TRUST MAKES IT HAPPEN WITH LAUNCH OF NEW INITIATIVES
THE DUDLEY GROUP NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

Objective

Following a difficult CQC inspection in 2018 and below satisfactory NHS Staff Survey results, the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust identified a need to improve staff engagement, leadership and quality of care. Feedback and Staff Survey results highlighted a clear challenge for the organisation in relation to staff feeling seen, heard and recognised. As such, a focus was placed on understanding their needs and a range of innovative ideas for sourcing feedback and improving performance were launched.

Key benefits and outcomes

1. People feel the trust has listened and that their views are valued.
2. Key changes have been made which are changing the workplace culture around wellbeing.
3. Staff are beginning to feel more engaged and developing their own ways to promote their services, develop their teams and support their own staff to be engaged in what they do.

What the organisation did

Recognising that there were gaps in how to engage with staff, the trust recruited an engagement lead. Bringing expertise from outside the NHS, the trust began by listening to people and asking what would need to happen to support improvements for staff. This connected to a number of other activities – launching a new leadership development programme, reviewing the patient safety strategy, and investing in an improvement programme organisation-wide.

At the same time, having listened to feedback about the lack of clear training and development pathways to support the leadership skills of staff, the learning and development team set about creating a programme to resolve this. With a focus around developing leadership skills and mindset for both now and the future, the programme was also beneficial in creating a network where leaders could come together, shares ideas and build connections. Consisting of one workshop per week over
three months, a range of themes were covered including self-awareness, motivation and human needs, coaching, quality improvement, change, modern leadership and networking.

Following the local information gathering, the engagement lead worked alongside the learning and development and communication teams to design a new approach to staff engagement with a focus on listening, acting and feeding back on actions. This process helped them to realise that the best way to source ongoing information and discuss feedback with different staff groups was to spend time with employees at their work areas. To respond to the need to listen and the concern of staff not having sufficient food and drink breaks, an idea was developed to create a trolley of refreshments, named the make it happen trolley.

The first trolley visited wards in Sep 2018 and had a purpose of finding out what staff loved about working at the trust and if they had three wishes what they would be? Concerns around health and wellbeing and the opportunity to have sufficient breaks were highlighted, as well as issues around management, leadership style and communication. The trust identified that feeling part of an NHS family and having passion for their jobs were the areas staff felt happiest - themes that were all subsequently echoed in 2018 Staff Survey results.

The trolley had a dual purpose of encouraging breaks as well as discussion, visiting departments every three months. Each quarter a new theme is set, key questions are presented and feedback and updates are also given on actions that have been taken. The trolley has been warmly received by staff providing them with a forum to discuss their concerns.

Putting listening into action

The feedback enabled the trust to pre-empt NHS Staff Survey results early on and implement a number of actions including the launch of a behavioural framework and their managers essentials programme. Consisting of a five-day course, the managers programme covers a number of areas including how to keep yourself well, equality and diversity, inclusion for all, and management behaviour skills. Regular events and a newsletter were also produced to communicate key messages to employees.

Another key concern raised by staff was around restrictions on drinking at workstations. To respond to this, the trust launched the 3 R’s campaign (rehydrate, refuel and rest). Using the make it happen trolley, the trust provided all wards with a hydration box for staff to store their flasks and water bottles, thus reinforcing the message about taking a break. The aim of the campaign was to essentially bust myths around what was and wasn’t allowed at work stations and to provide a safe solution.

For community staff, access to water was sufficient but being out and about, they struggled with access to toilet facilities. Because of this, the trust launched a PR campaign to enlist the public’s help. The request was a big success with over 30 sites in the local area from shops, pubs and residents offering use of their facilities for district nurses with promotional material now being launched to easily identify these pit stops for staff. This has sent out a positive message to all that staff are listened to and a commitment to try different solutions.
Results and benefits

The trust believes that the full impact of engagement initiatives, which form part of its longer-term strategic plan, will be seen more fully over time. That said, a number of immediate outcomes have been identified including an increase in staff participating in the Friends and Family Test, a rise in enquiries about the upcoming national Staff Survey, and more engagement between teams. Twitter training is also paying dividends with more interaction, connectivity and sharing of good news stories across the trust. The next national Staff Survey takes place in Nov 2019 with results published in March 2020 and the organisation hopes to see an improvement in results.

Overcoming obstacles

One of the biggest challenges for the trust was obtaining a shared understanding of engagement and then agreeing a coordinated plan to follow across the organisation.

To address this, the trust worked with leaders, the board and staff across the organisation to describe the ambition for engagement. Key events, the NHS People Plan and the culture change programme played a key role in supporting this process.

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Takeaway Tips

1. Get out into working areas and ask people for their feedback
2. Do something with the information you find – put listening into action!
3. Take the time to understand the needs of your organisation and set actions accordingly. Find the barriers and use that to tailor engagement activity.
4. Staff engagement isn’t just about pop up events but about effective listening and communication across the organisation.

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Further information

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