

### **Q: What was the task?**

With the merging of Astra and Zeneca, three clinical research groups needed to come together, facing the challenges of previous history, the variety and complexity of systems and processes and the integration of employees across five sites. Questions of Difference were asked to help with the integration strategy from initial organisational redesign to implementation. How could we build on the strengths and attributes of the three existing groups to ensure they incorporated best practice and formed one highly effective group as quickly as possible, maintaining business as usual?

### **Q: How did we resolve the issues together?**

The aim was to create a single, fully integrated group with factions and issues left behind, delivering quality data to agreed timelines, resources and budgets. Another important goal was not to lose staff due to the process and to meet the overriding outcomes of the integration – that is, to maintain high standards of clinical research and patient safety throughout the process. Over the course of two years, drawing on an affirmatively disruptive approach, Questions of Difference incorporated management and leadership development into the integration process. Our work included assistance with the development of a new structure and ways of measuring it, managing existing conflicts and differences between individuals and teams, leadership development for all managers, staff engagement processes - including a company wide launch conference and integration of the clinical research unit into the global Marketing organisation. The emphasis throughout was the use of questioning skills to engage all stakeholders in determining the future success of the group.

### **Q: Did the outcome meet expectations?**

Expectations were around the degree of integration in the newly merged company: to establish a robust single entity, clear on its own identity and proud of its diverse histories, ready to effectively meet the challenges and deliver the benefits of scale.

- The new group was formally launched within 4 months of the announcement and continues to be one of the most effective and efficient research groups within the global AZ organisation
- 98% Staff retention was successfully achieved
- Communication with staff was open and regular
- The focus was on people and creating the best environment to surface, address and manage issues
- Team motivation was maintained by building on previous successes and identifying future opportunities

### **Q: What did AstraZeneca learn from the relationship with Questions of Difference?**

Managers can and must rely more on staff during such times of transformation for the business. With an open and innovative change process, involving people at all levels, it is possible to get people to absorb integration activities into their day-to-day work and ensure that people have confidence in the future – for themselves as well as the company.