Guy’s and St Thomas’s Hospital (GSTT) is one of the largest and most complex health care providers in the world. This nomination is for the Integrated Governance Assurance and Performance project (IGAP) undertaken by one of the GSTT’s Clinical groups. The Clinical Group is sizable with 9000 WTE, £500m budget.

Its purpose was to design a truly integrated oversight of governance, by implementing a tailored version of King IV, and introduction of the Thinking Environment (an approach developed by author and Teacher Nancy Kline) which enhances the quality of thinking of the senior team.

The 360 - governance approach (leadership, vision, risk management, assurance, transparency, openness, honesty and accountability) focused on 4 key business areas and functions as our key capitals:

* Quality and safety
* People
* Finance and resources
* Regulatory compliance.

The project team recognised that to be truly transformational this approach needed to be supported by a focus on the individual habits and intentional behaviours that make up what happens around the boardroom table. Like many health care organisations GSTT was working against a backdrop of increasing pressure, ever greater scrutiny and a scale and pace of change that was unprecedented, all against the backdrop of a global pandemic. By combining the governance principles of King IV with the Thinking Environment, the project moved away from the dominance dynamics and legacy behaviours that typify most board rooms to an approach that facilitates greater cognitive diversity, a focus on core and critical questions and a freedom from the tyranny of the short term.

The aim of the project included:

* Removing duplication by removing redundant governance
* Creating a golden thread that allows a truly bottom up and top down (Board-to-ward and ward-to-Board) oversight of key issues
* Using a variation of the principles of Integrated Reporting (<IR>) that enables cross fertilisation of ideas and cross-impact across key business areas
* Igniting fresh, independent thinking using techniques from the Thinking Environment

**The design**

The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) have developed a framework, <IR>, built around 6 Capitals which combines both qualitative and quantitative data to

* Promote a more cohesive and efficient approach to corporate reporting that communicates the full range of factors that materially affect the ability of an organization to create value over time
* Enhance accountability and stewardship for the broad base of capitals (financial, manufactured, intellectual, human, social and relationship, and natural) and promote understanding of their independencies
* Support integrated thinking, decision-making and actions that focus on the creation of value over the short, medium, and long term.

GSTT identified its own list of capitals which are linked to the key business domains that we operate under, as explained above.

We built a governance and oversight framework where all 93 services, which are categorised under 8 large directorates, reported against defined metrics against these capitals. 80% of assurance was sought from quantitative data with a crucial 20% assurance built from vital qualitative data such as

* patient feedback
* stake holder engagement
* staff concerns raised
* Intelligence from system partners and held by our regulators.

Through this approach we focused not only on key domains/capitals but also applied more widely the concepts and principles from King IV and the Nolan principles such as inclusive and ethical culture, good performance, effective control, legitimacy, transparency, accountability, objectivity, openness and most importantly integrated thinking.

We brought in board advisor Mitzi Wyman who is an Ambassador with the IIRC and is trained in Kline’s Thinking Environment approach. Working with Mitzi we introduced behaviours designed to enhance the quality of fresh, independent thinking through cultivating a culture of attention, equality and freedom from urgency and rush. This approach saved time, money and costly mistakes as we shifted from a focus on Change (as in fixing the past) to Transformation (creating the future).

One simple but significant change was to turn our agenda items into questions. So instead of agenda items:

* Finance Report - May
* Performance Report –May

We moved to:

* What are the factors driving the deteriorating financial position in the May report?
* What impact will the May financial position have on the quality of care we provide?

For each meeting, there was a short pre-meeting to craft the questions – in itself a valuable exercise. This meant we got down to business more quickly, attendees were more engaged and were encouraged to think beyond the norm. This was applying the concepts of co-creating to problem finding instead of traditional problem solving.

By implementing King IV, colleagues moved away from silo thinking and thoughtfully appraised information against each of the business domains, enabling cross tabulation, cross fertilisation and also analysing impact of one change to all aspects of our business in a holistic way.

The approach led to a sharpening of our thought process, allowing the senior leadership team to become visionary leaders. They were not only better able to pre-prepare their contribution but also thoughtfully consider impact assessment of our business activities and the decisions we make, more holistically and in an integrated approach – integrated thinking.

**The transformation**

IGAP is in its early stages. However, over the last three months the results have be transformational. Some of the early benefit realised includes:

* Effective and efficient meetings where every minute is utilised to think and consider all aspects of business in an integrated way
* Clarified accountabilities, where off track areas are not only understood but solutions are owned by the leadership teams
* Improved communication and transparency where all involved work through a single version of and that all information is put through a single lens that is truly integrated
* Open culture where challenge became second nature and conversations are focused on issues that we face and co-producing the solutions and away from omni combatant approach to collective team accountability
* Risk driven business planning and core activities enablement. The core leadership team were able to identify, understand, mitigate, and own risks we faced
* Effective and meaningful escalations, where key themes are identified and reported to the management with specific requests for support
* Lastly, governance structure that is purposeful and aligned to strategic vision fulfilment. It fosters open discussions and transparent decision taking and decision-making ability