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BARTS HEALTH NHS TRUST ENGAGING WITH PROJECT SEARCH

The organisation

Barts Health NHS Trust operates from four major hospital sites (The Royal London, St Bartholomew's, Whipps Cross and Newham) and several community locations, including Mile End hospital. Around 2.5 million people living in east London look to their services to provide them with the healthcare they need. Barts Health NHS Trust's overall aim is to become an all-inclusive hospital, fully integrated in the community they serve.

Background


Five years ago, the trust agreed to host Project SEARCH, a supported internship programme that helps young people with learning disabilities gain the skills they need to get meaningful paid jobs.

After hearing positive information about the project in the United States where it originated, a local learning provider approached the trust to consider hosting the project. This suggestion came at a time when a positive change was needed to enable people with learning disabilities an opportunity to flourish in the workplace, and help a group of people to improve their life chances. The trust embraced the challenge during a period of uncertainty.

What's happening nationally?

Disabled young people are significantly underrepresented in the nation's workforce and are far less likely to have a job than the general population. Current figures indicate that only around seven per cent are likely to experience employment during their lifetime and numbers employed within the NHS are low.

- Six per cent of adults with a learning disability known to their local authority in England are in paid work.
- 17 per cent of all adults with a learning disability in England are in paid work.

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- 47 per cent of people aged 16 to 64 with any type of disability in Great Britain are in paid work.
 - 74 per cent of people aged 16 to 64 in the general population in England are in paid work.

The process

During the year-long programme (academic year) an intern will have three placements that are supported by one to one support from the Project SEARCH team. The interns have a hospital member of staff as their mentor and who they can go to with any questions or concerns. They receive continual feedback on their performance, to help them develop and work towards individual goals. To deliver the programme the trust works in partnership with a job coach service offered by Kaleidoscope Sabre and Workplace, and tutor from a local provider or Newham College of FE who are the key educational partners.


The role of the tutor and job coach is to ensure that the interns are given the right level of support in terms of basic skills as well as being taught the role through using various methods and techniques, for example using pictures and diagrams. If any problems or challenges arise, the job coach and tutor ensure they are dealt immediately. The effective partnership in place with the educational providers and the local authorities at each of the key sites creates clarity between roles and responsibilities and is vital to the project's success.

During the first year, six interns were recruited, the second year 12, the third year 18 and the fourth and fifth years 24 interns were recruited across Whipps Cross, Mile End and the Royal London hospitals. Due to its success Newham General Hospital also began hosting the programme, and over the last two years they have recruited 36 interns.

Barriers

The change was a gradual process but through active marketing and word of mouth, managers agreed to offer interns placements in several settings from pharmacy to catering. Initially some were anxious about hosting an intern, as they were not sure how to manage people with learning disabilities. Managers questioned the amount of support they would have to give. However, these anxieties were overcome once they met the job coach, who explained how the support structure worked and dispelled some of the myths around learning disabilities.

The role of the job coach is critical to the success of the programme. They work through duties in details and identify any learning and environmental issues that the intern would need to overcome. Once the interns were in place the managers reported that their team really appreciated the support



that interns offered. As a result some managers offered their interns a paid position. This method of recruitment worked as the managers could 'test' the interns and get to know them well, their strengths and areas that required further development.

The trust also discovered that they faced challenges with some interns' home life. Parents who came from a deprived background or had learning disabilities themselves didn't understand the benefits the programme could have. To overcome these problems the tutor worked closely with third parties, including carers, to demonstrate progression and effect it can have on the intern.

Outcomes

The trust has been hosting the Project SEARCH for five years and over 54 per cent of interns have successfully moved into paid work, we expect this to rise to over 60 per cent once current offers are completed.

The programme has transformed the lives of many interns. They have become more confident, job ready and now have the ability to travel on their own to and from work. The programme is now a key part of the trust's public health vision, which includes the aim of improving the health of the local population by impacting of the social determinants of health.

After five years the public health team is seeking support for an impact assessment. This would include a framework to assess the return on investment being made and the qualitative impact on the interns and their carers. Overall the job outcomes have been excellent despite the odds stacked against the interns in terms of their life chances, as shown by the national employment data.

Moving forward, the trust will continue to support the programme as it sees the immediate impact it is having on the local community and on its

The story so far

- ✓ 85 interns have successfully completed the programme since it began in 2013.
- ✓ 46 interns have secured employment; many within the trust (including ward clerk, house keeper, catering, portering and ward host roles) and others outside the health sector in retail education and construction.
- ✓ 60 per cent of interns are now in paid employment and 35 per cent are with Barts Health or its contractors.

workforce. A wider selection of placements is required to ensure continuity of the programme, placements outside the trust within the locality is one option. In the Newham scheme, the partnership with Newham Council's job brokerage service has led to placements with other local employers. Other steps may include promoting the scheme elsewhere in the health economy or involving the parents and guardians, something the trust is widely advocating.

Top tips

- ✓ Good partnership relationships - the project can fail if there is a lack of clarity between stakeholders and partners.
- ✓ Go in with the right intentions – understand your community.
- ✓ Educate your staff on the benefits of employing someone with a learning disability.
- ✓ The role of the Employment Coach is critical to the success of the programme delivery. Invest in a good coach.
- ✓ Review your Critical Success Factors.

Further information

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