



YORK TEACHING HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

HEALTH CARE ASSISTANT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION INITIATIVE

SUMMARY

In March 2010, an innovative project was introduced to review the way in which Health Care Assistants (HCAs) were recruited to the Trust. The primary reason for this was a low retention rate for this particular staff group (15.59% versus a Trust average of 12.10%) and the belief that this was due to a lack of understanding about the realities of the role. With this in mind, a completely new way of recruiting HCAs was developed, focusing on providing information for applicants prior to them making an application, utilising values based recruitment as part of the selection process and then comprehensively inducting new starters.

Since 2007 the Trust has been recruiting HCAs generically, using one advert and interview session to fill multiple vacancies across many departments. This approach has dramatically reduced both administration time and time spent interviewing. Historically, these adverts attracted very large applicant numbers that were not only unmanageable, but also contained a large number of unsuitable applicants, who subsequently left the organisation after a short time. Before the project an average of only 13% of applicants were appointable and since the new measures were introduced this has risen to 36%.

The developments from March 2010 saw the addition of compulsory Open Days introduced prior to the application stage. Only candidates who had attended one of the Open Days would be eligible to apply. The Open Days not only inform applicants about the day-to-day tasks of HCAs, but also ensure only candidates who are genuinely interested in the role are able to apply, therefore reducing the number of uncommitted and ill-informed candidates.

At each stage of the recruitment process, a strong emphasis is placed on values. The organisation felt that experience of similar roles or settings should come second to a desire to provide high quality patient care and commitment to the role. The HCA person specification was altered to reflect this and enable more effective shortlisting. Values based interview questions are used, in addition to scenario and knowledge based questions, to ensure a robust but rounded interview takes place.

The final, but significant, addition to the process was the introduction of a two-week, predominantly classroom based, induction to the role and the organisation. This induction was introduced to ensure HCAs were better prepared for their commencement on the ward. A mixture of Corporate Induction, Statutory and Mandatory training and role specific training all make up a comprehensive grounding for commencement in post.





GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY



Health Education Yorkshire and the Humber

BACKGROUND

York Teaching Hospital NHS Trust became a foundation Trust on 1 April 2007. The Trust provides acute services to 350,000 people living in and around York. From 1 July 2012, the Trust also manages Scarborough Bridlington Hospital and now provides a range of acute and specialist services over a wider catchment area of around 500,000 people in North Yorkshire.

KEY OUTCOMES

Of the 86 HCAs that have commenced employment with the Trust via the new recruitment process i.e. since April 2010, only 5 (5.8%) have left the Trust to date (End Jan 2011). Of the HCA leavers in the year, ending December 2010 34% had less than 1-year's service, compared to 52% in the previous year, which demonstrates a quantifiable achievement of the project within less than 12 months of implementation. The turnover rate for this staff group now sits at 12% (October 2012) having fallen from an original figure of 17%.

Further evidence of the positive impact of the programme on the whole staff group (including those not recruited through the new process) is demonstrated in the significant reduction in the annual sickness absence rate amongst HCAs from 8.49% in December 2009 to 6.21% in December 2010. The sickness absence rate has fallen again and now stands at 6% in October 2012.

In the year ending March 2010 there were 10,444 requests made for unqualified nursing bank shifts. This was an average of 870 shifts per month. In the financial year April 2010 – January 2011 there were 7,834 requests. This was an average of 783 shifts per month.

In the Trust's June 2010 Star Performer awards, three of the HCAs that supported the Open Days were recognised at Board level for their contribution to the project.

These trends indicate improved morale, better health and job satisfaction amongst HCAs. This inevitably contributes to improved continuity and quality of patient care due to a more stable staff base.

The initiative has attracted national recognition winning a Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) award for Innovation in Human Resources (HR) and the Workforce category of the 2012 Health Service Journal (HSJ) awards.

KEY AIMS

Workforce information clearly demonstrated that prior to the introduction of this project the turnover rate of 15.59% within this staff group was significantly higher than the Trust average of 12.10%. In the year ending December 2009, 52% of HCA leavers had less than one-year's service.

'Softer' information in the form of feedback from numerous Directorate Managers, Matrons and Ward Sisters gathered through Workforce Performance Management Meetings indicated that a major reason for this was a lack of understanding about the role from new recruits. New starter expectations were not matching the realities of the role in an acute setting.

To address this, a project group was set up to look at how a clearer message could be given to applicants, improve the calibre of candidates and ultimately improve retention.

KEY STAGES OF SET UP

The formation of an initial project group saw scoping meetings take place where key actions were identified. This group comprised of the HR Director, Chief Nurse, Assistant Chief Nurse (Workforce) and the Recruitment Manager. It quickly became clear that candidates needed more information prior to application and it was agreed that compulsory pre-application Open Days could facilitate this, along with the added benefit of more manageable applicant numbers. It was agreed that a clearer message would be essential and a review of the HCA person specification was important. To ensure new recruits were more prepared it was also identified that better initial training and induction would need to be implemented.

Once a basic recruitment and induction process was developed, a pilot was agreed. The first programme of the revised generic

recruitment process, in March 2010, provided an opportunity to assess and evaluate the Open Day, new style values based interview and off-ward induction. Feedback was key and regular reviews took place whereby Ward Sisters and newly recruited HCAs were asked to share their experiences of the new programme. Each round of recruitment was reviewed and changes made to hone the process.

HOW IT WORKS

Each round of HCA Recruitment begins with mandatory pre-application Open Days. The Open Days comprise a series of talks from the Assistant Chief Nurse, existing HCAs and the Recruitment Team. Questions are encouraged by each of the speakers to ensure applicants have access to as much information as possible to make an informed decision about applying.

A DVD of the organisations HCAs has been produced specifically for use at the Open Days. The DVD was developed because HCA roles differ significantly across specialties. It is important for candidates to have an understanding of these differences so that an informed choice can be made when choosing which area to be considered for, something candidates are asked to do at interview.

Only those people who have attended an Open Day are eligible to apply, they do so by responding to a strategically placed 'hidden' advert via NHS Jobs.

All applications are shortlisted against a person specification that has been specially designed with a focus on core values and emphasis placed on candidates' desire to provide high quality patient care and a commitment to the role.

Interviews are conducted over one day with multiple panels. Panels consist of Ward Managers and Matrons, the questions asked are a mix of values, and knowledge based questions, as well as questions that test competency. This ensures a robust and well-rounded process.

At interview, candidates are asked to provide their preferences for working in different clinical areas and where possible, candidates are interviewed by those Ward Managers who cover these areas.



GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY



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Feedback from the panel and candidates' preferences are taken into consideration when allocating successful candidates to available posts.

Any candidates who score above the pass mark, but who are not initially allocated to a vacancy are retained on a 'reserve pool' and slotted into any further vacancies that arise within a specified timescale. This process of keeping a reserve pool ensures that where possible vacancies are filled in a timely manner.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

A project group consisting of both HR and Corporate Nursing colleagues was set up to look at how a clearer message could be given to applicants. This group developed an implementation plan that tied in to the existing schedule of monthly HCA Recruitment.

Once the initial plan was in place, input from the wider Recruitment Team and Nursing colleagues was introduced to ensure that the day-to-day running of the Open Day and subsequent recruitment process could be managed effectively.

RESOURCES

The formation of the process was done within existing resources from the Recruitment and Corporate Nursing Teams; there was no additional cost for staffing. However, £4,500 was spent on filming and producing the purpose designed DVD that is used at Open Days to demonstrate 'A day in the life of a HCA at York Hospital'. The DVD was funded using money the recruitment team had generated from other projects.

There is an ongoing need for staffing at each round of recruitment, with a minimum of 5 staff needed at each Open Day and a minimum of 8 people needed on each day of interviews.

Other resources for use at Open Days include an agenda for the day, a script for the talk given by the Deputy Chief Nurse, the presentation and handouts that explain the recruitment process and feedback sheets for completion by attendees. All of these

resources were built from scratch with no existing models or templates used.

Resources for interviews were also developed including specially designed questions; interview notes sheets and guidance for panel members.

These resources are used at each round of recruitment and changes made if and when necessary.

KEY CHALLENGES

The main challenge was to get the key stakeholders involved in the process and help them to understand the benefits.

Across the main sites, involvement from Matrons and Ward sisters (totalling around 40 people) was necessary to ensure all departments followed the same process to enable consistency in the way HCAs are recruited at the Trust.

This was particularly challenging when these individuals all had their own opinions about how HCAs should be recruited, and all wanted to be involved in the recruitment of their staff.

By engaging the key stakeholders it was possible to discuss any concerns or anxieties people had around the process, and provide reassurance that the process was as robust and effective as possible.

Another key challenge is the coordination of each round of recruitment to ensure that timescales are sufficient without being unmanageable, that there are sufficient resources available to run each Open Day and that rooms and panels are available on interview day. As a large number of people are involved in this process, it is important that things run as smoothly as possible.

KEY LEARNING

The key lesson learnt from this process is that by engaging the key stakeholders, it is possible to make a radical change to the way a particular staff group is recruited, which is tailor made to meet the needs of that staff group. There was recognition that different models of recruitment can

be carried out to ensure the recruitment is both robust and effective.

SUSTAINABILITY

All HCA posts are filled using this process with a very small number of more specialised posts being recruited to separately where the generic pool does not provide a suitable candidate.

After each round, the process is reviewed and feedback from key parties, including attendees from the Open Days in used to make changes where necessary.

NEXT STEPS

Following the success of the HCA Recruitment program, we are now looking at using this model to recruit Therapy Assistants for both Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. This staff group has been identified as needing a more robust recruitment process to aid with staff retention and ensure that values based recruitment is carried forward to another key role within the Trust.

This will require a review of the existing process of recruitment, and adaptation of the resources developed for HCA recruitment to ensure that they are relevant to the post of Therapy Assistant.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

- Agenda for Open Days
- Crib Sheet for Corporate Nursing talk
- Recruitment Presentation
- Feedback Sheet
- Preference sheet
- Interview Notes Sheet
- Advert

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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