Improving the health of the NHS workforce: what needs to be done

Dr Justin Varney
Interim Deputy Director of Health and Wellbeing (Healthy People)
justin.varney@phe.gov.uk
Why does workplace health matter?

Direct cost to business
• Sickness absence
• Productivity loss
• Recruitment costs

Adults in work spend over a third of their waking hours in the workplace

Adults are living longer with more complex health needs but need economic security
“All organisations routinely say that ‘people are our greatest asset’. Yet few practice what they preach, let alone truly believe it. Organisations have to market membership as much as products and services – and perhaps more.”

Peter Drucker (1992)
Drivers in the NHS

Sickness absence/Agency costs

Ageing technical/professional workforce

Increasing pressures of resource vs. demand and need to support individual resilience

Healthier & engaged staff = Better patient outcomes
The NHS Workforce

Multi-disciplinary, diverse, highly skilled, professional workforce
Highlight motivated by their work
Diverse work patterns including shift and remote/ sole practitioner working
Over 1.2 million people directly employed by NHS organisations
Primary & secondary care organisations range from very large to micro employers
The health of the NHS workforce

Routine data
• Sickness absence data
• NHS staff survey
• NHS Occ. Health data

Survey and research data
Key issues are the same for all businesses

- Stress and mental wellbeing
- Musculoskeletal disease
- Chronic disease

Stress and mental wellbeing
Musculoskeletal disease
Chronic disease
Improving NHS workplace health

Commitment in the 5 Year Forward View to improving the health of the NHS workforce

NHS England and PHE collaborating to support national and local action

Lots of local support through local public health teams & programmes

Investment in 12 NHS pilots covering primary and secondary care in England

Pilots are working on a range of areas including accreditation through the workplace wellbeing charter, tackling staff obesity, stopping smoking, improving food in hospitals, promoting physical activity, physiotherapy for MSK problems, mindfulness and counselling and NHS Health Checks
Prevention
Early intervention
Treatment and management

Good access to expert clinical advice and treatment through multidisciplinary NHS Occ Health

Using the Workplace Wellbeing Charter to implement NICE guidelines on workplace health
Mental health & stress
Healthy eating
Physical activity
Health & safety
Smoking
Alcohol & substance misuse

NHS Staff Weight Management pilots

NHS health check for NHS Staff
One You national campaign

Line Manager training to improve communication, engagement and support for staff
NHS Health Check for NHS Staff

NHS Health Check remains targeted at 40-74yr olds

Further development work planned for an induction health check for new starters to provide structured offer for those under 40yrs

Pilots including testing new modules on mental health and lower back pain

Most of the 12 are delivering NHS Health checks in-house, through OH

2 trusts offer enhanced checks, incorporating whole NHS Health Check, but add other elements. 1 offers liver screening tests for a select few individuals that meet certain criteria

All the 12 trusts are building in pathways for extra support for health checks, with additional activities to refer staff into

Evaluation to understand the model for different NHS settings
Learning so far

Significant appetite for action to improve staff health and wellbeing

Some investment needed to enable IT pathways

In-house provision seems to be landing well with staff and promoting understanding and awareness of NHS OH services

Process is building stronger connections with the local support offer

**Providing a safe space for NHS staff to talk about their own health needs**
‘People aren’t our greatest asset, they are our only asset’
Improving the health of the NHS workforce: what needs to be done

Dr Justin Varney
Interim Deputy Director of Health and Wellbeing (Healthy People)
justin.varney@phe.gov.uk
Further resources
Further support and information

**Workplace Wellbeing Charter**

- Provides a simple road map for employers to implement the NICE guidelines and access local support services and share good practice with others
- National standard for the Charter which is commissioned & delivered locally
- Where there isn’t a local provider NHS Trusts can buy in the process from another local authority funded provider, local authorities provide the QA for the accreditors
- Website has toolkits to help support businesses of all sizes to take action, just launched new toolkits on healthy eating, smoking, alcohol and dementia

**PHE Employer Campaign Toolkits**

- PHE provides free online resources for businesses to adapt national campaigns to their local business and build on the national activity.
- New national campaign for adults launching at the start of March which focuses on seven key aspects of our lives: stress, inactivity, sleep, diet, smoking, alcohol, checking yourself

[http://www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk](http://www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk)

[http://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources](http://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources)
Further support and information

NHS Employers Work and Wellbeing Resources
Specific NHS tailored resources, case studies of best practice and resources on managing sickness absence

NHS Health at Work Network
http://www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/
NHS Health at Work is the network of occupational health teams dedicated to ensuring that the NHS has a healthy, motivated workforce that is able to provide the best possible patient care.

NHS Choices Workplace Health Resources
http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/workplacehome.aspx
Lots of free resources from preventing back pain and RSI to returning to work after a period of mental ill health

NICE Guidelines for Workplaces
https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/settings/workplaces
Support available

**Health and Safety Executive**  http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/

- Stress Management standards are a very good place to start and provide a good framework to approaching the issue.

**RCN Healthy Workplace, Healthy You**  
http://www2.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/campaigns/healthy-workplace

- The Healthy Workplace project supports health care employers and RCN workplace representatives to create good working environments with high quality employment practices.

**TUC Resources on Workplace Wellbeing**  https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues

- Range of resources from a trade union perspective to support employers and employees

**Living Wage**  http://www.livingwage.org.uk

- National campaign to promote the living wage
- Accreditation requires paying directly paid staff the living wage and working towards including this as a procurement requirement.