1. Summary

Challenge and business need

A staggering 93% of Trusts experienced a shortage of nurses in 2015 – and we were no different.\(^1\)

With 7,200 staff serving a population of 530,000, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals (SWBH) NHS Trust is a vital service under constant stress. It faces ongoing challenges of recruiting/retaining staff and tackling escalating spend on temp-staff, all amid a workforce redeployment programme that’s successfully creating efficiencies but negatively impacting on morale.

In 2014, we launched our “2020 Vision,”\(^2\) designed to ensure the business is moving towards excellence. With a mission to “become renowned as the best integrated care organisation in the NHS,” its delivery is reliant on having a highly-engaged workforce. Therefore, it incorporates two critical objectives:

1. Achieve employee morale/engagement scores that are among the best in the NHS.
2. Reduce sickness rates, fill vacancies and reduce staff-turnover.

Performance against objectives

Although only launched in Oct-2016, our offering is already contributing to our 2020 Vision:

1-Achieve morale and employee engagement scores that are among the best in the NHS.

Our 2016 NHS National Staff Survey demonstrated improvements, including:

- “Does your organisation take positive action on health and well-being?”
  Those who answered ‘yes’ increased from 92% in 2015 to 93% in 2016, against an industry average of 92%.

- “During the last 12 months, have you felt unwell because of work-related stress?”
  Those who answered ‘yes’ reduced from 38% in 2015 to 34% in 2016, against an industry average of 34%.

2-Reduce sickness rates, fill vacancies and reduce staff turnover.

We’ve achieved the following improvements (all April-2016 vs. Jan-2017):

- Reduced sickness-absence from 4.9% to 4.5%.
- Filled 297 clinical roles, including 184 staff nurses.
- Reduced staff-turnover (exc. junior doctors) from 12.8% to 11.3%.
- Reduced staff-turnover for nurses from 13.6% to 11.6%.
- Reduced time to fill vacancies from 26 to 21 weeks.
2. Our Solution

To help us meet these objectives, April-2016 saw us develop SWBH Benefits. While we previously offered employee benefits, they were fragmented and without dedicated management/communication resources. However, with SWBH Benefits, our existing benefits, along with a wealth of new ones, are now managed in a single-platform, and supported by a dedicated team.

3. Strategy

The project is supported from the top of our organisation, with our Chief Exec, Toby Lewis, having an active involvement and reviewing performance summaries on a bi-monthly basis.

Similarly, it has the buy-in of the Trust’s board, with many members attending the launch event, and reviewing performance at Board meetings.

Overcoming challenges / managing communication

A key task of project team was the management of communication activities. This saw them engage our entire workforce, with a focus on physical engagement (rather than digital). Our core challenge was how to efficiently communicate with frontline staff. With 74% of our workforce spending 80% of their time away from their desk/PCs, we recognised from the outset that this was a key consideration and so we conducted the following:

- Running a launch event. Held in Oct-2016 at Sandwell Hospital, it was our largest ever staff event, with 1,000+ attendees. And by linking it to our annual flu vaccination campaign, we successfully vaccinated 300 staff in a single day.
- Appointing 150 ‘Communication Champions’; advocates who conduct visits to wards, clinics and departments, enabling people to sign-up to the benefits portal there and then.
- A bi-monthly printed H&W newsletter.
- Daily staff memo promoting upcoming employee benefits and H&W events.
- Displaying H&W flyers in communal areas.

PROJECT DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT

To ensure the efficient design/development our new benefits package, 2016 saw us create the new position of Head of Employee Benefits and Engagement, recruiting seasoned specialist Amir Ali and marking the first time we’ve had a dedicated role for managing our benefits offering.

Amir is supported by a benefits team consisting of:

- Director of Communications, Ruth Wilkin.
- Director of Organisation Development, Raffaela Goodby.
- Health and Wellbeing Manager, Jenny Wright.
Additional support is provided by internal departments, including Occupational Health, Medical Illustration, and Internal Communications, as well as The Personal Group.

4. Implementation

Following six-months of development with Personal Group, Oct-2016 saw us launch our new benefits package, portal and app, with benefits including:

- Smoking cessation
- Alcohol/drug support
- Weight management
- Exercise classes
- Eye tests
- Chiropody
- Immunisations
- Physiotherapy
- Counselling
- Finance/debt management
- Stress management
- Retirement planning
- Staff lottery
- Library services
- NEW: Will writing
- NEW: Nationwide discount scheme offering 6,500+ discounts
- NEW: Local discount scheme with 40 regional-partners
- Salary-sacrifice schemes for:
  - Cycle to work
  - Cars
  - Childcare vouchers
  - Car-parking
  - NEW: Smartphones and home technology

INNOVATIONS

Our offering has been hailed as “unique, innovative and sector-leading” by The Personal Group, thanks to:

- FREE ACCESS: Unlike many NHS benefit offerings, we provide staff with free access to a bespoke platform, with costs being absorbed by salary sacrifice savings.

- APP: To target hard to reach staff, we created a mobile app to provide all staff with easy access on the go, and to promote initiatives through push notifications.
**ELECTRONIC REFERRALS:** By working with software specialists North 51, we’ve become the FIRST TRUST IN THE COUNTRY to introduce an electronic referral system for all four key lifestyle elements (healthy eating, weight management, alcohol/drug support, and smoking cessation). This enables us to automatically issue staff and patient referral requests to local consultant partners, in turn improving efficiency/lead times.

**LAUNCH EVENT**

Oct-2016 saw us launch SWBH Benefits with our biggest ever staff event. Held at Sandwell Hospital, 1,000+ staff attended, and by linking it to our annual flu vaccination campaign, we successfully vaccinated 300 staff – the most we’ve ever delivered on a single day.

The event featured a variety of stalls to showcase our benefits, and we ran competitions to engage staff, with anyone who attended the event, received a flu jab, or signed up to the app being entered to win prizes including tablets, TVs and laptops.

**5. Results**

Although only launched in Oct-2016, our offering is already contributing to our 2020 Vision:

**1-Achieve morale and employee engagement scores that are among the best in the NHS.**

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**2-Reduce sickness rates, fill vacancies and reduce staff turnover.**

We’ve achieved the following improvements (all April-2016 vs. Jan-2017):

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We’re also performing well against project-specific objectives, including:
- Achieve 1,000+ sign-ups to the benefits portal: achieved 2,500+
- Achieve 100+ sign-ups to the benefits app: achieved 177
- Have 300+ staff attend the launch event: achieved 1,000+
- Conduct 100+ flu jabs at launch event: achieved 300+
- Immunise 75% of frontline staff against flu: achieved 81%