



Dr Alison Holt

Masters in Health and Medical Education,
2011

Chief Executive Officer, Sunnyhill Healthcare CIC

From GP to CEO

Having worked as a General Practitioner (GP) around Hertfordshire for ten years, Dr Alison Holt is already an extremely qualified individual. In order to progress professionally she decided to undertake a postgraduate medical qualification, to allow her to become an approved trainer for trainee GPs.

Even though she initially undertook the course as a means to an end, Alison discovered that the Masters changed her way of thinking. *'Medicine can be quite a rigid and closed structure. The course gave me a new perspective, through learning with individuals from different backgrounds and countries. The exposure to other disciplines was fantastic and the leadership module gave me the confidence to go for a leadership role in a small organisation.'*

Leadership roles now take up nearly half of Alison's workload, primarily as CEO of Sunnyhill Healthcare Community Interest Company: a not-for-profit GP practice which offers a different management model to help serve the local community. The course also achieved its purpose, and the practice now has both undergraduate and postgraduate learners that Alison teaches.

Healthcare and business

As a patient- and village-driven organisation, Sunnyhill has a multidisciplinary board, which includes patients and sees doctors in the minority. Whilst Alison still works as a GP for

three days a week, the rest of her time is taken up with running the practice and other roles. *'My business and medical roles are clearly defined and it's great to have the opportunity to focus on these two aspects of healthcare. Being involved in the business also provides a respite from the emotional intensity of being a GP.'*

Alison is involved in clinical commissioning –where GPs, nurses and other local clinicians make decisions about how healthcare funds should be spent to provide the best care for patients. Alongside this, Alison has an interest in the health of Healthcare Practitioners. *'It is easy to forget that those who work in healthcare are vulnerable to the same illnesses that can affect anyone else. Working within the system can make it difficult to access help if you are unwell.'* Alison works with the Pastoral Care team of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Local Medical Committee providing support to colleagues. She teaches GPs skills to help them support practitioner patients and is secretary of the Doctors Support Network, a charity that provides peer support to doctors with mental health problems.

The future of the NHS

Alison has a clear five-year plan, with a focus on helping the practice survive in an increasingly competitive environment. Even though the NHS will undoubtedly face huge upheaval and change over the next ten years, Alison sees this as an opportunity. *'Primary care is a great place to be at the moment and is a chance to be part of the solution.'*



The course gave me a new perspective, through learning with individuals from different backgrounds. The exposure to other disciplines was fantastic and gave me the confidence to go for a leadership role.

