The organisation

The George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust employs around 2,300 staff and is a general district hospital, offering a range of acute and community services. The trust serves a population of 300,000 in North Warwickshire, Nuneaton, Bedworth, South West Leicestershire and North Coventry.

The challenge

Historically, attempts to implement a cultural shift towards service improvement and staff engagement were imposed on the workforce without any real consultation which led to an unengaged and detached workforce. The lack of buy-in to the trust’s vision meant that the organisation’s culture was unclear.

In 2011 there were a number of significant changes to executive senior posts in the organisation. The new senior team were more aware of the importance of the right organisational culture and the need for engagement with the workforce.

The George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust was also one of 14 trusts to undergo the Keogh review. Led by Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS Medical Director for England, this review explored the quality of care and treatment by hospital trusts with persistently high mortality rates. It was after this review was published in 2013, that the trust was placed into special measures.

Steps to success

The trust’s journey to improvement began in 2011 when they enlisted the support of Christine Belcher as head of organisational development, education and training, who wanted to try a different approach to staff engagement. Starting from grass roots, Christine wanted to develop a set of values with the workforce that they could own and believe in.

This was a long-term project and seen very much as a journey to continuous improvement, rather than one that would provide a quick resolution to the challenges they
faced. Christine began by leading a number of focus groups to establish what the workforce felt about the organisation - the executive team were invited to listen.

The trust also wanted to find out what staff thought the culture and vision of the organisation should be. This process of fact finding and interviewing took over 12 months and was supported by Dr Lisa Bayliss-Pratt, now director of nursing for Health Education England, who had a strong background in data and was keen to be involved with the project. Dr Bayliss-Pratt helped to analyse over 6,000 pieces of information generated.

Following the research, the workforce vision was created and presented to the board to finalise and approve. This provided the board with a chance to approve the vision taking into account its own views and the corporate business objectives of the trust.

The following value pledges were created with the strapline, excel at patient care:

- effective communication
- excellence and safety in all we do
- challenge but support
- expect respect and dignity
- local healthcare that inspires confidence.

In April 2012, the trust had a formal launch event to promote the new value pledges to the workforce with good representation across all staff groups. Union shop stewards, staff, managers and the executive team helped to cascade the information.

At the launch, board members made a declaration to uphold the values of the workforce. Each member signed a pledge and this was created into a plaque and hung in the main reception for staff and visitors to see. A number of table top presentations were delivered in partnership with board members to share and embed the values of ‘EXCEL’ to patients, carers and visitors to the trust.

**Embedding the values**

The next phase of the project focused on embedding the values. A values based behavioral framework was developed and integrated into the appraisal process. This ensured that all staff were assessed against the trust’s values.

EXCEL was incorporated into the trust’s annual awards ceremony, which recognise and celebrate staff who were demonstrating those values in their roles.

The awards ceremony proved a big success but the trust wanted to maintain the momentum and celebrate success on a daily basis. An excel recognition scheme was launched giving patients, visitors and staff the opportunity to nominate anyone they felt had excelled in living the values.

Nominations are submitted via a specific postcard, outlining reasons why the member of staff deserved to win an award. All nominations are then given to the relevant director who visits the nominated member of staff in the workplace and presents them with an excel badge and certificate.

The recognition scheme has proven to be very motivational and has meant that staff who are not patient facing can be recognised alongside the doctors and nurses. It is a universal recognition scheme that brings the team together as one, irrespective of grade and job role.
Recently (October 2015) the trust has developed a compact agreement with staff based on the Virginia Mason Medical Centre Model. This agreement looks at the expectations of staff and their behaviours towards the organisation. The compact agreement is currently being piloted in specific areas across the trust.

Communication

The trust has a good range of communication methods which have delivered positive outcomes enabling the organisation to reinforce its messages to staff and generate more favourable results in the annual staff survey.

Methods of communications include:

- the intranet
- a twice weekly on-line staff publication
- flyers and posters
- team briefings and meetings
- regular email updates

Results and next steps

In May 2014, the trust was taken out of special measures with no conditions. It also achieved a CQC rating of good overall. This was a major achievement for the trust. Other notable outcomes following the staff engagement programme included:

- An increase in staff engagement scores in the 2014 staff survey for the first time since the staff survey began.
- An increase in the staff Family and Friends Test (FFT) scores in the 2014 staff survey to above average for the first time since the survey began.
- An increase in the survey results around staff’s recommendation of the trust as a place to work or receive treatment for the fifth consecutive year.
- An increased desire from staff to want to improve the patient experience.
- A range of qualitative audits of staff appraisals that have observed how behaviours over time have aligned themselves to the excel framework and trust’s values.

In order to ensure the work of the team is sustainable over time, there were a number of next steps acknowledged as requiring implementation. These included:

- Measuring the level of disciplinary, employee relations and grievances to establish what impact the new culture and behaviours had on individuals.
- Introducing pilots of the EXCEL Compact programme on 20 Oct 2015 to further embed principles. Compact is a documented statement of gives and gets, pledging what the trust will do for staff and what it expects from them in return based on the trust’s EXCEL values
- Increasing value based recruitment, ensuring that the trust’s values become a key consideration in employing staff with the right skills and ethos.
Embedding the trust’s values within the exit interview process.

Uncovering metrics around how the trust’s staff engagement programme aligns with patient satisfaction results, as there is currently no concrete analysis on this.

More analysis around staff sickness absence to establish what further support the leaders and managers of the workforce require.

Evaluation

George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust has made significant progress in engaging its workforce and moving out of special measures. This was due in part to the implementation of the ‘Excel’ staff engagement programme, which focused on empowering staff to create their own vision and values. A vision that could unite staff irrespective of grade.

This innovative way of working bottom up, has helped give staff the empowerment and belief that they could make change happen. Staff engagement scores are rising each year and continue to follow an upward trend. It is important to note, however, that even though the trust is on the right path, the employees acknowledge that they’re on a journey to continuous improvement and in order to continue to excel they must respond to the challenges and next steps presented to them.

Top tips from the trust

✓ Employ patience when progress seems slow and things feel frustrating.

✓ Avoid at all costs quick fixes and temporary measures. These are great for a while but are short term solutions which can lead to demotivation.

✓ You need to work from the bottom up to engage the workforce and encourage buy in.

✓ Even though you may appear to be on the right track, you must continue to learn from others. reshape. grow and evolve.

Further information

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