



happier@work

End of project briefing note: May 2014

We spend one third of our lives, and half of our waking hours, at work.

Given that startling statistic, creating optimal conditions for happier working lives seems a worthwhile aspiration – for individuals, teams and organisations. Since November 2011, King's Health Partners has been running happier@work, a programme aimed at improving staff well-being within the context of the challenging realities of NHS working life.

What happened in the first year?

A small group of King's Health Partners' staff from a range of disciplines including clinical services, HR, occupational health and mental health promotion, worked with 7 teams to discover what it's really like to work at King's Health Partners - and to create a realistic picture of what might help to improve staff well-being.

Each of the seven King's Health Partners teams was involved in exploring the factors that have an impact on employee well-being. They participated in a group process called a mental well-being impact assessment (MWIA) and each team was also 'job-shadowed' to document the day-to-day experience of working on a particular ward, in a clinic or for a specialist health service.

What was discovered?

Through this careful and collaborative process of exploration, a very clear and compelling picture of working life across King's Health Partners was built up. A series of team action plans were drawn up and some very moving and powerful stories were told. Most importantly, many examples of great working practice were highlighted.

Some of the findings from the initial process of discovery were pretty obvious. King's Health Partners' employees are caring, compassionate and highly motivated - but in relation to workplace well-being, there is room for improvement.

Many staff are feeling the psychological effects of increasing demands, larger and more complex workloads, and less control over their work. Poor support systems, faulty equipment and ineffective procedures are adding to the stress of patient and systemic demands. Staff also reported feeling less recognition and appreciation for their efforts. As a result, team dynamics, mental health and work/life balance are being adversely affected.

King's Health Partners' employees are strongly motivated by the need to 'make a difference' but staff reported that morale was being undermined - an unintended consequence of delivering on key performance indicators which seem to contradict their ambitions to provide the very best of patient care.

What happened next?

These are complex issues. They can't be dealt with in isolation by tweaking a process here or procedure there, within a single team or organisation. Systemic improvements will take time and collective effort across a broad landscape of factors that contribute to well-being at work. King's Health Partners is committed to making a start. As a result, between October 2012 and March 2013, a range of new pilot initiatives appeared under the banner '**happier@work**'.

These new initiatives were easily identified by a distinctive multi-coloured logo – the **happier@work** wheel of well-being. The logo has been designed to represent the integrated nature of well-being: a visual reminder that well-being includes body, mind, spirit, people, place and planet.



Each **happier@work** initiative focused on improvements at one of three levels of well-being: individual, group/team and structural/organisational and each was designed with a focus on starting conversations that challenge us to change. Activities highlighted particular themes like 'managing for staff well-being' and 'developing practical skills for peace of mind'.

They included courses on mental health awareness and stress-awareness and training in mindfulness, as well as a project called 'Creating Space for Well-being' and a series of 'Leading Lights' seminars.

How did staff get involved?

Staff were regularly invited to take part through staff e-bulletins, cross-project promotion and word-of-mouth. As the project grew in recognition, employees also began contacting the project team directly for info.

Project activities year 2012-13:

happier @work THEME	INITIATIVE	Open to	Self reported outcomes
Masterclasses for managing staff well-being (1 x full day)	8 Mental health awareness workshops 81 participants	Managers of staff	56% increase in confidence 55% increase in knowledge 98% approval rating 74% better able to support their team 6-9 months later
Practical skills for peace of mind (1 x 3hr sessions)	6 Stress- awareness workshops 62 participants	all KHP staff	63% increase in confidence 69% increase in knowledge 96% approval rating 68% better able to manage stress 5-8 months later
Practical skills for peace of mind (8 x 2 hr weekly sessions)	7 Mindfulness training programmes 96 participants	all KHP staff	66% more mindful 74% more choices in dealing with stress 57% kinder to themselves 3-6 months later
happier@work -	2 Leading Light Seminars	all KHP	No evaluations

people (1.5 hr twilight presentation)	93 participants	staff	
Happier@work - place (9 month programme)	Creating Spaces for well-being 3 teams were given a small budget and support form an artist to make changes to work spaces to enhance well-being	3 KHP teams	Evaluation pending

Evaluating success

A formal evaluation was undertaken by London Southbank University (LSBU). Project participants completed an initial baseline survey, 183 (52%), and a follow-up survey, 71 (20%). Whilst the indicators of well-being improved and indicators of mental ill health decreased the sample size is too small to be conclusive. However LSBU concluded that, “despite the methodological difficulties of this evaluation, the results would suggest that well-designed employee well-being interventions that are integrated into the workplace could help increase the well-being of employees...”

Measure	Baseline	Follow up	Effect
Well-being	60% lower than average well-being	53% lower than average well-being	7% increase in well-being
Psychological health	35% threshold for minor psychiatric disorder	16% threshold for minor psychiatric disorder	19% reduction in minor psychiatric disorder
Sickness absence			Reduction in time taken off in last 2 weeks but no significant difference
Productivity (burnout)	21.8% average time limited performance	14.7% average time limited performance	7.1% reduction in average time limited performance
Employee satisfaction			15% increase in those who would recommend their trust as a place to work

Mainstreaming of the programme

In 2013/14, based on the success of the pilot, further funding was secured through King’s Health Partners to continue the programme benefitting an additional 150 staff. This year (2014/15) the interventions are being funded by individual KHP training departments. Kent County Council has also commissioned a happier@work programme for their staff, which commenced in January 2014.

If you would like to discuss the **happier@work** project, please contact tony.coggins@slam.nhs.uk

Why **happier@work**?

There is compelling body of international evidence that links our happiness with longer lives, better mental and physical health, stronger relationships and a range of other psychological, social and economic benefits. While it is slowly finding its way into public policy, another growing body of evidence is showing that people who experience more positive emotions at work demonstrate better performance, less absenteeism and more positive relationships with colleagues.

In the US, Professor Barbara Frederickson's research into high-performing business teams has gained international attention because of the powerful links it has discovered between high levels of positive emotions and more creative problem-solving, improved performance, better team communication and greater resilience in times of adversity.

In addition, research is showing that people who are more satisfied with work are more likely to help others – and their organisation – outside their regular job roles.

Workplace well-being

The bad news...

Work-related stress, anxiety and depression are the most frequent cause of days off work

9.8 million days lost in UK in 2009/10
(Health and Safety Executive, 2010)

- 1 UK businesses lose £1035 a year as a result of mental health problems for every person they employ (NICE 2009)
- 1 Mental health problems cost UK businesses £28.3 billion per year (NICE 2009)

and the good news...

There's a lot we can do. According to the Department of Health (2011):

- 1 Early detection and treatment of depression at work saves £5 for each £1 spent
- 1 Mental health promotion at work saves £10 for each £1 spent after 1 year

KING'S HEALTH PARTNERS' **happier@work** programme has taken this evidence as a starting point to design innovative and cost-effective solutions to improving well-being at work.