

DECEMBER 2017

## SANDWELL AND WEST BIRMINGHAM HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

### REWARD TO SUPPORT STAFF RETENTION

#### ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

- Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (SWBH) is an integrated care organisation, providing hospital and community care.
- The trust serves a population of 530,000 people across north west Birmingham and the towns within Sandwell.
- The trust employs around 7,500 staff.

#### SUMMARY

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (SWBH) faces an on-going challenge to retain staff, putting its service under constant pressure and increasing spend on temporary and agency staff. Redeployment programmes have successfully created efficiencies, but negatively impacted staff morale and engagement and led to increased sickness absence rates.

The trust wants to retain staff with key skills and knowledge, particularly within nursing. The SWBH public board has committed to reducing staff turnover by three per cent and set objectives of reducing sickness absence rates, filling vacancies and re-engaging the workforce.

Recognising that reward is a strategic tool and a key enabler to help meet workforce challenges, the trust decided to take a holistic approach, developing and implementing a comprehensive reward package for employees, bringing the benefits together and making them accessible to all staff.

#### WHAT THEY DID

The trust already offered a range of benefits and rewards, but the offer was fragmented and there was no dedicated management or communication resources to highlight the reward offer. The trust reviewed the current reward offer, including health and wellbeing initiatives, financial wellbeing and education, salary sacrifice schemes (childcare vouchers, cycle to work schemes, car lease and staff car parking) the staff lottery and SWBH library services. A range of national and local discounts

were added and the range of salary sacrifice schemes available to staff were increased, to give more discounts and savings for staff.

The trust created a reward brand, SWBH Benefits, and developed an online portal, which is free for staff to use, putting all rewards and benefits in one place. SWBH knows that 74 per cent of the workforce spends 80 per cent of their time away from work computers, so they decided to make the portal available through a smartphone app too. The portal and the app are accessible to staff 24-7 and from home, increasing engagement with the entire workforce.

To help implement and drive these changes, SWBH recruited Amir Ali as head of employee benefits and engagement. Amir worked with a project team of senior leaders to implement SWBH Benefits. The project team consisted of the director of communications, the executive director of people and organisational development and the health and wellbeing manager. Support also came from the SWBH board and the chief executive. The project team worked closely with other internal departments such as occupational health and the internal communications team. The project team developed a communications plan to ensure all staff were engaged with the new offer.

SWBH Benefits launched in October 2016, with an event that attracted more than 1,000 staff and included benefit market stalls. The chief executive, the project team and members of the board were on hand to meet with staff face to face, answer questions and help staff sign up to the portal. Competitions encouraged engagement and a network of 150 benefit champions were recruited to share reward messages with colleagues and display benefit information in communal staff areas.

Alongside the October 2016 launch event, staff were communicated with through various channels, including:

- face to face visits to wards, clinics and departments, encouraging and enabling staff to sign up to the portal
- a bi-monthly printed health and wellbeing newsletter
- daily all staff communications to promote forthcoming events and offers
- the network of benefit champions displaying flyers and posters in communal staff areas
- a dedicated section of the intranet with news and details of SWBH Benefits
- a staff engagement and benefits event in April 2017.

## OUTCOMES

Having clear objectives helped the project team assess the impact of SWBH Benefits. They conducted a staff survey, which showed that 86 per cent of staff feel that SWBH Benefits is a positive improvement, showing increased engagement with the reward offer.

Between April 2016 and January 2017, SWBH Benefits has helped the trust:

- Reduce overall staff turnover (excluding junior doctors) from 12.8 per cent to 11.3 per cent.
- Reduce nurse turnover from 13.6 per cent to 11.6 per cent.

- Fill 297 substantive clinical roles, including 184 staff nurses, thereby reducing spend on temporary and agency staff.
- Reduce sickness absence from 4.9 to 4.5 per cent.
- Reduce the time to fill vacancies from 26 to 21 weeks.

Results of the national NHS Staff Survey on questions relating to health and wellbeing and work-related stress have seen improvements between 2015 and 2016.

*“The delivery of SWBH Benefits has been superbly executed and has truly created a level of enthusiasm and participation that is taking our organisation to new heights.”* Toby Lewis, chief executive, SWBH.

## NEXT STEPS

The project team continues to meet monthly to review SWBH Benefits and evaluate the outcomes and the impact on staff turnover. The chief executive will continue to have an active involvement in evaluation and reviews performance summaries on a bi-monthly basis. The board receives regular reports and updates on progress and outcomes.

The SWBH Benefits portal will be regularly reviewed and refreshed to reflect the types of benefits staff want and value. The portal allows changes to be made easily so the offer remains responsive. SWBH will continue to communicate the offer through benefit champions, the senior leadership team, staff bulletins, newsletters and social media.

## TOP TIPS

- ✓ Using reward strategically can help you meet organisational objectives and workforce challenges.
- ✓ Gaining buy in from senior leadership and including them in the planning and delivery of your reward initiatives will demonstrate your organisation’s commitment to staff.
- ✓ Developing a strategic reward communications plan will help raise awareness of the benefits you offer and help staff understand the value of their overall employment and reward package.
- ✓ Setting clear objectives for what you want to achieve will help you evaluate the success of your initiative.
- ✓ Don’t underestimate the effort, time commitment and resources required to communicate effectively with frontline staff.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details please contact Amir Ali, head of employee benefits and engagement at [amir.ali1@nhs.net](mailto:amir.ali1@nhs.net).

Find out more about reward in the NHS through our [web pages](#) and view further case studies and tools in our [reward resource library](#). You can find out more about health and wellbeing on our [web pages](#). Read our comprehensive guide to retention - [Improving staff retention: a guide for employers](#).

You can contact the reward team on 0113 306 3000 or by emailing us at [reward@nhsemployers.org](mailto:reward@nhsemployers.org).

