

The skills you never thought you needed: TVLC leading change in tissue viability

In this reflective article Hollie Robinson, a tissue viability specialist nurse, Community south, describes her experience of completing the online Tissue viability Leading Change (TVLC) business skills masters course. Hollie explains how, initially feeling out of her depth, she has learnt a unique set of skills that all senior leaders need, especially when developing and improving services.

Since I started as a trainee nurse in 2010, in only 11 years, I have seen a drastic change in nursing roles, expectation and a new focus around leadership and service improvement. When I joined nursing, the profession was not a degree profession and I left university with a diploma. During our final year at university, we were offered the opportunity to complete a dissertation and qualify at degree level. I declined, believing I was not 'academic' enough and would be sure to fail.

Fast forward 11 years, I have completed three degree modules and am now studying for my masters while working as a specialist tissue viability nurse. Trust me, no one is more surprised than me that I have just written that sentence.

In the Summer 2020 I decided, in the middle of a global COVID-19 pandemic, with two small children, I wanted to start my masters. This is when it dawned on me, I do not do things by halves. Mostly all of my learning thus far had been clinical, so I decided to continue and apply for the wound care theory and practice module which I completed in January 2021. None of the modules I have completed over the years have been easy but, with a clinical aspect to the course, I was passionate and interested in the topics so found the learning and assignments relatively uncomplicated.

I was approached by URGO medical who advised me of a course they currently sponsor at Huddersfield University called Tissue viability leading change (TVLC) business skills. Leadership is a huge passion of mine so felt so excited to

combine my two passions – tissue viability and leadership, I mean, how hard could it be?

Little did I know, I was about to embark on one of the most incredible, career changing journey. TVLC started with a bang, I presented my business idea to the course tutors, feeling confident and optimistic about how I could change our service for the better. The tutors shot down my idea, told me it was far too big and told me to go away and think of another idea. To say I was shocked is an understatement, and I left the day thinking, what have I got myself in to. I am not usually someone who quits easily so I went away and thought of a new, much smaller project that focused on considering what administration roles the specialist nurses were currently undertaken, could this be reduced with administration staff to free up clinical time? This idea was accepted and I then began learning how to drive this change on by writing a business plan and talking to key stakeholders. I now realise that the course tutors were preparing us for the challenges that come with service improvement.

Every other member of the group seemed so confident and experienced while I was googling the word "stakeholder". I sat through each lecture feeling more and more overwhelmed, thinking I have absolutely no idea what anyone is talking about. Each subject was interesting but it felt random, out of place, as though I hadn't learnt the back story.

During the 4th session the tutors asked everyone about their progress so far. I sat quietly, thinking

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"I haven't started because I have no idea where to start." The delegates one by one, confidently alleged they were all getting on fine and had done some bits to add towards their final submissions. When it came to me, I had to be honest, I explained I was feeling lost, I didn't really understand much and hadn't known where to start. The course tutors were really supportive and told me that this was a very normal process on the course and not to worry, everything would soon become clear. The room instantly changed and many of the participants also admitted they too were struggling and hadn't really known where to start either.

I think sometimes, when we are in a world of professional people, it can be daunting to say we don't know something. I soon came to realise that I was one of the most junior on my course, a lot of the other delegates being band 7 and had experience of business cases before. Before TVLC I had no prior knowledge of service improvement or business planning.

The tutors were right, following the next few sessions, I really felt like things started to click into place and I was really enjoying the course, learning new things at each session. I found myself wanting to know more and more and was excited about future sessions. I started to speak to stakeholders and write my business plan using the new skills I had learnt.

TVLC is an innovative, modern course that has captured skills that are required within our tissue viability specialist roles. It opens your mind to

different ways of working, teaching you concepts that were not founded within the NHS to broaden your mind to other ways of working. The tutors have identified that the tissue viability role is changing and these skills are now necessary in order to drive services forward. Leadership, self-analysis, business case writing, barriers with stakeholder groups and budgets are just some of the topics covered.

Originally, when I started this course I felt I had signed up to early. Within my team, I am the most experienced band 6 so I can go from being very confident in my ability, to being exposed to a whole world of tissue viability I had not explored. Throughout the course I felt I needed to be a more senior member of the tissue viability team. I now realise that now I have a unique set of skills, which will prepare me for any future senior roles that become available. Unlike others that quite often have to "learn on the job" I will be at an advantage, having learnt a very unique set of skills that all senior leaders need, especially when developing and improving services. This is why I now believe that I did TVLC at exactly the right moment in my career, I now feel confident to progress.

The best thing about TVLC for me has been the growth in me and learning about different roles such as project management, leadership and academia. TVLC has opened many doors for me and the future looks exciting. I would recommend the course to everyone!



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