

CHESHIRE HR SERVICE

THE CHESHIRE HR SHARED SERVICE APPROACH TO STAFF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

SUMMARY

Cheshire HR shared service was established in late 2006 and is a provider of a full range of high quality, business focussed HR services to 3 NHS organisations, East Cheshire NHS Trust, Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT (including Cheshire East Community Health), and NHS Western Cheshire (including Community Care Western Cheshire) with approximately 5,000

staff in total. The mission of the shared service is to support those organisations **"to deliver excellence in people management"**.

The SLA Partnership Arrangement set out to increase HR efficiency and to maximise resources on behalf of the 3 organisations. It also recognised the value of adopting a common strategy and approach to improve the health and wellbeing of staff across Cheshire.

Alison Nuttall, Wellbeing Advisor for Cheshire HR Service supported the development of a generic Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy which was adopted by all 3 partners in 2010 and allowed for customisation by individual organisations to meet their specific needs. This model enables a collaborative approach to wellbeing by sharing resources, ideas, good practice and strategic intentions. Business Partner teams employed within Cheshire HR work with individual Trusts/PCTs and take a consistent and proactive approach towards the implementation of the strategy.

This case study looks at the development and delivery of a staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy for customer organisations within a HR shared service organisation



KEY OUTCOMES

- Benefit of shared capacity/knowledge/ research/best practice and effort with economies of scale – enables more to be done with limited resources and reduces duplication. This includes shared HWB newsletters and events open to staff across the partners.
- Staff across the Cheshire partners, some who work alongside each other, have similar support and benefits
- The shared service is able to co-ordinate and oversee progress on HWB and target support where necessary
- A Wellbeing Advisor provides consistent and focused wellbeing expertise and support to customer organisations
- HR Sharepoint provides a centrally administered web site for all wellbeing information, news and activity
- Consistent and focused drive and development of the wellbeing agenda and the benefits it creates for the employer, employees and the population
- Greater awareness raising and therefore understanding within senior management of the organisational requirement to deliver against the following National NHS Wellbeing and Engagement Programmes and NHS Governance standards :
 - The NHS Constitution Pledges to Staff, 2009
 - Boorman Review of NHS Staff Health and Wellbeing, 2009
 - 2011 – 2012 Operating Framework
 - Government Health Work and Wellbeing Programme

- NICE Clinical Guidance on Workplace Health and Wellbeing
- Care Quality Commission Standards
- NHSLA Risk Management Standards



BACKGROUND

Cheshire HR is a shared service organisation hosted by East Cheshire NHS Trust, providing services to 3 NHS organisations through clear service level agreement arrangements. It provides HR administration, learning and development, and employee wellbeing. Occupational health and payroll are outsourced but the contracts are centrally managed. Business Partner teams in each Trust are supported by the shared service's new on-line information web site for managers and a HR Consultancy team who offer telephone advice and case management support.

The service has been referred to by Peter Reilly, Director of Research at the Institute of Employment Studies, in an article in *Personnel Today* as "a blueprint for NHS shared services". The 125 staff are based in various locations in Cheshire and operate within a £4.3m budget. There are no professional HR staff retained in any of the Trusts outside this virtual organisation. A Wellbeing service led by Alison Nuttall works with organisations and HR Business Partners to improve the health and wellbeing of staff based on a shared strategy. She is part of the HR Consultancy element of the shared service.

Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work was tasked with reviewing the health of Britain's working age population and in March 2008 published her report 'Working for a healthier tomorrow'. In addition to the findings it was widely recognised that effective support for staff health and wellbeing was vital for ensuring that the NHS could meet the productivity and quality challenge set before it.

The Cheshire HR service identified a crucial gap in their service support which could further assist their customers in meeting their business objectives and becoming high performing organisations. It was at this time that the shared service started to implement a number of employee wellbeing initiatives. It was clear that there were significant advantages in taking a shared and co-ordinated approach to wellbeing. At this point a steering group was set up within the shared service to consider a more integrated approach.

PURPOSE

- To improve the health and wellbeing of staff across the 3 partner organisations and ultimately improve the quality of services for patients. This is based on a wealth of research that demonstrates clear links between staff wellbeing and patient safety, patient experience, and the effectiveness of patient care
- To gain the benefit of shared resource, expertise and capacity through economies of scale
- To develop a 3 year strategy and approach for HWB across the 3 NHS organisations
- To improve productivity and reduce sickness absence
- To help staff be at their best, be energised, motivated and committed to their work

KEY STAGES OF SET-UP

A steering group of Cheshire HR Business Partners and the Wellbeing Service was set up to take this agenda forward across the three organisations. The group looked at research, advice and good practice including the Final Report of the independent NHS Health & Well-being Review which was published on 23 November 2009. Dr Steve Boorman's report set out the business case for change, and provides a comprehensive set of recommendations for improvement in the provision of health and well-being across the NHS.

A HWB Strategy was developed by the group for the three organisations. Staff consultation was sought to ensure the strategy was tailored to organisational need the following two sets of themes emerged as a basis for the development of annual delivery plans:

SET 1

Theme 1: Improving the physical wellbeing staff

Theme 2: Improving the mental wellbeing of staff

Theme 3: Improving wellbeing through people management practices

Theme 4: Supporting economic and social wellbeing

SET 2

Theme 1: Connect

Theme 2: Be Active

Theme 3: Keep Learning

Theme 4: Give

This was followed by a series of workshops and mini road shows to publicise the approach and the commitment of the three employers to the health and wellbeing of their employees.

Wellbeing Steering Groups

The Wellbeing Advisor and the HR Strategic Business Partner for each organisation established a Wellbeing Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the strategy through the development, monitoring

and communication of wellbeing actions. It was crucial that each group had wide membership which had joint involvement in the delivery of the strategy. This included senior management, operational staff and specialist services such as Health Promotion, Occupational Health, Health and Safety and Learning and Development.

Overseen by the Director of HR, the Steering Groups monitor progress of the action plans developed to support the delivery of the strategy. They also review the effectiveness of the strategy through their agreed performance measures.

Communication Plan

A wellbeing communication plan was specifically developed in partnership with each organisation's communication lead to ensure a joined up and consistent approach to the delivery of the message of wellbeing to all employees and to signpost them to relevant activities, resources, services and action plans.



HOW IT WORKS

The strategy for HWB sets out the strategic intentions and vision for improving the health and wellbeing of staff in the Cheshire organisations. Individual organisations customise the strategy to meet local needs.

HR Business Partners employed within the shared service, but based in individual Trusts/PCTs, lead the wellbeing agenda for that organisation supported by the specialist Wellbeing Advisor in the shared service Consultancy.

The Wellbeing Steering group who developed the shared strategy oversee the co-ordination and progress of implementation. However each organisation has a multidisciplinary Wellbeing Group that provides the leadership and focus for this agenda locally and monitors progress of their action plans.

Shared events, information and communication reduce the level of resource required in each Trust/PCT to maintain the level of activity and support offered to staff.

RESOURCES

- a Wellbeing Advisor provides specialist knowledge and support to the wellbeing agenda across the 3 organisations
- Further resource and funding has been dependant on activities and initiatives developed within each organisation and their available budget. However, in most cases wellbeing activities have been developed with very little or no cost involved. For example Lloyds Pharmacy have undertaken free blood pressure checks for staff at wellbeing events.

**KEY CHALLENGES
AND LEARNING POINTS**

- **Management Buy-in**

Initially there was difficulty getting managers in the organisations to recognise the importance and benefits of the wellbeing agenda including, how staff are managed and how the support they get from their employer influences performance. The HR Business Partner roles in each organisation have revised wellbeing responsibilities which have created a renewed drive raising the profile of this agenda.

- **Geographical Challenges**

The Cheshire HR Service footprint spans a wide geographical area covering diverse staff groups and cultures. It became apparent very quickly that robust partnerships between the Wellbeing Advisor and identified wellbeing champions across the partners needed to be developed in order to deliver the wellbeing agenda efficiently and effectively. This process has taken some time but an emphasis on the tangible benefits of staff wellbeing as opposed to the 'soft and fluffy - nice to do' image, has slowly but surely generated an interest and willingness to help deliver on this agenda

- **The Role and Responsibilities of Steering Group Members**

In the first year of delivering on the wellbeing strategy it became evident that steering groups loved to talk about improving staff wellbeing but individuals did not take proactive ownership of agreed actions. A key challenge was to ensure that members of the wellbeing steering group understood their role and responsibilities and the requirement to actively lead on wellbeing activities/projects and provide regular feedback to the group. This was overcome by re-visiting the Terms of Reference to make them more explicit, and by renewing group membership.





GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

KEY LEARNING

- Although the Trust Boards have recognised the importance of the health and wellbeing of staff and have taken ownership of the strategy it has been a challenge to get managers to recognise that they play an important role in staff wellbeing and the benefits of them getting it right
- Wellbeing Steering groups need to have clear and robust terms of reference and members need to accept responsibility for taking forward plans and actions
- A shared service organisation is in a prime position to strategically lead the HWB agenda across its partners/customers
- Limited resources are required to establish a small wellbeing advisory service within the shared service which is available to provide specialist advice across a broad customer base.

SUSTAINABILITY

The shared service approach to staff wellbeing has now been in place for over 2 years. The initial difficulties and lack of understanding have been mainly overcome and but they are well aware that the wellbeing agenda is part of cultural change within an organisation and is not something which will change overnight but will embed slowly over a number of years.

The strategy, structure and systems are all in place, providing the framework for each partner organisation to deliver their HWB plans, customised to local circumstances and performance managed by their own steering group.

The HR Business Partners employed within the shared service but located within partner Trusts/PCTs lead the agenda supported by the Cheshire HR Service specialist Wellbeing Advisor which provides a very cost efficient delivery method.

NEXT STEPS

- Development of a Wellbeing dashboard of key performance measures to enable quarterly reporting to senior management of the impact of wellbeing initiatives, activities and projects.
- Development of line managers to enable them to provide the right level of challenge and support to their staff, to motivate them and improve quality and productivity based on enhanced discretionary effort.
- Exploring the provision of resilience training for staff to promote celebration of success and self belief and to offer practical tools and techniques to deal with the challenges and stresses of working life
- Provision of administrative support to the Wellbeing Advisor by the HR Consultancy Administration Team. It is hoped this will free time to allow the Wellbeing Advisor to dedicate more time to the research, co-ordination and delivery of wellbeing into each customer organisation.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

The following resources are available as an appendix to this case study

- Terms of Reference of the Wellbeing Steering Group
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy

FURTHER LINKS

www.dwp.gov.uk/health-work-and-well-being/

www.cheshirehr.nhs.uk



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