Improving the provision of a competent radiotherapy workforce in a climate of increasing clinical complexity

**Project Aim**
To address workforce competence enabling the appropriate skill set required to deliver a high quality radiotherapy service.

**Background**
There is a polarity that exists when creating provision for a competent workforce. In a Radiotherapy setting we need to have experts in specialist techniques but also need to have the flexibility to allow for cross-cover of staff when they are unavailable. Staff engagement working parties have highlighted how this issue can be addressed in the large regional radiotherapy department in Southampton.

**Methods**
Staff training is recorded on a competency database so the number of staff for each specialist technique can be monitored. Metrics utilised to record staff perceptions were employed. A survey was conducted at the start of the project for each work stream, which will be repeated once changes are implemented.

**Results**
Staff involvement has meant that they are engaged in finding a solution that will meet both their needs and the needs of the service. There has been an increase in the length of rotation for staff to allow consolidation of taught skills (from 3 to 4 months as their survey suggested), and staff are aware of their next work area. The training programmes in Radiotherapy have been reviewed and are utilising a variety of training methods to maximise staff engagement.

Initial indications suggest that staffing will be more robust, staff satisfaction will be improved and the workforce is attaining the skill set required to support service delivery. The staff will be completing the surveys once more when the changes have had a chance to embed within the department.

**Personal lessons learnt**
Polarity is present in many workplace situations. It is a continuous process to get a balance that is right at any point in time as there is a constant need to consider the opposing forces. When one issue is resolved the opposing issue will be affected and over time this will need to be re-assessed.