



ROYAL LIVERPOOL AND BROADGREEN UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

# STAFF PERCEPTIONS COUNT IN DEVELOPING A HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

## SUMMARY

A group was set up in the Trust in late 2009 to bring together existing Health at Work initiatives and to plan a series of events for the Liverpool PCT 'Year of Health and Wellbeing' 2010. It wanted to reinforce the Trust as a good employer, improve motivation and productivity, reduce sickness and in doing this broaden staff involvement. It has recognised the importance of staff involvement and engagement in this project. Representatives from many areas of the organisation play an important role in the multidisciplinary Health and Wellbeing group.

Staff from many disparate areas such as Dietitians and Alcohol Specialist Nurses have been key to assessing the current status of wellbeing in the workplace.

The Trust commissioned organisational psychologists Robertson Cooper Ltd to carry out a survey of perceptions across the hospitals related to wellbeing at work. Their established model for work related stress and wellbeing assessment (ASSET) enables organisations to look at the aspects of the workplace that determine business level outcomes such as productivity, sickness absence and staff retention. Research has established that there are a

number of factors that act as barriers (if the organisation gets them wrong) or enablers (if the organisation gets them right) to productivity. When these aspects of working life are well managed the workforce has good levels of psychological wellbeing and engagement.

ASSET measures staff perceptions of 7 key barriers to, and enablers of, wellbeing in the workplace including work relationships, work-life balance, overload, job security, control, resources and communication, pay & benefits and aspects of the job.

The ASSET survey was carried out in March/April 2010 and the results are contributing to a new programme of evidence based work to determine the enablers and barriers to wellbeing and to the development of the Trust's Health and Wellbeing strategy.





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## KEY OUTCOMES

Evidence from the survey:

- Staff who responded to the survey have provided an insight into how it feels to work at the Trust and identify the severity and specific sources of stress as well as areas where wellbeing is positive
- The positive overall picture indicated no major sources of pressure affecting staff to any greater degree than is typical in other organisations. However 'work relationships' appear to be the area of most concern but still lie within the typical band of the scale and so is not of immediate concern
- Information was gathered in the survey from a number of additional health questions which has provided the Trust with areas of ill-health that may need further consideration as part of the Trust's Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Although the level of reported bullying was found to be typical when compared with other organisations surveyed by Robertson Cooper it is still a factor that concerns the Trust and prompts further work in this area
- Particularly positive scores in the area of work-life balance

The survey results showed 2 on a scale of 1-10 where the higher the score the more the area is considered to be a source of pressure for staff.

- Very positive survey scores in the area of pay and benefits where results from the survey were 2 on the 1-10 scale, again showing that it is very low on sources of pressure
- In the other 5 key areas of the survey, work relationships, overload, job security, control, resources and

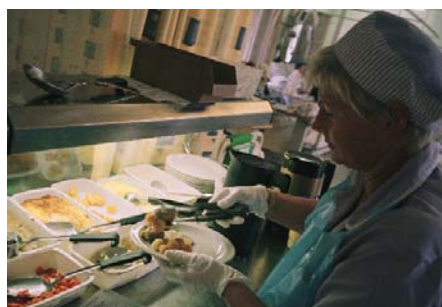
communication, and aspects of the job, scores came out as between 4-5 which sits within the typical comparison group of 4-7

- Survey results were broken down to Directorate level and shared with them

Evidence of staff utilising Health and Wellbeing activities in the Trust:

- Up to 600 places at 17 events on 'Money made clear' - personal finance sessions
- Well at Work days in 2010 included dermatology which led to 2 members of staff receiving treatment for cancerous moles
- Positive feedback for weekly Pilates sessions held in the physiotherapy gym
- Arts for Health successes including a Trust choir, photography competition, Music project which includes a musician in residence on the dialysis wards
- Oakdale and staff support services – between April and December 2010 84 staff sought counselling and 28 contacted the help lines
- 700 visits to the Liverpool University gym (arranged by the Trust)

Both outcomes from the survey and positive feedback for current initiatives have provided the evidence base for development of a Trust Strategy and the introduction of further activity.



Mark Caffrey, HR Manager (projects), welcomes staff involvement in this programme of work and stated,

**"An example of a new activity being introduced as a result of staff comments is the regular organised lunchtime walks. We are also looking into work based 'Weightwatcher' sessions."**

## BACKGROUND

The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust is situated in Liverpool and consists of 3 hospitals, the Royal Liverpool, Broadgreen and the Dental Hospital and directly employs 5200 staff. Serving the population of Merseyside and beyond it is currently working towards Foundation status and is looking forward to a new hospital build on the Royal Liverpool site.





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## PURPOSE

Key aims:

- To improve the wellbeing of staff and to create a healthier, more engaged workforce who are ultimately more productive
  - To obtain an evidence base of staff perceptions as the first stage in a new approach to improving health and wellbeing and in the development of a Trust strategy
  - To co-ordinate and review existing health and wellbeing activity and initiatives to help in deciding where future investment should lie
  - To involve staff at all levels and staff side representatives in determining future wellbeing strategy and actions adopted by the Trust
  - To consider survey results at Directorate level through staff focus groups to gather further information on enablers and barriers to wellbeing, particularly where 'hot spots' have been identified
  - To work with staff to develop action plans for individual areas with specific concerns identified in the survey results and focus groups
- All staff received a copy of the survey either on-line or a paper copy in spring 2010
  - Results of the survey were shared with the Health and Wellbeing group and more localised breakdowns to Directorates
  - Well at Work events and focus groups were arranged to supplement the findings of the survey and gain further information from staff starting in autumn 2010
  - Progress on the survey and findings were reported to the Joint Consultative Committee and Health and Safety Committee
  - Action plans are being developed for individual areas with specific concerns and implementation will be monitored
  - General findings are being used to develop the Trust strategy for Health and Wellbeing

## KEY STAGES OF SET-UP

- The Board appointed the Director of HR and OD as the executive lead for Health and Wellbeing who was responsible for establishing the Trust's Health and Wellbeing Group, chaired by Elaine Butchard an HR Business Partner.
- The Health and Wellbeing group with staff side members co-ordinated existing activities and commissioned Robertson Cooper Ltd to undertake the ASSET survey.

## HOW IT WORKS

The ASSET survey asked staff how they felt at work, both positive and negative experiences. It asked a range of questions about health and lifestyle, perceptions of their job, performance, and commitment towards the organisation, engagement, line management and stress.

The findings measure the perceptions of 7 key barriers to, and enablers of, wellbeing in the workplace in comparison with the general working population. All sources of pressure are reported to a similar or lesser extent than is typical in that working population group. ASSET also measures perceived health on 2 scales – physical health and psychological wellbeing.

A number of additional questions on health and lifestyle, perceived productivity levels, and bullying at work plus the opportunity to make additional written comments provided further information on staff views.

It was important for the Trust to provide Directorates with a breakdown for their area as some showed specific 'hot spots' or issues and needed to be discussed and understood. This would then lead to locally owned barriers and enablers and any action plans produced as a result.

Targeting specific areas identified in the findings as barriers to health and wellbeing or areas of concern will be important in optimising investment and resources for most return in terms of improvements for staff and their wellbeing

Communication with staff has also been a key element of the project. All activity is now co-ordinated and standard posters/logo are used under the Trust's Health and Wellbeing banner. Regular newsletters and items in Team Brief also support this agenda and keep staff informed.

## RESOURCES

- The success of this project and the potential to both improve staff health, motivation, sickness levels and productivity was a key factor in the Trust's Business Plans. It not only supports good employment practice, making the Trust an attractive employer for hard to fill posts and reduces turnover but sets out to achieve a more productive and cost effective workforce. The Trust agreed to support the ASSET survey on this basis with the NHSNW funding 50% of the survey.
- Other activities to support this agenda have been at minimal cost and HR are in the process of allocating a specific budget to this work.

## KEY CHALLENGES

The response rate for the ASSET survey was lower than expected although similar to that for the NHS staff survey in this Trust. This was disappointing as some caution is needed in generalising the findings across the whole Trust. However this doesn't mean that some of the departmental level results will not be meaningful. By communicating the results and action plans this time it is hoped that when the survey is repeated in 12-18 months time there will be an improved response

Although some results were in the benchmark average range, they had a higher score (reflecting a greater source of pressure for staff) than the majority of results. Assumptions and generalisations are not helpful at this stage as these areas will need to be further investigated through the use of focus groups to identify the actual concerns and develop actions to remove the 'barriers' and maximise the 'enablers'.

Perceived productivity levels were lower than the Trust would expect. Even though there were good levels of wellbeing, this was not matched with strong feelings of being fully productive amongst respondents. Again a better understanding of what is causing this staff perception is needed and further work is underway involving staff focus groups to explore the findings.

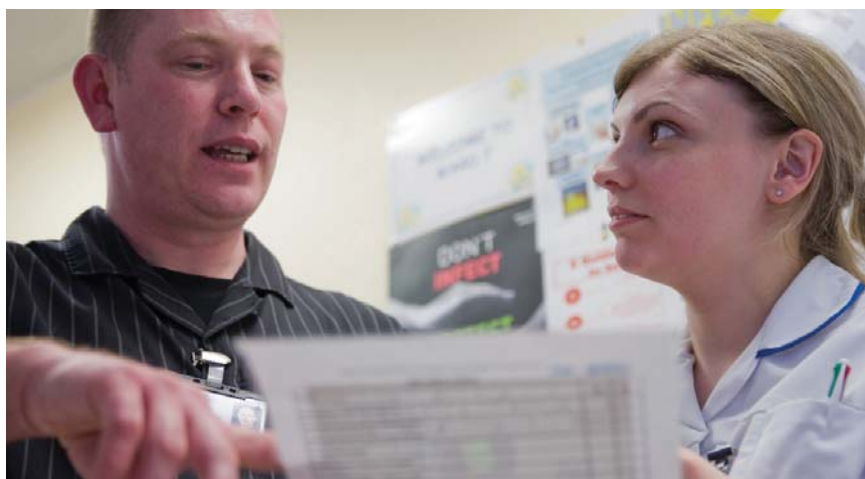
## KEY LEARNING

- Many health and wellbeing activities and initiatives were already in place across the Trust before the project but they were disparate and needed co-ordinating
- Board support is necessary to both lead the project and ensure it becomes key to the Trust culture of engaging and involving staff in improving their health and wellbeing at work. The Director of HR, and Wellbeing Champion Liz Mear is passionate about Health and Wellbeing which helped considerably. She initially took a paper to the Board to agree the ASSET work and there was recognition by Board members that this was an important piece of work to support HWB and staff engagement. The

key was providing evidence that investment was needed. (sickness rates, trends and benchmarking with other organisations) – it is important to provide an evidence based persuasive and compelling business case.

- In planning the project and associated events it is important to recognise the service priorities so that staff are able to be released where necessary and timing fits with service needs.
- Many staff will not take the time to complete surveys and facilitating completion needs to be considered to improve response rates
- Staff perceptions identified in the survey provide an insight into how it really feels to work for the Trust. Although there have been other staff surveys carried out in the NHS this project has, as Elaine commented

**“provided the opportunity for staff to contribute their views to the Health and Wellbeing agenda in the Trust and to shape its Strategy and actions-their views count”**





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## SUSTAINABILITY

- Health and Wellbeing activities are in place across the Trust with post survey action plans being implemented.
- The project has shown that staff views, their wellbeing and their involvement are highly valued by the organisation and form part of Trust culture
- Trust Health and Wellbeing Strategy is being developed based on staff views from the survey and focus groups and will reinforce staff involvement and wellbeing

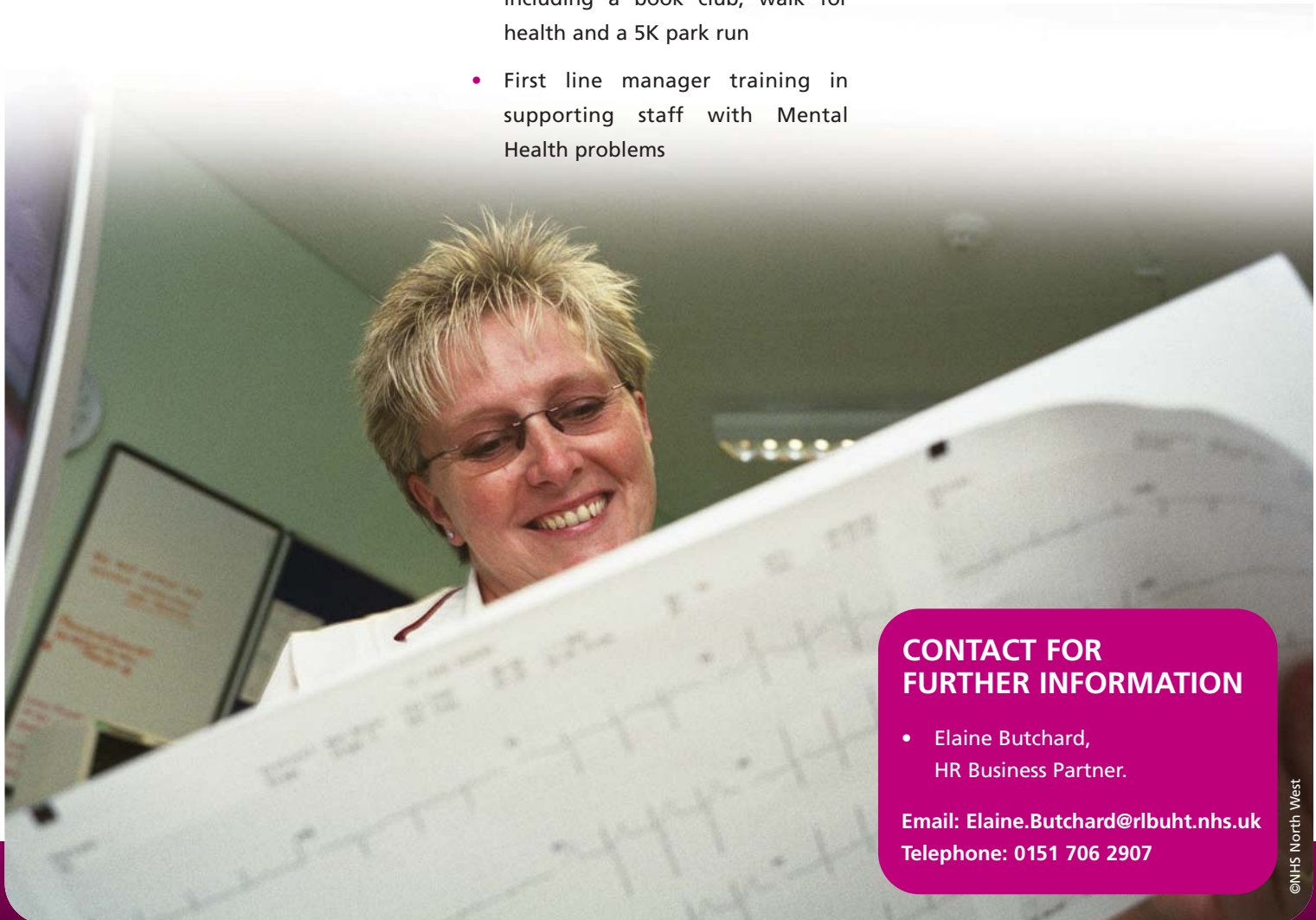
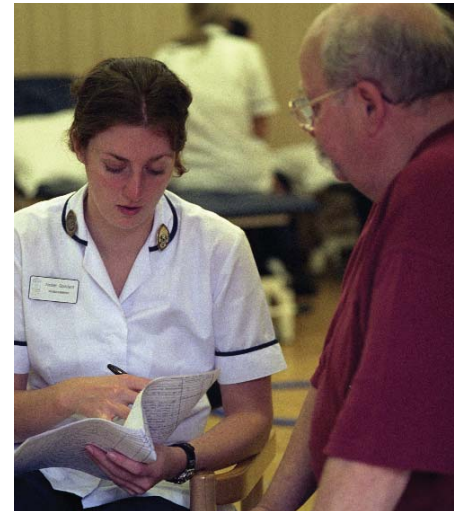
## NEXT STEPS

- Progress will be monitored via the project action plans and a further survey carried out in 12 – 18 months time to measure improvements
- Trust Health and Wellbeing Strategy to be in place in spring 2011
- Health and Wellbeing website being extended to cover all activities and provide better information for staff
- Health and Wellbeing at Work conference to be held in spring 2011 to launch the strategy for the coming year
- Further activities introduced in response to staff suggestions including a book club, walk for health and a 5K park run
- First line manager training in supporting staff with Mental Health problems

## SUPPORTING MATERIAL

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

- List of Health and Wellbeing events run in 2010



## CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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