WORKFORCE SUPPLY: COLLABORATION IS KEY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST

Overview

The county of Buckinghamshire has a high employment rate, making the employment market highly competitive and creating workforce supply challenges for Buckinghamshire Health Trust (BHT). Attracting individuals to a career in the NHS and retaining them once they join is an ongoing issue, so to address this, BHT is leading on the development of the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy.

Key benefits and outcomes

- Creating evidence and learning to inform future educational models for delivery within integrated care alliances.

- Reducing avoidable hospital admissions.

- Improving the quality of life for people who reside and are cared for in nursing home accommodation and their experiences of care.

What the organisation faced

BHT faces a serious challenge in workforce supply. The county has close to a 100 per cent employment rate, so the employment market is highly competitive. The trust faces a constant challenge, not only attracting individuals to a career in the NHS, but also retaining people once they join.

In addition, the education system has traditionally been defined within sector boundaries, which has resulted in training differences, inconsistent skill levels and complexity in navigating between the different organisations. This has proved to be a limitation for career development for the workforce within their organisational system.
What the organisation did

To overcome these difficulties and ensure a skilled workforce is available to operate wherever the community requires, BHT is leading on the development of the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy. The work is being undertaken in partnership with local organisations including further education colleges, higher education institutions, Buckinghamshire County Council and other care providers.

The ambition of the academy is to bring together the planning, coordination, resource and delivery of learning and development interventions for healthcare staff across the Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Partnership (ICP).

The priorities are:

• establishing strong foundations for a highly skilled and engaged workforce
• promoting a career in health and social care within Buckinghamshire
• creating a new pipeline for attracting talented people into the system.

The academy partners have already delivered several projects to benefit their local health system, working in conjunction with their key partners.

One such project is a programme that was run in conjunction with local nursing homes in recognition of the vital role they hold as part of an integrated health and social care system.

The aim was to standardise delivery of some clinical skills across the healthcare system, with the primary ambition of improving service user experience and reducing avoidable hospital admissions. The project delivered a standardised education package identified by the nursing homes, to address the learning needs of their healthcare support workers and registered nurses.

There were seven core study days as part of the programme:

1) Human factors, record keeping and accountability
2) Tissue viability
3) Nutrition
4) Deteriorating patient
5) End of life
6) Catheter and continence
7) Oral care

Each study day was delivered multiple times over the period.
Overcoming obstacles

One of the challenges for the programme was staff release. Courses would fill up quickly but on the day of the event, individuals would drop out. This first run of the programme was offered on a no-fee basis and one of the considerations for any repeat programme in the future was implementing a fee to reduce the number of non-attenders. Since running the programme the academy has been approached by several individual care homes asking for the courses to be repeated; a service which the homes are happy to pay for. Consequently, there is assurance that should a charge be implemented it will not deter individuals from being able to access the courses. An additional value from making a charge is that the programme has the potential to be self-sustaining for the future.

The original driver for the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy was to offer education in a collaborative way, moving beyond the traditional sector-based training opportunities that currently exist. Providing the workforce with the ability to move more freely between organisations offers individuals broader career opportunities and benefits the organisation by providing a new workforce supply pipeline comprising staff who hold consistent skills and training levels no matter where they have been working. This programme has delivered on this ambition. Nursing home partners have improved their learning environments, and some are now providing practice placements for pre-reg student nurses and nursing associates. Its success has laid strong foundations for future collaborative working between the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy and nursing home partners within the Buckinghamshire ICP footprint.

Results and benefits

Following financial support received from Health Education England a formal evaluation of the nursing home programme is currently underway and, based on feedback, it is evident that the programme was well received.

Nursing home staff feedback illustrated that the content was relevant to their work and environment and managers felt assured of the quality of the training. The fact that the training is delivered locally by local educators was also highly valued, as there was a depth in the understanding of the population being cared for and their specific needs.

Other benefits of the academy’s approach include:

- Building a training dialogue with staff.
- Creating evidence and learning to inform future educational models for delivery within integrated care alliances.
- Reducing avoidable hospital admissions.
- Improving the quality of life for people who reside and are cared for in nursing home accommodation and their experiences of care.
Takeaway Tips

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the specific training needs of each nursing home.
- Capture emerging themes in order to prioritise training need in relation to the needs of the service user.
- Agree the achievable benefits and establish a baseline on which to measure results.
- Meet regularly with nursing homes representatives to reflect on challenges and share best practice.
- Capture impact on service user experience.
- Assess impact on the management of avoidable hospital admissions, readmissions or early discharges.
- Harness the skills of topic experts to deliver specialist training, including expertise of nursing home representatives.

Further information

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