SOUTH LONDON AND MAUDSLEY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
IMPROVING STAFF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The organisation
The South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) provides the widest range of NHS mental health services in the UK. This includes substance misuse services for people who are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

SLaM employs around 4,800 staff and serves a population of nearly two million people covering an area of 168 square miles. The trust has more than 230 services including inpatient wards, outpatient and community services. The trust also provides inpatient care for approximately 5,300 people each year and treats more than 45,000 patients in the community boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Croydon providing specialist services for people from across the UK and beyond.

SLaM is part of an Academic Health Sciences Centre called King’s Health Partners (KHP) which includes the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience (IoPPN), King’s College London, Guy’s and St Thomas’, King’s College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and SlaM. Each trust makes up a team within the KHP collective.

The collective’s mission is to treat mental illness effectively and promote mental wellbeing by sharing clinical expertise and knowledge. This mission is applied to the care of both patients and staff.

The challenge
Many staff were feeling the psychological effects of increasing demands, larger and more complex workloads and less control over their work. Poor support systems, faulty equipment and ineffective procedures were adding to the stress of both staff and patients. Staff survey results and feedback also showed that staff were feeling less recognised and appreciated for their efforts.

As a result, team dynamics, mental health and work / life balance were being adversely affected. Employees were strongly motivated by the need to make a difference but staff reported that morale was being undermined - an unintended consequence of delivering on key performance indicators which seemed to contradict their ambitions to provide the very best patient care.
Steps to success

SLaM’s aim was to reduce the stress its staff were feeling within the workplace and to increase staff happiness and wellbeing so that they could continue to provide the best care for patients.

This was done by:

- reviewing information from staff feedback and the staff survey and agreeing a plan of action. This included a communications and stakeholder plan to make sure the right messages were aimed at the right people for the happier@work pilot
- working in partnership with staff from a range of disciplines including clinical services, HR, occupational health (OH) and the mental health promotion team. SLaM worked with other trusts from the KH P to discover what it was like to work within KHP and to create a realistic picture of what might help to improve staff wellbeing
- running several interventions including becoming a smoke free trust, musculoskeletal interventions, psychiatric and physiological support, a mental health recovery college and a mental health awareness course. The trust also provided sports facilities including grounds in which to exercise and worked with staff and staff side reps to develop a full health and wellbeing strategy
- exploring the factors that have an impact on employee wellbeing. Staff participated in a group process called a ‘mental wellbeing impact assessment’ (MWIA) and each team was also job shadowed to document the day-to-day experience of working on a particular ward, in a clinic or for a specialist health service
- evaluation throughout the plan.

Along with the success of the happier@work health and wellbeing initiative, SLaM has:

- secured funding for a 12 month lead on its health and wellbeing strategy
- planned to implement further health and wellbeing initiatives such as weight management, healthy eating and resilience training
- initiated work with London NHS partnership following the London healthy workplace charter.

Key outcomes

Since November 2011, King’s Health Partners has been running happier@work in SLaM. This is a programme aimed at improving staff wellbeing within the context of the challenging realities of NHS working life. This is part of SLaM’s wheel of wellbeing (WoW) work.
More than 466 staff were involved, with most reporting increases in confidence, knowledge, ability to manage stress and support their teams’ health and wellbeing. Similarly for those who took part in mindfulness training, increases were reported in being more mindful, having more choices in dealing with stress and being kinder to themselves. As the project grew in recognition, employees also began contacting the project team directly for information.

In addition to this, a focus on absence management has resulted in a reduction from 6.79 per cent to 5.19 per cent.

In 2013/14, based on the success of the pilot, further funding was secured through KHP to continue the programme which benefitted an additional 150 staff. In 2014/15 the interventions are being funded by individual KHP training departments. In total, 851 staff members have taken part over the past three years.

A formal evaluation was undertaken by London Southbank University (LSBU). Early indicators of wellbeing have improved and indicators of mental ill health have decreased, although further evaluation is needed to be conclusive.

**Top tips**

- Recognise that you may not have all the answers and that front line staff have a huge amount of insight and value to add.
- Run focus groups, staff consultations and pilots to gain a solution and discover what had been perceived as the problem initially.
- Get board support and lead from the top to encourage a healthy, happy and engaged workforce.
Further information

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