PATIENT FIRST PROGRAMME DELIVERS POSITIVE CHANGE
BRIGHTON & SUSSEX NHS TRUST CASE STUDY

Overview
Following years of change in leadership and organisational structure at Brighton and Sussex NHS Trust (BSUH), it received an inadequate rating by the CQC and placed into financial and quality special measures. In 2017, a long-term approach to transforming services, known as Patient First, was introduced, which led to the trust being taken out of special measures and becoming the most improved UK acute trust for its NHS Staff Survey results.

Key benefits and outcomes
- Staff are more empowered to take ownership, solve problems and improve their performance.
- BSUH has become the most improved acute trust in the UK for its NHS Staff Survey results 2018.
- Communication and morale across teams has improved.
- The trust was removed from both financial and quality special measures.
- Following a Care Quality Commission inspection in 2018 the trust received a rating of Good, the fastest and most significant improvement of any organisation to date.

What the organisation did
The trust set itself an ambitious target of achieving seven goals as part of a three to five-year strategic plan, which is known as its True North objectives. One of the objectives was to be within the top 20 per cent of acute trusts on staff engagement within the NHS Staff Survey 2018. In order to achieve its goals long term, the trust needed to inspire cultural change, raise morale and set clear objectives with the care of patients being the top priority.

With the support of the executive team the trust developed ‘Patient First’, a long-term approach to transforming hospital services and improving the experiences of patients and staff for the better.
The programme focuses on empowering frontline staff to make improvements themselves, by providing the training, tools, and freedom to identify and make changes themselves, creating a culture where everyone is passionate about delivering excellent quality, every time.

The BSUH Patient First model is based around four strategic pillars: sustainability (managing budgets); our people (improving staff engagement); quality improvement (reducing mortality and avoiding harm); and systems and partnerships (improving patient flow). It is these four strategic themes that have guided the following projects and initiatives that take place at the hospital:

- **Lean methodology** – supporting the Patient First programme, staff were encouraged to learn the principles of the methodology to help them improve the quality of patient care and safety; boost staff morale, increase efficiencies, eliminate delays; and reduce length of stay.
- **Improvement huddles** in wards have been a big part of the programme strengthening communication, sharing ideas and helping staff contribute to improved ways of working.
- **Strategic development reviews** - senior managers have been supported in owning and driving True North objectives for their divisions. Alongside their HR business partners, training has been provided and divisional scorecards to monitor progress against set targets.
- **Leader, Culture, Workforce programme** - following analysis of the NHS Staff Survey results, 13 key work streams were created to help enable a cultural shift within the organisation, to raise morale and increase staff engagement. These areas included: appraisals; communications; health and wellbeing; staff engagement; equality, diversity and inclusion; retention; violence and aggression against staff; integrated education; and leadership training.
- **Trust ambassadors** were introduced to promote the trust’s values and help promote the Patient First culture.
- **Recognition and celebrating diversity** - to recognise the achievements of staff and celebrate diversity across the trust, BSUH run a star of the month campaign alongside its annual Stars Award ceremony to put a spotlight on hospital heroes and teams who have gone the extra mile. The first Stars Awards was run in 2018 and repeated in 2019 with nearly double the nominations from staff and patients. The trust also led a BME conference for staff and formed a BME working group, as well as hosting its first LGBTQ+ conference in 2019 to demonstrate inclusiveness as an employer.

**NHS Staff Survey**

As part of the Patient First approach, the trust also carried out a number of initiatives to improve engagement in the national staff survey and to support its goal of being within the top 20 per cent of acute trusts on staff engagement within the NHS Staff Survey 2018. This included;

- identifying divisional staff survey champions to promote the survey
- using the support of the communications team to share results and action plans through ‘You Said, We Will’ and ‘You Said, We Did’ campaigns
- developing a dedicated web page on the staff info-net with all the latest survey information and divisional information
- sharing weekly communications with leaders on participation rates in the survey
- organising roadshows to promote achievements and encourage participation
- giving staff dedicated time, [with a cuppa and a cake!] to complete the survey.
Overcoming obstacles

Releasing senior leaders and staff to attend Patient First methodology training was and continues to be a challenge in a busy acute hospital environment. This was overcome by a staggered approach to training and ensuring that managers were able to take the knowledge back to their areas and train colleagues on the job.

Results and benefits

There has been a number of clear notable outcomes following the trust’s implementation of Patient First, including:

- ranking in the top three most improved trusts for NHS Staff Survey results in 2018
- a significant increase in 61 out of 90 survey questions and improvements in nine out of 10 themes, including the most improved score in the health and wellbeing category nationally
- like-for-like scoring compared with other acute trusts across 10 themes
- an increase of 9 per cent for the breakthrough objective 2018 ‘care is my organisation’s top priority’, which is now on par with national average scores.

Further information

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