

Case Study: East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust Specialist Employment Service

The Five Year Forward View committed to the NHS leading the way as a progressive employer. NHS England and NHS Employers are now working together to support and encourage NHS organisations to develop local and national solutions to remove barriers and increase employment of people with a learning disability in the NHS, building on the work that is already happening across England. (1)

This is a case study from the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust working in partnership with the Specialist Employment Service from The Education People to employ more people with a learning disability as part of their pledge. This has resulted in two jobs being designed specifically for people with a learning disability, which has led to two successful job outcomes.



Values - why is this important?

NHS England and NHS Employers have launched a pledge to employ more people with a learning disability which local NHS organisations are being encouraged to sign up to. East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) was keen to support this pledge building on the work they have done with supported internships.

EKHFT understand that people with learning disabilities have many skills and talents to bring to the workplace and wanted to ensure that they were leading by example, exercising their Corporate Social Responsibility.

They also recognised that they needed to widen their talent pool and understood that this provided an opportunity to tap into a pool of undiscovered skills and abilities.

The Trust identified that employing more people with learning disabilities would have many benefits to them as an organisation, including:

- Supporting their work in improving the patient experience of people with learning disabilities, building on previous research they had commissioned on their supported internship provision (2).
- Improving the diversity of their workforce and reaping the benefits that this brings
- Demonstrating that they are a caring organisation so that they could be seen as an employer of choice

What are the challenges?

The employment rates for people with a learning disability in the UK are very low - 24% overall (3) and 5.7% when known to services, despite the country experiencing the highest levels of employment since records began.

In addition, they were addressing issues around levels of staff turnover, which they deemed unacceptable as this was leading to an increase in their recruitment costs (5). They were also not necessarily recruiting the right people to their job roles, subsequently impacting on levels of staff turnover.

EKHFT was keen to ensure that they were increasing the rates of employment for people with learning disabilities and recognised that they needed support to be able to make an effective and long-lasting contribution.

As a result, they formed a partnership with the Specialist Employment Service (6) to ensure they would have a more robust, stable and less transient workforce in the future, recognising that this highly renowned team from The Education People would be able to support them in developing their recruitment and retention practices to be more inclusive.

Solution

As a result of the partnership, the Specialist Employment Service designed, developed and delivered a programme of support to ensure EKHUFT was using the best practice model of supported employment as part of their recruitment and retention strategies.

This was achieved by working closely with Human Resources (HR) and a variety of departments across the Trust.

The programme of support was varied and ensured that both HR and the various departments understood the supported employment model, and the wider business benefits of a more diverse workforce which included disabled people. This also encompassed support for the Trust to become more disability confident.

Following this, they worked together to look at new recruitment strategies, using the Specialist Employment Service as a job-matching resource.

They also examined new strategies for designing job roles using supported employment techniques and reviewed their retention strategies with support from the Specialist Employment Service to ensure that they were effectively managing disabled staff through the potential changes within the Trust.

An eight-month programme of support was commissioned from the Specialist Employment Service and helped the Trust embed new recruitment and retention practices. Working interviews were introduced which provides people with a learning disability the opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

EKHUFT has entered into a long-term relationship with the Specialist Employment Service to support their new recruitment and retention strategies. The Team will now help the Trust to identify appropriate applicants prior to interview as well as ensuring that all parties are adequately prepared prior to any selection exercise.

The Specialist Employment Service also continues to support the Trust to retain new and existing disabled staff.

To date, two new posts have been designed specifically for people with a learning disability, a Ward Clerical Assistant, and a Renal Outpatients Administrative Assistant. Both posts were recruited to using a working interview approach, which was supported by the Specialist Employment Service. Other departments worked with include Phlebotomy, Pharmacy and Children's NeoNatal.

Feedback from the Trust has been very encouraging and has helped them to reflect on how to best support employees with a learning disability. As one member of staff said, "this has made us think about and apply what adaptations may be needed to recruit and sustain staff with learning disabilities."

For further information about this case study, please contact Alicia Moyles - Head of Service for the Specialist Employment Service - Alicia.moyles@theeducationpeople.org

- 1) <https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equalityhub/ld-emp-prog/>
- 2) <https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/about-us/people-with-learning-disabilities/brightfutures/>
- 3) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/workhealth-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack>
- 4) <http://www.nhsemployers.org/-/media/Employers/>
- 5) <https://www.theeducationpeople.org/our-expertise/specialist-employment>

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