

SEPTEMBER 2019

# SURVEY AT THE HEART OF CULTURAL CHANGE

## ST HELENS AND KNOWSLEY TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

---

### Overview

St Helen's and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust realised that while the annual NHS Staff Survey is useful, it didn't provide the ongoing feedback needed to make changes at a departmental level. By creating a new cultural survey to compliment the NHS Staff Survey, the trust has been able to capture information that has informed improvements across several departments.

### What the trust faced

Key to ongoing improvement at St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust is the gathering and analysis of feedback from staff. While the NHS Staff Survey (NSS) plays a key role in the identification of areas requiring improvement across the trust, an annual review was deemed to not be sufficient to provide the ongoing feedback and granular detail needed to make necessary change and intervention at department level. A new process for obtaining and measuring information was identified and later developed through the creation of a cultural survey that would run alongside the NSS.

### What the trust did

Inspired by the pilot of a national culture survey in London, in 2014 Adam Rudduck, assistant director of organisational development, decided to look into developing their own tailor-made platform.

The aim of the cultural survey was to be much clearer and more specific, drilling down into areas and demographics within departments such as gender, age and ethnic origin. This would help to create a much more comprehensive approach in drawing out commonalities and overriding themes. The trust then triangulates this information with hospital data, local workforce key performance indicators and any soft intelligence.

The aim of the culture survey is to identify key themes and areas requiring improvement so that the right decisions and interventions could be made. In some instances, this has led to the need for subsequent research through focus groups, workshops, coaching and training. The format consists of a series of questions, issued to key staff members via a questionnaire.

Every quarter the HR team follows up the cultural survey with a pulse check. This helps the team monitor progress on an ongoing basis, giving it an opportunity to make necessary interventions. Action plans are then developed and are monitored by the trust's workforce council as part of the board assurance process.

The survey supports the trust's workforce development policy and development plans of each department.

### **Putting the cultural survey into practice**

Following the 2015 Care Quality Commission report, a number of issues in the maternity department were identified. It was decided the HR team would use the cultural survey to understand more about communication styles and culture across the unit, both of which were having a significant impact on morale, performance and recruitment.

A bespoke survey was created to help identify the needs of the department. Running over four years and supported by regular pulse surveys, focus groups and listening events provided a useful sense check and barometer on progress.

Research identified the need for an external coaching programme for senior midwives and team managers. This gave staff the freedom to talk openly and honestly about issues, allowing them to develop leadership skills to support their teams and the culture changes required.

Response rates ranged from 55-90 per cent of staff, which demonstrated that staff believed their feedback would be valued by the trust and result in positive action.

The trust also decided to trial the cultural survey in two other departments, pharmacy and theatres. An organisational development plan and cultural survey were created to help understand the detail behind the areas requiring improvement.

## **Obstacles and challenges**

Despite its success, the trust acknowledges the need to be open minded and agile in its approach when working with different departments.

For example, to improve engagement in the medical workforce, the cultural survey will be segmented and delivered by speciality and grade to achieve a more tailored approach. External leadership coaches will deliver listening events and targeted discussions around key themes.

## **Benefits and key outcomes**

The cultural programme is supported and funded by divisional management teams which has ensured that ownership is within leadership teams and not seen as centre driven by the HR/OD agenda, thus boosting engagement and buy in.

New departments across the trust such as HR, corporate nursing and IT are engaging with the tools using them in new ways to not just identify areas of improvement but to support talent management, team building and career progression within teams.

Importantly, the cultural survey has also helped provide a reliable form of evidence for CQC when it comes to supporting the trust's rating.

The survey helped the trust to see a number of positive outcomes for the maternity department including:

- development of management and clinical leadership teams
- improved staff engagement metrics
- better communication with staff feeling empowered to raise concerns
- improved visibility of leadership including the head of midwifery
- ongoing support and training where needed
- increased morale
- 100 per cent fill rate of midwife vacancies.

Overall staff engagement has been very positive. Over the last four years, the organisation has had year-on-year improvements and was the top performing trust for overall staff engagement in England.

## Takeaway tips

1. Position the survey as something that brings about positive change and development within the organisation, rather than being a vehicle to pin point fault of apportion blame.
2. Don't create a survey if you aren't going to do anything with the results. Effective change only happens through ongoing identification of information, analysis and action.
3. To get the most engagement in the survey, ownership is vital. This needs to be service led.

## Further information

For more information please contact: Adam Rudduck, assistant director of organisational development, St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

**Email:** [adam.rudduck@sthk.nhs.uk](mailto:adam.rudduck@sthk.nhs.uk)

**Tel:** 0151 430 1340