Staff Wellbeing & Retention Project

Identification of low staff morale, low levels of support and increased sickness

As a Primary Care Network Manager it was recognised that there were high levels of sickness, days off, low productivity and reports of low morale across the network.

A piece of work was completed with the team to look at why these things had started to develop and what could be done to support the team in their day-to-day role and development.

Acknowledging that working in general practice is difficult at times and supporting the team to see the difference made to patients.
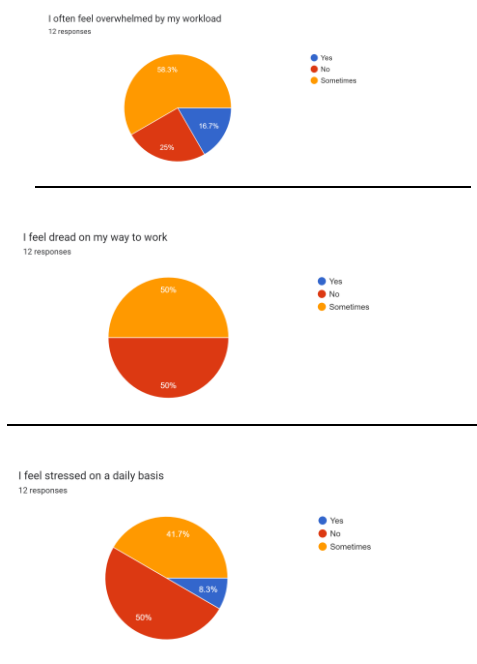
1-1's & Supervision

As a manager 1-1s often become overlooked when the workload rises. It was realised that without regular contact the team would become more distant and again morale would decrease. As a network we increased the team supervision time and supported peer to peer working which enabled greater understanding of people's roles and demands.

Implementation of MIND 'My Mental Health' Form

As well as standard 1-1's and appraisals, I adapted and introduced the 'My Mental Health' form from MIND and asked all employees to complete. This has been very well received and I as a manager have a much broader understanding of what to look out for in terms of potential burn out, stress and mental health issues within my team and how they would like me to approach them.

Outcomes from the PCN Staff Survey

I often feel overwhelmed by my workload
12 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

I feel dread on my way to work
12 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

I feel stressed on a daily basis
12 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

As highlighted above the outcomes from the initial PCN staff survey showed significant room for improvement in staff morale.

Understanding asking for support is not a weakness.

Many staff within the workforce have come from environments which have not been conducive to good working relationships and therefore have preconceived fears about discussing their concerns due to fear of repercussions. Breaking that mindset was very important and as a manager I spent hours with my staff members explaining how I had learnt from my mistakes and how I identified the learning outcomes.

Nurse Engagement Group

Being a nurse, I was keen to support the nurses within general practice. I set up a nurse engagement WhatsApp group which was used to inform nurses abut CPD, share policies, Updates and for general discussion as practice nursing can be isolating. We hold a MS Teams drop in session once a month to network with other nurses and arrange training and updates as requested. This has been a valuable platform in the post COVID recovery particularly with reference to reintroduction of spirometry. This is a non-judgement group and all participants views and opinions are respected.

Looking at the bigger picture

There is much more to consider when an employee is not performing to their usual standard or having additional sick leave than them just being unhappy at work.

You have to consider.

- Home Problems
- Mental Health
- Bereavement
- Family Issues
- Children
- Carers responsibilities
- Financial worries
- Relationship Problems

Whilst considering that we cannot always support with these issues it is key to understand external factors so you can thoroughly support the employee

Development of PCN Mental Health Support APP

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Due to many calls asking for signposting to support I created an app where all the key information could be found. Initially this was for my PCN and has now been expanded to a citywide offer via NCGPA.

This has links to financial support, NHS wellbeing and Samaritans. The app contains details of the Employee Assistance Programme and resources which they can use to monitor their own health and wellbeing.

Mental Health First Aid Offer

Managers and staff within the network were offered the opportunity to attend a 2-day mental health first aid course to equip them with the skills and knowledge to support their teams and colleagues. The overall feedback from this was positive and staff felt more empowered to have open and honest conversations with their teams and colleagues.

Results

Overall, after the implementation of the steps outlined there was an increase in staff retention and the outcomes of the post implementation staff survey showed and improvement in staff morale and sickness decreased across the network.

Staff are continuing to be encouraged to support their mental and physical health and the Balance App is free to NHS staff via the App store for 12 months.

We are implementing staff wellbeing days and hoping to collaborate with other PCN's to enable better networking opportunities and support for staff.

Finally, we are encouraging a simple Thank-you! The power of acknowledgement of someone's input, hard work and dedication is often overlooked. A simple Thank-you holds a lot of meaning in a difficult environment like General Practice.

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