West Yorkshire and Harrogate Integrated Care System
Collaborative recruitment

The Challenge

Operating department practitioners (ODPs) are a vital part of theatre teams. ODPs can cover many different roles and aspects of surgical care including anaesthetic assistants, surgeon’s assistants, scrub assistants, post-operative care and pain management.

Across the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Integrated Care System (ICS) there is a shortage of ODPs and a survey in early 2017 showed over 100 vacancies. An ODP vacancy has a huge impact on patient care and can compromise the effective running of an operating list.

The profession is largely unrecognised by the general public, and in the ICS there is only one ODP course provider - the University of Huddersfield. Each year, only 40 to 50 of the available 70 places are filled. On top of this, placement capacity limits the number of students that can study at any one time.

Led by the former director of workforce and organisational development at Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, the ICS therefore decided to launch a local campaign to increase the awareness of the ODP, encourage applications to the role and to reduce vacancies.

What the ICS did

The success of the recruitment was driven by three key factors.

- Good engagement.
- Clinical leadership.
- Social media expertise.

Good engagement

The campaign was delivered in partnership, allowing the ICS to draw upon resources and expertise from each participating organisation. An initial survey was carried out to develop a clear understanding of the workforce gaps in each trust. This ensured understanding of the localised work already being completed; it found that some good ideas were being put in
place but little that could be rolled out across the ICS, and the results helped sensibly formulate the working group.

Following the survey, key local workforce action board (LWAB) stakeholders such as Huddersfield University, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, and The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, were brought together as a working group, and social media specialists from the private sector were recruited ensuring the right people and expertise were involved from the beginning. It was also key at this stage to engage with a range of staff from within the trusts including ODP leads, theatre managers and HR managers.

The Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) also attended the working group, offering much needed reach to 80 per cent of schools in the region (360 in total), enabling the NHS to showcase itself as a leading employer in the community. It was highlighted that approaching schools was difficult, and LEP played an important part in getting LWAB an initial foot in the door.

Using relationships and partnerships that already existed was important in sharing key messages and campaigns across the local community more widely.

Clinical leadership

Given the lack of awareness around the role, it was important to have an ODP helping to lead the recruitment campaign. Without clinical leadership, there may not have been a full understanding of what ODPS do and the responsibilities of the role to sell it to prospective students and drive the project forward.

The tagline ‘the most rewarding job you’ve never heard of’ was developed with an ODP and this ensured the positives of the role were front and centre when the campaign began.

Social media expertise

There was a lack of experience within the working group on running large social media campaigns, and that’s where the private sector social media agency was important in developing and running targeted campaigns. It helped effectively target the age group – 16-25-year olds – with the ODP messaging.

Two different campaign ideas were taken to a local youth forum, set up by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, to make sure the brand was attractive to the right audience. This exercise showed that this group wanted to understand the reality of the role - what the role is, how they would train, the salary and future promotion prospects. There was a feeling that the videos in the recruitment marketing space don’t always articulate the reality of working day to day in these roles. The youth forum effectively acted as a focus group suggesting that it was the most important element to cover.

Videos were then developed to share real stories of what it is like to work as an ODP, giving potential candidates an idea of the role and this included what a day on the job is like. The films used specific questions asked by 16 and 17-year olds in the youth forum, to find out the
information those young candidates would most like to hear about. The videos were shared on social media over an initial two-week pilot and signposted individuals to find out more information.

You can find the full campaign videos on the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership website.

**Measures of success**

After the pilot period across July – August 2018, the campaign had already reached over 65,000 people and delivered the following results:

- 1,895 engagements online
- over 600 visits to the online landing page
- 29 people registered their details to find out more about ODP through visiting the landing page across the first two-week period
- over 200 people have now liked the Facebook page and opted to see future posts on their newsfeeds.

Following the pilot period, Huddersfield University has since seen a marked increase in the number of potential students enquiring about the ODP role and attending its career events. This had led to further conversations about future investment into the campaign, with the deanery at the University of Huddersfield agreeing to fund the campaign going forward.

The team is still waiting to hear about future applications to the course this summer. The key measures of success will include the number and quality of applications as well as the number of applicants from within the local community, with a full report into the outcomes of the programme in September 2019.

**Next steps**

Due to the success of the ODP recruitment campaign, the ICS now plans to develop similar campaigns to increase the uptake to mental health and learning disability nursing roles. This activity correlates with the second phase of the national We are the NHS campaign, which aims to highlight and encourage students to apply for mental health, learning disability and community nursing courses.

This campaign brings new challenges, with more education providers and stakeholders involved, it will be even more essential to have strong engagement to maintain a collaborative approach. The ICS will continue to work collaboratively on this campaign and has already engaged with local universities which are willing to be part of the next phase.

The nurse recruitment campaign will commence with a launch event and the ambition is to include a resource pack and mobile tutorials for potential candidates to access.
Top tips

- Engage with key stakeholders from the very beginning and initiate conversations early about everyone’s key responsibilities and how actions and resources will be disseminated.
- Use existing partnerships within your local community. Calling schools out the blue and trying to establish networks was difficult, but using the existing LEP gave the ICS established contacts to work with. The ODP recruitment campaign now features on the LEP website Future Goals, expanding its reach into the community. Other trusts could consider similar link ups with enterprise groups.
- Establish links to the key targets of your campaigns, allowing the opportunity to road test ideas early in the process. Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust's access to a youth forum was extremely useful in this regard.
- Recruitment campaigns need administration support as well as clinical leadership and social media experience to succeed. Use the strengths of those working on the campaign to best utilise time and effort.
- Factor backfill costs into your plan. Your clinicians will need time to visit local schools and open events, taking them away from clinical practice.

Find out more

For more information about the ODP recruitment campaign please contact steven.burns@hdft.nhs.uk.

For the next steps on the mental health and learning disability nursing campaigns, the best contact is leedsth-tr.wyhexcellencecentre@nhs.net.

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