One of the key factors affecting whether staff feel engaged is the degree to which staff feel valued by the organisation they work for.

In the NHS Staff Survey, respondents are asked how valued they feel. In 2014, the results showed that 41 per cent of staff felt their organisation valued their work. This was broadly stable with previous years, but it’s not as high as in other sectors. In addition, there is a lot of variation between NHS organisations on this measure.

Organisations need to create the right culture so that staff feel positive and engaged. One way many NHS organisations choose to do this is through formal staff recognition schemes which often include an awards ceremony.

This briefing highlights the various staff recognition schemes from across the NHS that we are aware of and includes some case studies.

Running staff recognition schemes should be part of an overall consistent approach to staff engagement.

Key points

— Recognising the contribution of staff is a key part of successful staff engagement. As part of an overall approach, a focus on ensuring staff feel valued can help sustain engagement during periods when staff are under greater pressure.

— The NHS could improve in this area as only four in ten staff say their organisation values them, according to the NHS Staff Survey. Although this has improved in recent years, it is below levels achieved in other sectors.

— Recognition schemes are a formal way of recognising the contribution of staff. These schemes do not involve monetary reward but are a symbolic way in which the organisation can show staff it appreciates their contribution.
STAFF RECOGNITION AWARD SCHEMES

There are a variety of formal approaches by NHS organisations for valuing staff. The main ones are staff awards schemes and these operate in a variety of ways.

Awards are mainly nominations led by staff. In a growing number of schemes, patients and visitors can also nominate. For example, The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust recently awarded a lifetime achievement award to a porter with over thirty years’ service.

Other award schemes include:
- nominations by line managers
- nominations of teams
- nominations for individuals.

Schemes can have a combination of individual and collective awards and many organisations recognise teamwork with awards for departments or teams.

For example, Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust’s emergency department was given an award for ‘outstanding care and compassion’.

Many NHS organisations have developed their own schemes which have a locally designed criteria. A number of organisations use the industry wide WOW awards scheme that anyone can join. This uses common categories focussed on customer care across a range of employers in both private and public sectors.

VALUES-BASED AWARD RECOGNITION SCHEMES

Over two thirds of schemes identified by NHS Employers have recognition schemes that link to rewarding behaviours based on the values of the organisation.

In most cases, these values are based on those in the NHS Constitution. Common categories used include compassionate care and responsiveness.

Categories vary but have included awards such as:
- an award for an individual making a difference
- an award for excellence in service improvement
- an award for making a difference as a team
- an award for staff who go beyond expectations
- an award for staff who have been exemplary in the provision of care.

In most cases, awards are for all staff though a number of trusts do have a nursing focussed award as well.

Read about Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust’s Star Awards as an example of an awards scheme that is based on values.
Almost all organisations with recognition schemes have an awards ceremony of some type where there is a public celebration of those who are being recognised. Some organisations refer to these as their Oscars. The format varies but it usually includes a formal award of prizes by senior management such as the chief executive, combined with a dinner or other social event and in some cases local celebrities are involved.

In most cases, costs of the event are met from non-core funding or it is sponsored. West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust has a more unusual approach and organises an it's a knockout style event as part of its awards and the Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has a ‘Moorfields Got Talent’ ceremony.

**Case study: Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust**

The trust runs an annual event called the Striving for Excellence Awards, to recognise the hard work of staff, showcase best practice and outstanding work.

The awards ceremony involves local people (foundation trust members), governors, stakeholders, staff and families.

Initially, nominations are sought from staff for the following categories:

- Chairman’s Outstanding Contribution Award
- Chief Executive’s Leadership Award
- Equality and Diversity Award
- Service Improvement Awards (three categories)
- Unsung Hero Award
- Governors’ Volunteer of the Year Award
- Living the Values Award (one award for each of the four values).

In addition, patients and the public can nominate staff for:

- Customer Care Awards
- Pinder Award – for staff mentoring.

On the day, the first session takes place over the course of three hours and enables shortlisted staff to present their service improvement projects. The audience then has an opportunity to vote, and this score is combined with a panel decision to identify winners and runner ups. The second part of the day is a straightforward awards ceremony based on panel decisions. The awards are well attended and well received by staff and, as well as promoting their success through the local media, there is a dedicated awards newsletter that staff can keep for their portfolios and CVs and share with their colleagues, families and friends.
Case study: City of Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

The trust has a few categories for nominating and recognising hard work:

— Customer Service Award – individual and team
— Service Improvement and Innovation Award – individual or team
— Partnership Award
— Care and Compassion Award
— Award for Outstanding Contribution
— Ward or Department of the Year Award
— Leadership Award.

Customer Service Award – individual and team
The general criteria of the award is:

— exceptional quality above and beyond what is expected of their role
— enthusiasm and commitment to the trust and its goals
— a sustained contribution over a period of time.

The award recognises a team and an individual who have demonstrated excellent customer care by putting the patient first or at the centre of the service.

The award values staff who have respected, listened and responded to the needs of customers. The entry must explain how the individual or team has provided a service which has consistently exceeded expectations.

Service Improvement and Innovation Award – individual or team
The award celebrates and honours those who have done either of the following:

— implemented improvements and innovative ideas which have enhanced patient experience
— improved patient safety and or reduced risk within their care delivery.

The judging panel looks for examples of hard work and bright ideas which produce excellent outcomes. The service improvement does not need to be ‘ground-breaking’. The panel looks for evidence that the change has had a positive and sustained impact on patient experience and/or safety. Entries must show:

— how, or why, the need to make improvements was identified
— how the change has had a positive impact on the patient experience or safety
— how the improvements were measured and will be sustained.

Partnership Award
The award is awarded to the team or individual working in a formal or informal partnership with external organisations to deliver a project which:

— is making a difference to the health of individuals within Sunderland and the wider North East
— has achieved service improvements or improved outcomes as a result of working in partnership.
Case study continued

Care and Compassion Award
The award recognises an individual who epitomises everything that leads to outstanding care and compassion outlined in the 6Cs.

While the 6Cs are primarily a nursing tool, the principles can be applied to any member of staff, so the judging panel welcomes entries from all disciplines – not just nursing.

Award for Outstanding Contribution
The award looks for someone who is an inspiration to staff and is instrumental in motivating and encouraging others to achieve the trust’s aims.

This person will be making an outstanding contribution to the development of services, and be someone who ‘makes real’ the trust’s commitments to outstanding patient care through their own daily work. They will have demonstrated a sustained contribution over a period of time and overcome challenges in order to achieve goals.

Ward or Department of the Year Award
The award recognises a ward or department (including non-clinical areas) that has consistently given the very best of care to its patients, clients or customers. It will show true team working, with valued contribution from all members of staff at any level and any discipline. The ward or department will have the best environment for care or a service to be delivered and for staff to work.

The entry must show:
— they have used the principles of team working to achieve good practice
— they have provided an improved performance or service as a result of multi-disciplinary team working
— they can demonstrate significant achievements and commitment
— compassionate care (for clinical areas)

Leadership Award
The award is awarded to an individual who shows exceptional leadership skills in one or more of the following:
— demonstrable outcomes in performance, locally or organisationally, due to their contribution and leadership
— leading staff through organisational development or change
— encouraging and motivating staff to develop and achieve personal and/or organisational goals.

The individual will be someone who places quality at the heart of everything they do and inspires every member of the team. Entries must show how the nominee’s leadership behaviour has impacted on the quality of the service delivered to the benefit of patients or customers and their staff.
KEY THEMES AND TOP TIPS

There are some common lessons from this brief review of staff recognition schemes:

✔ A formal recognition scheme will only be effective if it’s part of an overall approach to people management and staff engagement.

✔ There is a strong case for having a formal recognition scheme if one is not already in operation. It is a demonstrable sign that an organisation values its staff and supports staff engagement.

✔ Local circumstances vary for such schemes, so there isn’t one best model for all. Those which are linked to locally developed values and overall patient care appear to have most support among staff and have the most impact. Trusts can learn from each other.

✔ Award schemes need to take account of the cultural context of the NHS. Some approaches which are found in other sectors such as gold star badge schemes or individual bonuses may not be appropriate in the NHS although the NHS can learn lessons from other employers, for example, on developing responsiveness to patients.

✔ Awards ceremonies appear to have an impact on staff morale overall as well as for individual award winners.

GET INVOLVED

NHS Employers is building up an information base on staff recognition schemes and is currently aware of around fifty schemes. We would welcome information from trusts on local schemes and are happy to share examples from our existing data. If you would like to share any information from your organisation, please contact Steven Weeks at steven.weeks@nhsemployers.org
The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients.

We help employers make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues to ensure that their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice. We keep them up to date with the latest workforce thinking and expert opinion, providing practical advice and information, and generating opportunities to network and share knowledge and best practice.

We work with employers in the NHS to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

The NHS Employers organisation is part of the NHS Confederation.

Contact us

For more information on how to become involved in our work, email comms@nhsemployers.org

www.nhsemployers.org

enquiries@nhsemployers.org

@nhsemployers

NHS Employers

www.youtube.com/nhsemployers

NHS Employers
50 Broadway
London
SW1H 0DB

2 Brewery Wharf
Kendall Street
Leeds LS10 1JR