

OCTOBER 2019

# IMPROVING STAFF ENGAGEMENT THROUGH ONLINE PLATFORMS

## NORFOLK COMMUNITY HEALTH AND CARE NHS TRUST

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### Overview

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve communication and engagement with employees dispersed across a wide geography, Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust (NCH&C) invested in crowdsourcing technology. This has enabled senior managers to gather views from staff across the organisation, which has led to improved engagement metrics and NHS Staff Survey response rates.

### Key benefits and outcomes

- Better engagement with dispersed staff across a large geography.
- Positive culture change.
- Increase in staff engagement and health and wellbeing scores from 3.71 to 3.77 (6.8 to 7.2 in the new scoring system)
- Contributed to NCH&C being the first community trust to achieve 'Outstanding' CQC rating, including caring and well-led domains.

### What the organisation faced

The trust recognised that staff did not always feel involved, engaged or valued. This was reflected by its 2016 NHS Staff Survey score of 3.71 - a below average rating for a community trust. Chief executive-led engagement sessions were poorly attended, with less than 10 per cent of staff taking part.

The trust believed that this was largely down to service delivery being considered more of a priority. And, given the vast geographical spread of the trust, the distance and time required to travel between sites for meetings was also a problem when trying to engage with staff.

## What the organisation did

The board agreed that a wider strategy was needed for creating a positive culture. It committed to using an online crowdsourcing platform as a high-profile tool to gather more detailed evidence on the real issues affecting their staff and then, through executive-led programmes of work, respond to those issues promptly.

The trust used the platform to have a range of conversations with staff on different topics. Questions were posted on the platform, and staff could submit their responses. The first conversation focused on asking staff what they felt was good about the trust and what they would change. Response rates were high, with over 900 people taking part and 8,500 ideas, comments and votes being posted.

A conversation about leadership led to the trust developing a refreshed behaviour framework and the 'leadership promise', which is a series of 10 descriptors highlighting what managers will and will not do in their roles. This helps provide clarity on the expectations of managers, helping staff identify development areas and use them as a point of reference for appraisals.



From staff feedback on the platform, a range of communication channels were updated to help inform staff about current initiatives. One tool used is SnapComms, which helps improve internal communications using various features including desktop wallpapers. This was particularly beneficial in sharing information to a geographically diverse group of employees.

From a conversation on staff health and wellbeing, the trust updated its recognition and reward processes to include a staff awards ceremony every 18 months. Badges of recognition were also created, as were electronic thank-you cards that could be downloaded and sent from anyone to anyone at any time. Physio gyms have also been opened across the trust for staff use.

Following the leadership conversation highlighting inconsistencies, the trust also revised the appraisal paperwork and process, as well as reinvigorating its leadership framework, updating content and introducing some of the basic resources that employees felt were missing such as financial and budgeting tools.

## Results and benefits

Overall, the platforms and initiatives introduced by the trust have had a significant impact on staff engagement and helped create a more open and honest culture, where staff have a voice and the confidence to offer their opinion or report cases where needed. In the 2017 NHS Staff Survey, the trust saw 12 statistically significant improvements, with the overall staff engagement score moving from 3.71 to 3.77. In the new scoring metrics, this was an increase from 6.8 to 6.9, with a further increase to 7.2 in 2018. Health and wellbeing scores also improved, and the platform is credited as helping the trust to become the first community trust to achieve a CQC rating of 'outstanding' in June 2018 for its work in the well-led and caring domains specifically.

## Takeaway tips

1. It's not about an online tool, it's what you do with it and how you use it that matters.
2. Having the ongoing support and commitment from the board is essential.
3. Building a driven staff engagement committee and having a dedicated staff engagement lead has been fundamental in driving organisational change.
4. Success isn't down to one area or the other, rather it is the combination of collective projects, tools and resources that has led to the positive change.

## Further information

For more information about the work in this case study, contact Laura Palmer

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