THE MID YORKSHIRE HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

THE LINE IN THE SAND – TACKLING BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND ABUSE

Overview

Using findings from an internal staff survey, the pharmacy department at The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust developed a new approach to tackling bullying, harassment and abuse (BHA). This approach sought to clarify to all what is unacceptable behaviour and advised staff on how they should act if they are at the receiving end of such behaviour.

Key benefits and outcomes

This initiative, which could be replicated in other departments across the NHS, led to a reduction in the number of staff in the pharmacy department at The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust experiencing BHA. Also, as a result of this initiative and other staff engagement work – 91 per cent of the organisation’s pharmacy staff would now recommend the trust as a place to work.

What the organisation faced

A staff improvement project group (SLIP) was formed, comprising eight interested volunteers and led by a senior clinician. The first stage of the project was to build a shared understanding of what constituted BHA and get a more detailed picture of experiences. A confidential questionnaire was sent to the 130 members of the pharmacy team, with guarantees of anonymity for the respondents. Of the 62 (47.7 per cent) who completed the questionnaire, 45 per cent felt that they had experienced some form of BHA.

What the organisation did

The results from the questionnaire enabled more detailed conversations between relevant parties and informed stage two of the project. The SLIP wanted to develop something to identify when
interactions between staff crossed the line to become malicious. After discussions within the group, the 'Line in the Sand' was agreed. This was compiled into a Personal guide to bullying, harassment and abuse booklet which explores the different ways in which individuals can be made aware they have crossed the line in the sand, with the victim encouraged to find support from colleagues/peers to have these conversations.

The booklet was made available to all existing pharmacy staff and is now also included in the departmental induction pack for new staff, complimenting the trust policy for BHA and the social media policy. Whilst the booklet is the key vehicle for the messaging, it doesn’t stand alone and serves to emphasise the underlying behaviours and attitudes that all staff must understand and take shared responsibility for.

**Results and benefits**

Since the project began, the pharmacy team’s staff survey results show a year-on-year fall in the number of staff reporting they have experienced BHA. Discussions are ongoing on how to roll out this work across the trust.

Reflecting on progress to date, Phillip Marshall, Director of Workforce and OD, said: "When I joined the trust in September 2018, I was keen to understand why staff would recommend the trust as a place to work. One of the first people I met was Shane Townend, who led on the Line in the Sand project.

The simplicity of the model, which had staff engagement at its heart, had a profound impact on me. I immediately invited Shane to speak to my directorate management team. The tool encourages people to speak up and to check their experience against the principles in the Line in the Sand framework. It is such a simple model that it can be replicated at scale, but only if all staff are involved with the work from the beginning. This is one of the tools we will be using as we further develop the just and learning culture at The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust in partnership with our trade union colleagues."

**Overcoming obstacles**

The inclusive staff-led approach to the consultation is felt to have been a crucial driver for the eventual positive outcomes.

**Takeaway Tips**

1. Ensure staff are involved from the outset and any activity is staff owned and led.
2. Do not overcomplicate the model to follow – simplicity is the key.
3. Emphasise to staff, using resources such as a 'Line in the Sand' booklet, the behaviour and attitudes that are expected of them.

**Further information**

For more information about the work in this case study, contact Philip Marshall, Director of Workforce and Organisational Development.

**Email:** philip.marshall1@nhs.net