerves and some visible emotion.

First a senior medic explained experiences of discrimination in the workplace, and even worse the discrimination her eight year old son experiences when at school, just because he is the 'only brown boy' in his school. When she described the belittling comments that had been made to him about having Indian heritage, we heard the audience's sharp intake of breath.

Second, a staff member who is the only wheelchair user in the organisation, spoke about the challenges he faces just trying to get to work, access NHS premises and buildings, park in appropriate disabled spaces that aren't being misused and having other staff support him in his constant battle to ensure that all NHS buildings are accessible to all. He spoke of the importance of the many acts of kindness he receives from colleagues, patients and their families and the difference these kindnesses make to his daily working life. His story made such an impact on people when they realised the emotional impact of a physical illness that is progressive, particularly when it feels that no one around you opens their eyes to the accessibility challenges you face. It also highlighted that not all disabilities can be seen and that hidden disabilities and impairments can cause people equal distress, when others around them are making assumptions that they are ok, when they are not.

Speaking third, was a panel member who broke some significant boundaries by talking graphically and openly about the menopause. She talked about times when she had felt like she was 'losing her mind', wasn't able to perform to the expected levels, was violently ill but felt like she needed to 'just get on with it' as with the menopause, 'every woman goes through it'. She carefully navigated all of the challenges, emotions, distresses and frustrations she had faced throughout her menopause, with the audience intake of breath again coming when she explained that it had lasted ten years.

And last, a team leader shared a very personal account of how it had felt to come out as gay; starting with the journey with her family and the significant emotional challenges this had presented her with, her experiences of joining the gay community and 'finding herself' only to be quickly followed by her first professional role in a hospital where she had seen a nurse out in a gay club one night, to be told 'Don't you dare tell anyone you saw me out'. That message had left her with the feeling that it wasn't safe to be gay and out at that organisation, so she never was. She closed the panel presentations saying that if her story could show people in DPT that it is safe to be out, and if her account could prevent anyone going through what she did, then it was hugely worth her efforts to share it.

The audience applause was riotous, and tears in the eyes of many were evident.

And after the usual pause for silence, suddenly stories flowed –

- of people's experiences with their children who were unique and different and how they protect them from the cruel world outside while celebrating their differences with pride,
- of how it feels to be in an organisation that is celebrating difference in communities that sometimes don't

- of cruelty people had experienced because of their difference
- of how others had faced challenges with coming out to family and truly thanked our panel member for helping them celebrate themselves
- of how women across our workforce have been reluctant to talk about their menopause symptoms and now they don't want to be worried about it any more

The purpose of the day was to open people's eyes to how equality, diversity and inclusion is far more than just the EDI badge. The Schwartz Round enabled us to take it so much further than that. Following the round, we had an overwhelming flurry of thanks and a large range of staff joining our staff LGBTI+, BME, Disability, Impairment and Long Term Conditions and Menopause Matters staff networks; the latter even including men.

We had over 60 staff make pledges, which included how they would encourage and support teams to talk openly about their differences and celebrate them in a variety of team and service activities.

We were invited to run a range of Schwartz Rounds across our services, to support staff in having open and candid discussions about how it feels to work within our organisation, celebrating and observing their differences and the differences of others, to ensure that they provide the most respectful, personalised care and treatment they can.

But most importantly, we encouraged people to 'bring their whole selves' to work, enabling them to feel brave, to speak out about parts of their identities they were holding confidentially, that they felt weren't for the workplace, but were huge parts of who they are at work.

The hugs, the tears, the follow up emails and the evaluations from the day were testament to the effect this day, and particularly the Round had on everyone present and we were exceptionally proud to lead it.

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## Some of our Evaluation Comments

- *Very thoughtful and reflective day.*
- *Schwartz Round brilliant!*
- *Very good session & thought-provoking.*
- *Best day ever.*
- *Large Schwartz Round was excellent. I'm sure many of us (especially men) have never thought about the reality of the menopause. Thank you to the person who shared this.*
- *Schwartz Round story telling very inspiring sparking ideas.*
- *Please do Schwartz Round again. Best SSF I've attended.*
- *Brilliant! You couldn't improve on today.*
- *Being part of the Schwartz Round was nerve racking but the comments I've received since have made it clear it is worthwhile. People are making an emotional connection to EDI agenda which is great. Thanks for making it the focus of SSF.*
- *I really valued hearing the stories of staff members.*
- *Thank you to your steering group for your thoughtful approach to organise such an inclusive, improvement session on EDI.*
- *Thought-provoking day & amazing to see people engaging more. EDI → stories encouraging openness!*
- *This was one of the best staff forums I have attended. Good participation by attendees. Passionate delivery.*
- *Welcome change to the usual 'feel' of SSF. Lots of passion, emotional energy & sincerity. Extremely thought-provoking and moving in places.*
- *Great to have a theme throughout & stories shared.*
- *Excellent Schwartz Round – so good to hear ones experiences of colleagues.*

## Tweets!

[Melanie Walker](#) @DPT\_ChiefExec Feb 14

Schwartz round around Equality. Moving, powerful & important. Thank you

[Lewis Powell](#) @lewisjpp Feb 14

I had a powerful and amazing experience today with @DPT\_NHS #dptssf my first attendance and there were intensely emotional and personal stories shared. Ones that really meant a lot to me too. "Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common" so let's celebrate it.

[DPT PMO](#) @DPT\_pmo Feb 14

DPT PMO Retweeted Emma Tucker

Really great Senior Staff Forum today, on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Made you think. Take away - what matters to you? @DPT\_NHS @Laura\_Hobbsie

[ian scott](#) @ianscott73

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Great day @DPT\_NHS senior staff forum. Equality and diversity pledge from the Ward managers, @lewisjpp @PeteKeohane psychologists #beechteamrocks #rougemont #meadowview and #rougemont

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Tina Campbell Retweeted ian scott

Agree really great thought provoking day @DPT\_NHS #dptssf thanks @Laura\_Hobbsie & all of our totally amazing colleagues who trusted us with their personal stories #respect #ProudOfDPT

[Tobit Emmens](#) @tobit\_e Feb 14

Huge thanks to @Laura\_Hobbsie for organising today's @DPT\_NHS senior staff forum. I'm proud to work with some truly beautiful people