USING BENEFIT CHAMPIONS TO PROMOTE STAFF REWARDS
MID YORKSHIRE HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

Overview
Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust had some difficulties in promoting reward across the organisation and recognised that it might not be reaching all of it workforce. Particularly those working in a community and clinical setting because they don’t have regular access to a computer. To tackle this issue, the trust introduced benefit champions to reach out to staff across the whole trust.

Key benefits and outcomes
1. The trust is reaching more staff with messages about its reward package
2. More staff are accessing and utilising benefits
3. Benefits have been introduced that the trust knows are valued by staff

What the organisation did
The trust has been promoting its rewards and benefits through a variety of channels. These include all-user emails, information cards [in areas such as the canteens], newsletters, screen savers, a printed annual benefits handbook, and since 2005, two annual reward roadshows.

During the May 2016 roadshow the trust recruited benefit champions and by the end of the event 140 members of staff had agreed to be benefit champions. The new champions represented many different areas of the trust. The employee benefits team also worked with payroll to identify areas of the workforce that did not have a champion and contacted them to recruit one. Following this exercise, the number of champions increased from 285 to 320.

To encourage staff to be benefit champions the employee benefits team was very clear about the role, what was expected and how it would impact on their day-to-day job. To keep the impact to a minimum, the team was clear that the champions would only receive one email a month with information which they are expected to share in the best way for their team, ward or department.
In August 2016, for the first time the champions were asked to help to distribute the annual benefit handbook. Previously this was distributed with payslips.

**Results and benefits**

By distributing the employee benefits handbook through the champions, there was a noticeable reduction in the number of calls from staff who had not received their handbook when compared with previous years.

Champions have a good understanding of what their colleagues want and value. Feedback from champions has helped the trust gauge the appetite for new initiatives, ensuring the trust can deliver benefits that staff find valuable. Champions can reiterate messaging and gather colleagues’ interests which, for example, has led to the trust setting up a netball team for staff.

The trust evaluated the impact of champions six months after introducing them at the November 2016 reward roadshow. Staff were asked to put coloured balls into yes and no bowls to indicate whether they had received the monthly benefit information through their champion. Over 95 per cent responded positively. Staff also confirmed that champions have raised their awareness of benefits and encouraged them to access the different rewards on offer.

**Overcoming obstacles**

One of the biggest challenges managing the benefit champions is keeping up to date with changes and maintaining accurate contact information.

**Take-away tips**

1. Define the role of your champion, be clear about what you expect from them and how it will impact on their day-to-day role.
2. Have a defined reward communications strategy, including how and when you will be in touch with champions.
3. Consider how you will gather feedback from champions.
4. Think about how you will evaluate the effectiveness of champions in improving your communication with staff.

**Further information**

For more information please contact Arlene Wills, head of employee benefits and childcare support

Email: arlene.wills@midyorks.nhs.uk
Tel: 01924 543040