

Making positive change to staff wellbeing and culture at Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



Summary

Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) is an NHS provider serving a population of over 300,000 people in the North-West of England. Over 4000 staff work across two sites and the Trust provides half a million appointments, procedures and stays in hospital each year. Their mission is to be outstanding for their patients, their communities and each other. The COVID-19 Pandemic brought a range of challenges to the Trust, including the significant impact on staff health and wellbeing.

In late 2020, Creating Compassion was commissioned to provide 500 places on its online Public Sector Self-Compassion at Work Programme (the Programme) to Trust staff. Any member of staff was able to access the automated programme at any time and were actively encouraged to do so by the Trust.

This is what Rebecca Patel, Associate Chief People Officer at the Trust, said about the Programme:

“Having the Public Sector Self-Compassion at Work programme has enabled the hospital to have a renewed focus on wellbeing and compassion at arguably the most challenging period in the NHS’s history. The programme has provided opportunities for staff who would not normally access these types of programmes to learn at a pace to suit themselves and to make positive changes to our organisational culture.”

The Challenge

Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provide a wide range of services from A&E to vascular surgery across their hospital sites and in the local community. The climate in which they are operating is significantly challenging due to the increased pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to impact currently. Due to additional workloads and extreme operational pressure, staff were more inclined to neglect their own emotional and wellbeing needs. The Trust was seeking an easily accessible, cost-effective solution to support the psychological wellbeing of their staff and to help build a more supportive organisational culture.

It was important that any solution did not impact significantly on work or personal time but could be embedded into day-to-day activities. Having considered a range of services the Trust decided that the Public Sector Self-Compassion at Work Programme provided a valuable solution.

The Solution

International research evidence shows that when the three core components of Self-Compassion (Self-Kindness, Common Humanity and Mindfulness) are developed, individuals see an increase in, amongst other factors, their emotional resilience, happiness and compassion for others. Benefits in decreased stress, compassion fatigue and burnout are also achieved. This is particularly important in healthcare where the inherent challenges of providing high-quality, compassionate care are pronounced and staff are particularly vulnerable to burnout compounded by the past two years of the Pandemic.

The Public Sector Self-Compassion at Work Programme is an evidence-based online intervention that provides a full grounding in the theory and practice of self-compassion. It delivers four webinars along with deepening exercises and practical tips to introduce and embed self-compassion into everyday life. In a randomised waitlist control trial, this Programme has shown significant improvements in mental wellbeing, stress and burnout in a large sample of healthcare professionals.

Creating Compassion provided access to the online Programme, organisational specific briefing material and a discount code to the Trust's Human Resources team that could be distributed as part of the Health and Wellbeing offer to staff at any level, in any role. As the Trust invested in a large number of places on the Programme, these were provided at a discounted rate.

The benefits

Since the Programme has been introduced, the Trust has seen:

- A renewed focus on health and wellbeing experienced across the Trust with large numbers of staff accessing the Programme.
- Staff have said the Programme opened their eyes to how critical they are of themselves and helped them to pause and reflect differently in those instances.
- Staff have felt more confident to focus on their own resilience and found the Programme's exercises useful to draw upon as coping mechanisms.
- Participants commented that they have felt less overwhelmed by their emotions and have been able to react differently as a result.
- Staff have felt able to better support their colleagues.

More information

For further information about the Public Sector Self-Compassion at Work Programme please visit www.creatingcompassion.com/public-sector-self-compassion-at-work-programme