

MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE HEALTH AND WORK DEVELOPMENT UNIT

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The Health and Work Development Unit is a partnership between the Faculty of Occupational Medicine and the Royal College of Physicians

Just over half of NHS Trusts have a mental wellbeing policy in place for staff, latest public health guidance audit results show.

Only 57% of NHS trusts have a mental wellbeing policy in place to support staff, according to new audit results from the Health and Work Development Unit (HWDU) at the Royal College of Physicians (RCP).

NHS trusts have a duty to their staff to support their health and wellbeing. NHS trusts rely on staff to deliver good quality healthcare to patients, but are not looking after the health of their own staff as well as they could be.

Figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) indicate that NHS workers in England took an estimated average of 9.5 working days off sick in 2012 – 2013. The Boorman review (November 2009) raised the importance of staff health when it identified that the health of staff has a direct impact on patient care. NHS trusts must take up the NICE guidance to support their staff if they are to deliver good care to patients.

73% of NHS trusts in England took part in the audit *Implementing NICE public health guidance for the workplace: a national organisational audit of NHS trusts in England*. This amounts to 862,365 (73%) of NHS staff in England. The audit measured how NHS trusts are progressing with implementation of NICE guidance for key public health topics – obesity, smoking cessation, physical activity, long-term sickness absence, and promoting mental wellbeing.

The audit shows that at board level there is an awareness of staff health and wellbeing; for example, all but two of the NHS Trusts participating in the audit have allocated a Board lead for staff health and wellbeing, usually the HR Director. However, less than half of all trust boards consider long term sickness absence alongside the health and wellbeing data so that a link can be made between the two.

It is a concern that nearly a quarter of NHS Trusts (24%) do not monitor their staff's mental wellbeing at all. Mental health is one of the leading causes, second to back pain, cited for long-term sickness absence amongst the NHS workforce.

Only 28% of trusts have a plan to tackle staff obesity levels. While 76% of organisations offer healthy food choices in staff restaurants, only 27% offer similar healthy food choices to those working night shifts.

Compared with 2010 the 2013 audit results show better performance on average but the range of results remains wide indicating that there is room for improvement in many trusts*. For example in 2010 only 13% of trusts had a plan for obesity compared with the 28% in 2013.

Dr Siân Williams, Clinical Director, HWDU said, *'The round two audit results show that there is acknowledgement of the importance of staff health and wellbeing in the NHS; but the results also show that there is wide variation and progress is slow. This is concerning given the evidence that NHS staff health influences patient outcomes, for example infection rates. There is room for improvement to ensure that organisations are providing the best support for their staff. The NICE guidance that we measured against is evidence-based, and so is a very good place to start for NHS Trusts' developing staff health and wellbeing strategies. In fact, I would urge all Trusts to familiarise themselves with it, because we anticipate further guidance from NICE about public health and the workplace next year.'*

Julie Pearce, Chief Nurse and Director of Quality & Operations, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, explains how they have engaged staff, patients, governors and the board of directors with their ‘We Care’ programme,

‘The aim of ‘We care’ is to inspire, develop and support every patient, every colleague, every day. In developing the programme we worked hard to make sure that staff health and wellbeing was a key part. We listened to 1500 staff and patients to find out what was most important to them identifying what’s good and what’s not so good about working for and being treated at the trust and what behaviours we should all sign up to working to in future. Our shared purpose is based on our three values: caring (patients and staff feel cared for as individuals), safe (patients and staff feel reassured and involved) and making a difference (patients and staff feel confident that we are making a difference). We are working towards ensuring that our values and behavioural standards shape everything we do and early signs suggest that there have been measurable improvements as a result of engaging staff and working together to change work-place culture.’

Notes to Editors

The Health and Work Development Unit (HWDU) is a partnership between the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) and the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) and works to support Occupational Health services and clinicians to measure and improve their practice.

Implementing NICE public health guidance for the workplace: a national organisational audit of NHS trusts in England round 2 was funded and supported by NHS Employers with additional funding from Public Health England.

This organisational audit is based on six pieces of guidance for the workplace, published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and represents evidence-based practice. The audit reports on round two data collected in 2013 and compares results with round one from 2010.

This audit uses self-reported data gathered through NHS trusts entering data that accurately reflect their policies and practices. For some questions on policy the audit included an ‘in development’ option to allow participating NHS trusts to demonstrate that they were taking action.

* Comparison of round one and round two results – see table.

Question	Round 2 (2013)	Round 1 (2010)
Participation in audit	73%	72%
Monitoring staff mental wellbeing	24%	26%
Have a plan to reduce levels of staff obesity	28%	13%
Health food choices in staff restaurant	76%	77%
Offer similar healthy food to staff on night shifts	27%	Question not asked

NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. The vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients. NHS Employers is part of the NHS Confederation.

The Faculty of Occupational Medicine aims to support healthy working lives through:

- maximising people’s opportunities to benefit from healthy and rewarding work while not putting themselves or others at unreasonable risk,
- elimination of preventable injury and illness caused or aggravated by work,
- providing access for everyone to advice from a competent occupational physician as part of comprehensive occupational health and safety services.