Working together to improve services

In the sixth in our series on our Clinical Directors, we put spoke to Dr Anthony Akenzua.

Dr Anthony Akenzua became Clinical Director of our Adult Acute Services in April 2011. A firm believer that improvements in efficiency and quality will deliver better patient experience, he is equally convinced that collaborative working between health professionals is the best way to achieve this.

Anthony has lived in the UK for more than 10 years having left Nigeria in 2002. He first worked as a locum with Oxleas in 2002 prior to going on to the Guy's, King's and St Thomas' rotation. He became a consultant psychiatrist with Oxleas in 2006 and worked as a community consultant psychiatrist in the then newly formed Recovery Team in Greenwich.

In April 2011, in addition to his clinical duties, Anthony took on a management role when he became Clinical Director of our Adult Acute Mental Health Services. Since March 2012 he has been Consultant Psychiatrist in the Tarn, our psychiatric intensive care unit in Oxleas House, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich.

When working as a community consultant psychiatrist, Anthony got a taste for management and says he enjoyed meeting the challenges: “One of the challenges when working with morbidly unwell people was to provide quality services with limited resources. Teamwork was the key to this and I enjoyed this side of things. So I was already interested in management and when the opportunity arose to be Clinical Director of the new directorate I felt I could contribute.”

Anthony says there are three main aspects to his role of Clinical Director: “First, I am responsible for the quality of services and support the senior management team to achieve all the necessary quality indicators. For example, to ensure that patients have good experiences of our services; are discharged in a timely manner, and that treatments are safe and effective. Second, I support the senior management team in developing services that best meet the needs of patients, including offering advice on medical issues to the senior management team. And third, I support and engage medical colleagues, acting as a bridge between them and management.”

A main focus for Anthony has been to reduce the amount of time patients spend in inpatient units and he puts his notable success in this area down to a clear definition of the task and to the collaboration of his colleagues: “We need to think of new and better ways of doing things and I have been fortunate to work with people who are willing to engage in dialogue. My approach is very consultative and I have been supported to drive innovative strategies. When people are willing to engage in dialogue and reach a consensus you are more likely to get the task done. This is also true when meeting challenges such as maintaining and improving the quality of services within finite resources and ensuring that colleagues maintain a good work/life balance.”

Anthony’s vision is for services that are more efficient and that better meet patients’ needs: “Efficiency is central. For example, more focused ward rounds in inpatient
units enable us to quickly set goals for patients and work towards them. Addressing issues early on means we can reduce the length of stay for patients and make services safer. Similarly, when community teams assess new referrals they now focus on quickly determining where the patients’ needs are best met rather than them just journeying through the system. It’s more efficient and the quality of service is better.”

In addition to his work for Oxleas, Anthony also undertakes voluntary assignments at the University of Ghana’s medical school, teaching psychiatry to final year medical students. A keen film buff with a penchant for Hollywood’s golden era epics, he is even more devoted to watching tennis, having visited Wimbledon every year for the last 10 years and seen all the top players.