

SEPTEMBER 2015

DERBYSHIRE COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

REDUCING AGENCY SPEND THROUGH A RESPONSIVE WORKFORCE TEAM

The organisation

Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust (DCHS) cares for patients across a wide range of services. The trust has 133 sites including 11 community hospitals, 12 GP practices and 30 health centres across Derbyshire and Leicestershire. DCHS employs approximately 4,400 staff and serves a patient population of more than one million.

What they did

In 2013 DCHS decided to take steps to reduce the amount they were spending on using agency staff.

The trust's demands fluctuated at different times of year, and across different regions of the county. To respond effectively, the trust required flexibility within the system to target those geographical areas where services were needed most.

The trust held a number of evaluations and discussions to explore whether there was a more efficient way to utilise the money spent on agency staff. In looking at different workforce models, the team decided to establish a responsive workforce team.

First steps to success

The trust's initial proposal was to create 10 new posts within a responsive workforce team which could be deployed across the county, on different shifts, to work in services that were struggling to meet needs.

The recruitment process provided an opportunity for those involved to be creative when building the job descriptions. HR colleagues were further able to

build upon and refine the role as they developed more in-depth information for the post. The posts were advertised as Band 6 nursing roles.

From the initial round of recruitment, the trust recruited five workers. The post attracted staff that already held a range of skills and experience, for example, some were able to prescribe, which further enhanced the flexibility of the team. These workers were engaged in a programme of individual development, delivered over a six month period to ensure that the team had the right skills for the role.

The DCHS training and workforce development team were involved in the delivery of a bespoke training programme which was developed specifically for the role and designed to build on the competencies the team already had. A key advantage of this approach was that this training was consistent with DCHS values, which is harder to achieve when using agency staff.

Challenges

Staff within the responsive workforce team can spend up to three months, on average, based in other teams. The additional competencies the responsive workforce specialists gained, along with the experience of working within different teams, has enabled some of them to progress to different roles within the trust. Whilst this has created a welcome career pathway, it has also created a challenge in terms of maintaining full staffing levels for the responsive workforce team.

Initially five people were recruited and the posts were re-advertised. A rolling programme of recruitment was set up but now this takes place on an as and when basis. The posts are promoted through social media channels such as Twitter.

Outcomes

The initiative has proved to be an effective way of sharing good practice between teams within the trust. There has also been opportunities for shadowing and sharing information across services.

The trust has seen improvements in a number of areas, including clinical effectiveness and improved quality outcomes, as well as achieving financial savings. From a clinical perspective those moving from in-patient to community based services are seen as having a better patient journey as members of the responsive workforce team are able to bring knowledge from an inpatient and community perspective. Patients stay in hospital for shorter periods of time and there are fewer episodes of resubmission being reported.

There are currently six members of staff in the responsive workforce team. At the point of recruitment staff are expected to possess a range of skills and certain competencies, such as the ability to access the various organisation wide patient care systems, dealing with in-patients, community patients and utilising varied clinical skills

Each worker is involved in developing their own pathway around development, which is linked to appraisals. DCHS training and workforce development team continue to deliver a bespoke training programme to the team which ensures consistency. Some of the staff in the team have been recruited into posts that are at a higher grade than their previous role within the trust, so the initiative has also had a positive impact on personal progression and the development of career pathways.

Top tips

- ✓ Ask/listen to staff and managers to develop an effective training programme
- ✓ Use your own training and workforce development team to develop and deliver bespoke training.
- ✓ Make use of social media to attract candidates and share examples of success and learning.

Find out more

For more information about Derbyshire Community Health Service NHS Foundation Trust's responsive workforce team, please contact Nicola Myronko at nicola.myronko@nhs.net

Access all of our [case studies and resources](#) for employers and learn from the experiences of other organisations that are responding to issues and challenges.

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