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EAST KENT HOSPITALS UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST IMPROVING NEW STARTER TURNOVER

Organisation

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) is one of the largest hospital trusts in England, with five hospitals and community clinics serving around 759,000 people locally and providing specialist services for a wider population.

As a teaching trust EKHUFT plays a vital role in the education and training of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, working closely with local universities and Kings College University in London.

The trust's vision is 'great healthcare from great people', and everything it does is guided by this vision, its mission and its values.

The challenge

In 2015/16 EKHUFT identified a concern: a high proportion of staff were leaving within the first year of employment. The trust conducted a deep dive into staff turnover using a system which draws on data from ESR. This allowed those the project team to filter by length of service and exclude fixed term contracts and junior doctors from the analysis.

The deep dive identified that turnover of staff within their first year of employment accounted for 40.3 per cent of the trust's overall turnover of 11 per cent.

EKHUFT recognised this was a significant issue and so committed to improving rates by investing time and resource. Particular attention was paid to improving the overall on-boarding experience, from advert all the way through to the completion of the local induction and probationary period.

Steps to success

Recruiting to values

The trust transformed the way in which it advertised jobs and focused on values based recruitment (VBR) as a way to reduce turnover by ensuring that the staff they recruited had values that fit with the organisation.

The director of communications and engagement and the head of strategic resourcing reinvigorated job adverts, redesigned job descriptions, and introduced a new vision, mission and set of values to recruit and work to.

These values are that people feel:

- cared for as individuals
- safe, reassured and involved
- teamwork, trust and respect sit at the heart of everything they do
- confident they are making a difference.

In addition, the values are reinforced on the wards to boost staff morale, create a positive working environment and make new starters feel valued within their new role and the organisation.

Attracting the right staff

The trust agreed a variety of methods to attract the right staff and set out strategic priorities for the year. It redesigned its website, giving it a more modern feel, held open days and advertised roles both through NHS Jobs and on social media platforms, engaging with new audiences which, following evaluation, proved to be the most successful way to engage and recruit.

Starting before day one

EKHUFT considered how it engaged with new starters before they joined. Working collaboratively, the retention programme manager and digital communications lead devoted time and effort in developing a new starter portal, which successful applicants could engage with immediately once offered the role.

The portal - localised to East Kent - was designed with one thing in mind: to make life better for their new starters. The team decided right from the start that this would be about support and development, and nurturing new starters throughout their first year.

This provided an opportunity for new starters to learn all they needed to about the trust before they arrived, to acclimatise themselves with the organisation's values and to fully prepare themselves for their new start.

They also provided answers to questions that people don't always have the confidence to ask in person.

The key to the success of this platform was simplicity. The team worked incredibly hard to identify:

- key information and how to communicate it in a simple and easy to understand manner
- the paperwork users needed to complete, why and when
- where new starters needed to go for their first day
- what the first day would look like
- how to get to the trust
- what ID to take along
- what to expect from a local induction programme.

This, coupled with the ability to complete pre-employment checks electronically, has made a huge difference to the new starter experience and retention.

The impact of induction

EKHUFT considered what new starters would need on their first day and set about building a high quality corporate induction programme, which was named the trust welcome day.

The trust welcome day involves:

- meeting the trust's chief executive
- an introduction to the great place to work programme
- an overview of the trust
- information around pay day, annual leave, pensions, rewards and benefits
- lunchtime marketplace for meeting specialist teams
- a brief induction to statutory training.

The trust also introduced a robust and consistent local induction programme, catering for the first six months of employment. It was hoped that by improving the quality of induction, EKHUFT could sustain its improved new starter turnover for many years to come.

Collaborative working

Support and combined effort from teams across the trust was integral to driving improvement. The head of HR and the culture change programme lead raised the profile of this work and this was backed at a senior level by the director of HR and chief executive, with both fully supportive of the agenda.

Improving organisational culture

In 2014 the trust was placed into special measures by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). EKHUFT was conscious to keep morale high and so launched a campaign called A Great Place to Work. It hosted listening events which identified that part of the reason new starter turnover was high was due to the experience of the first weeks and months within the trust.

The great place to work team worked on understanding and improving the culture within the workplace, implementing a training programme for recruitment managers. These changes were recognised in February 2017 when the trust was taken out of quality special measures by the CQC.

Training for recruiting managers

Recruiting managers were given a two-day training course which included an introduction to processes and systems, legal framework, key policies and best practice. VBR was introduced to the programme, along with mock interviews. The final piece in the jigsaw was focusing on what happened post-interview/offer, training recruiting managers on the importance of keeping in touch, introducing them to the new starter portal and delivering training around a high quality local induction.

Outcomes/successes

From January 2015/16 turnover of staff within their first year of employment was 40.3 per cent of overall turnover. By the end of 2016 this figure had reduced to

22.1 per cent – a huge change of 18.2 per cent. The trust will continue to evaluate the impact of its work both statistically and anecdotally, to ensure that it is meeting the needs of an ever-changing environment.

Robert Fordham, retention programme manager for the trust said:

“This marks the start of this journey. Work around attracting staff, engaging with them and supporting them will continue to ensure we maintain a high-quality induction programme.

“We are also committed to improving the quality of the local induction and learning more around why people leave. We have collaborated with an independent charity to implement a new exit interview survey, and this feedback will help us continue to learn and improve.”

Top tips

- Recruit to values to get the right people to fit into your organisation.
- Provide excellent training for recruiting managers.
- Start the induction before day one – find a way to engage new starters from appointment and sustain it.
- Deliver a high quality corporate induction that focuses on the needs of the new starter, not organisational compliancy.
- Extend the induction programme beyond day one and into the first six months through a robust, consistent local induction.

Further information

For more information contact Robert Fordham, retention programme manager, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust robertfordham@nhs.net

Contact us

NHS Employers
2 Brewery Wharf
Kendell Street
Leeds LS10 1JR
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www.nhsemployers.org
enquiries@nhsemployers.org

 @nhsemployers

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