

Best Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Winner

NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit

The NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit (MLCSU), a team of more than 1,800 experts, supports 10 of the NHS' health and social care systems. Responsible for getting the maximum possible value from its £14.9 billion commissioning budget, the unit ensures that the region gets the healthcare resources it needs, without a penny wasted.

Its work is vitally important, yet after two years of hell for the NHS, staff wellbeing, motivation, morale and mental health have never been more at stake.

The MLCSU needed a first-class health and wellbeing strategy immediately. With the greatest threat of burnout coming straight after a crisis, it could not afford to wait.

The strategy its HR team devised worked on two levels. A strong data-based preventative element, with buy-in from leadership, would help empower employees to take care of themselves and reduce the threat of burnout. The team would also implement practical interventions to support employees on issues that did arise.

Vitally, both levels were based on a strong basis of employee feedback. This approach is exemplified in the MLCSU's move to remote working. Taking a weekly temperature check it found that employees, who had all moved to homeworking during the pandemic, were struggling to take breaks and found themselves working longer hours.

Immediately, it stepped into action. The MLCSU managing director began sending regular all-staff communications, emphasising the importance of breaks, and sharing how he ensures he takes his breaks.



The psychological pressure to work longer lessened and the HR team made concrete actions, setting up virtual coffee and lunch clubs to share practical tips for taking breaks and desk exercises.

This intervention is just one of many facilitated by the weekly temperature

checks. Dedicated mental health support was also high on employees' priority lists.

The MLCSU team trained a team of mental health first aiders. It built a training and education campaign to help managers and employees better understand remote working, resilience, and physical fitness; opened blogs, intranet forums, and weekly wellbeing sessions to discuss wellbeing tips and resources, and it built health and wellbeing into one-to-one and appraisal documents.

It embedded these changes as a golden thread throughout the organisation, enlisting Health and Wellbeing Champions to push from below and members of the board

to role model and communicate healthy behaviours from above.

MLCSU's efforts paid off. In its latest staff survey, the organisation saw the number of people saying they had felt ill because of work-related stress drop. Almost all (92%) said they did not feel pressured by their manager to come to work when ill, and that they felt empowered to take informed decisions about their health (94%).

Significantly, too, the number of days lost due to stress, anxiety, or depression plummeted by 18% between March 2021 and June 2022.

What is remarkable about this strategy, labelled outstanding by judges, was that it was delivered on a shoestring budget by a generalist team, driven by a passion for its people.

Judges praised its clear focus on the business issue at hand and the engagement at every angle with its end goal of providing top-quality services to patients. **HR**

Highly commended

SoftServe

Shortlisted

Suez Recycling & Recovery UK

The First Mile

Weir Minerals Europe

Yodel