Improving psychological support for staff

Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

The challenge
One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year. Such problems are thought to be one of the highest causes of sickness absence. At Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust one of the main reasons for referrals to occupational health is psychological illness.

In 2014, the decision was taken to use the trust’s in-house expertise to deliver better psychological support for staff.

What was done
Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust launched a staff wellbeing service in September 2014. Its aim was to develop a wide range of interventions that could support staff through emotional or psychological difficulties that impact on their functioning at work.

The service is delivered by professionals working within the trust’s mental health services. This means there is no need to outsource, and it also gives mental health staff a chance to further build their expertise.

The service was developed following a consultation to which more than 580 staff responded. Through the consultation process it became clear there was a demand for services beyond those traditionally offered. So rather than providing counselling alone, the service also includes guided self help, mindfulness and stress management training. An online self-help programme, along with an online forum about health and wellbeing, is available to all staff.

In addition, managers are being trained in how to spot signs of psychological distress in their staff.
The results

Within its first year of operation alone, the service had received 477 referrals. User feedback was good, with most saying their wellbeing had improved after using the service. 85 per cent of those who completed a questionnaire said they would definitely recommend the service to a friend or colleague, with the remaining 15 per cent saying they probably would.

Data suggests staff are now getting speedy access to psychological support: all referrals to the service having been triaged within two days of receipt.

“I think this service has helped me. I wouldn’t have gone and found support myself off my own back. So I’m very thankful to the trust for offering this service.”

“My motivation and enthusiasm is increased and I have lots of new ideas in work.”

Acknowledgements

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