HEART OF ENGLAND
NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
STAFF ROLE MODEL CAMPAIGN

The organisation

Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust is one of the largest acute trusts in the country, operating across three large hospital sites; Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Good Hope Hospital in Sutton Coldfield, Solihull Hospital, Birmingham Chest Clinic and a smaller number of satellite clinics and community services.

The trust has a workforce of over 10,000 staff and treats more than 1.2 million people every year.

Background

The trust is committed to creating an inclusive environment by building a workforce which is valued and whose diversity reflects the communities they serve. To support this the Staff Role Model campaign was established in 2017 to engage with staff, particularly those from underrepresented groups, to let them tell their story and be an inspiration to others. The aim of the campaign was to hear from staff that despite the challenges they have faced, have still been determined to progress both personally and professionally. The trust believes that this commitment will lead to improved services for patients and greater equality of opportunity for staff.

The campaign supports the trust’s commitment to creating an inclusive environment for staff and patients and is in addition to reporting initiatives such as the Workplace Race Equality Index and as Stonewall Diversity Champions submitting to the Workplace Equality Index year on year.

“The power of the role model can not be underestimated.”
About the campaign

In September 2017, staff were offered the opportunity to come forward and tell their story of why they would like to be a role model. A role model could be any member of staff, regardless of band or position, who has for whatever reason triumphed, maybe against the odds, and acts in such a way that inspires and motivates others to do the same. Those who came forward ranged from:

- a trust board member who started their career as an auxiliary nurse and who is now deputy CEO
- a transgender member of staff who transitioned whilst working in the trust
- a staff member with a disability whose career has been able to flourish despite their daily challenges
- BAME staff who despite being told otherwise by others have climbed the career ladder.

Lisa’s story

One of the most successful role models of this campaign has been Lisa. Lisa came out as a transgender woman in 2009 and has been living full time as a woman since 2014. Lisa has been on hormone treatment since 2015 and is expecting to have gender reassignment surgery next year.

Her biggest personal challenge happened whilst working at the trust, when she decided to start her transition. Two years later because of the support of the trust, she has taken an active role in the trust to make changes for the better and in helping to support others like herself.

Lisa is actively involved with the LGBT staff network, attending the bi-monthly meetings and taking an active role in the objectives and actions; ensuring that transgender equality is taken into consideration.

She has been instrumental in the development of a new policy for the trust to support individuals who are trans, both staff and patients. By setting up a Trans Policy Working Group, Lisa ensured that at least one of the authors of the policy is a transgender person and that her personal life experiences are used to help shape the contents of the policy, including using the correct terminology.

Lisa also attends the trust’s Inclusion Steering Group meetings to contribute towards the wider equality and diversity agenda in the trust.
Campaign outcomes

- The campaign was a great success with a high level of engagement from staff. Positive feedback has provided motivation for other staff who have continued to come forward and share their stories.

- The trust put together a storyboard display detailing the life stories taken from the role models, from all levels throughout the trust. The storyboards were used electronically across social media, intranet and website. This told the role models' journey through life, their career and the challenges that they have faced getting to where they are today.

- The stories were incorporated into recruitment campaigns as a way of demonstrating the career progression available across specialties.

- The campaign received a huge amount of support and recognition from Stonewall, who helped with sharing ideas and best practice when putting the campaign together.

- In order to raise awareness and improve understanding of why this agenda is so important, the trust rolled-out a suite of specific LGBT training, including Sexual Orientation Awareness and Trans Awareness, to staff in partnership with Birmingham LGBT. Over 300 staff, including some senior managers, attended the training and many have gone on to use the learning to change the working practices in their areas of responsibility.

Challenges

Some of the role models struggled to know what sort of information was needed about them in order to create their storyboard. To overcome this the trust created a list of ten questions which included:

- *What does being a role model mean to you?*
- *What has been your most challenging time so far?*
- *What are you most proud of in your professional/personal life to date?*
- *Who is your role model and why?*

Staff who had been volunteered as role models by other staff sometimes needed encouragement to share their story, as they were not always aware that they were viewed as a role model by others. It was helpful to share with those members of staff the reasons why they were nominated.
Key learning

It was important that the organisation positively recognised role models, not just as a one-off campaign, but throughout the year and encouraged others to strive to be one. The power of role models cannot be underestimated, having a role model in the department can completely change the outlook of those around them and influence others to think ‘I can do that too’.

Anyone can be a role model regardless of their band or position, the actions and behaviours of that person will inspire and motivate others on a day to day basis.

Top tips

✓ When asking for role models to volunteer it is important to reach out to staff via as many communication routes as possible, such as network groups, team briefings, away days, managers meetings, newsletters and social media.
✓ Always explain what the trust means by the term ‘role model’. This can be anyone who through their day to day actions and behaviours motivate and inspire others.
✓ When asking for volunteers to be role models always give the option for staff to nominate other staff. Most people will not volunteer themselves, but are willing to volunteer others around them.

Further information

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