

# A happy, healthy workplace



Workforce wellbeing,  
recruitment and retention in  
mental health services

NATIONAL  
COLLABORATING  
CENTRE FOR  
MENTAL HEALTH

A BREAKTHROUGH INITIATIVE  
**POSITIVE**  
*Practice*  
Mental Health Collaborative

## **The Positive Practice in Mental Health (PPiMH) Collaborative**

The PPiMH is a user-led multi-agency collaborative of 75 organisations including NHS trusts, clinical commissioning groups, police forces, third-sector providers, front-line charities and service user groups. Its aim is to identify and disseminate positive practice in mental health services by working together across organisations and sectors, to facilitate shared learning and raise the profile of mental health with politicians and other policy makers.

Practice is shared through special interest groups, events, the National Mental Health Awards and virtual networks, as well as through a national online guide to mental health services:  
[www.positivepracticemhdirectory.org](http://www.positivepracticemhdirectory.org).

Free mental health awareness training and support is provided to members of parliament (MPs), and they are included in roundtables with PPiMH members to ensure that MPs are as well informed as possible about mental health issues.

For more information about the PPiMH Collaborative, see [www.positivepracticemh.com](http://www.positivepracticemh.com).

## **The National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (NCCMH)**

The NCCMH is a collaboration between the Royal College of Psychiatrists and University College London that develops guidance for NHS England and NICE. The NCCMH works with a variety of stakeholders, including world leading academics, clinicians and people with lived experience to produce a range of products, including mental health care pathways that promote timely and equal access to effective treatment and health care.

Each pathway comprises an implementation guide and helpful resources, with examples of good practice. NCCMH also produces national guidance for commissioners and providers of mental health services on how the pathways can be implemented and how benchmarks can be achieved, as well as independent systematic reviews, competence frameworks and service evaluations.

For more information about the NCCMH see [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/nccmh.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/nccmh.aspx).



## A happier, healthier workforce

The health and wellbeing of healthcare professionals is fundamental for the provision of high-quality mental health care. If you experience a mental health issue that requires treatment, you will receive better care if the person providing it feels appreciated and acknowledged in their work.

An effective, safe, compassionate and sustainable workforce requires motivated and skilled staff who are physically and mentally healthy enough to do their job. Organisations that act to improve staff health and wellbeing help make staff feel valued, supported and engaged in their work. Good staff health improves morale, job satisfaction and wellbeing, and is related to improved safety and experience of care, as well as reduced costs.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence indicates that staff burnout is a substantial problem in mental health services<sup>2</sup> and about 43% of mental health staff cite work related stress as a reason for sickness absence.<sup>3</sup>

Published in 2017, [Thriving at work: Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers](#) sets out six recommendations that all organisations should implement to improve mental health at work, and a further four specifically for large private sector organisations and the public sector. NHS England then published a [framework](#) to be used by employers to support their employees' health and wellbeing.

This report sits alongside these publications to give practical help and highlight some of the excellent initiatives being undertaken across mental health services, in the NHS, in the voluntary sector and emergency services, to address the serious challenges we face in tackling sickness absence, work related stress and staff retention.

Positive associations between staff wellbeing, job satisfaction and job performance are clear. Improving staff engagement, and ensuring that staff are well supported by peer and occupational health support, will lead to better quality of care and better outcomes for people using services, while saving service costs in the longer term.<sup>4 5</sup>

Factors that can contribute to staff support and wellbeing include: effective, regular clinical supervision<sup>a</sup> with an appropriately trained professional; training and continued professional development; and organisational culture. All

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<sup>a</sup> A formal but collaborative relationship in which an individual staff member provides an honest and open account of their work and the supervisor offers feedback and guidance, with the aim of developing the staff member's competences in line with current ethical and professional standards.

education and supervision should focus on the skills and resilience necessary to manage the emotional aspects of healthcare work and build positive therapeutic relationships.<sup>6</sup>

Employers should do all that they can to make workplaces flexible and supportive of people's lives, including consideration given to ease of parking, childcare (for example the provision of crèches) and journeys to work (for example car pools). Employers can also work in partnership with local authorities and sports organisations to provide cheap and easy access to physical health activities.

In order to have a healthy and happy workforce, organisations need to be able to recruit great staff and should use innovative ways to do this, including pop-up recruitment events such as Sussex Partnership's fish and chips recruitment event by the sea, harnessing the creativity and enthusiasm of staff to attract people to work in mental health services.

This report contains seven recommendations on the key aspects of staff health and wellbeing, with positive practice examples from services that embody each recommendation, illustrating how they achieve these goals through their culture and initiatives. Please note that these are just some of the available examples of positive practice in these areas – for further information on the services listed and others, visit the [Positive Practice Mental Health Service Directory](#).

# Recommendations

## Recommendation 1: Organisation culture

Organisations should work to embed a culture of staff wellbeing within their services. Health and wellbeing should inform and drive organisational culture. Visions and values should be clear, meaningful and embraced by the whole service. Organisations should aim for an open, honest, transparent, collaborative and compassionate culture which values the mental and physical wellbeing of their staff. This will be driven from a good leadership culture that models these values.



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## Recommendation 2: Support

Organisations should ensure that staff have easy access to a range of support and treatment, for example counselling services and occupational health support. Regular supervision with a suitably trained professional is a fundamental part of this support and should be available to all staff. Organisations should provide a safe and confidential



environment for staff to reflect on and discuss their work, and their personal and professional responses to work. The values of an organisation should embed health and wellbeing support from trust and board level.

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## Recommendation 3: Communication

Organisations should have a clear, comprehensive communication strategy which seeks to maximise staff engagement. Organisations should ensure communication is used a means to inform, engage, listen to staff, and together explore ways of improving their mental health and wellbeing.



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## Recommendation 4: Engagement

Organisations should have a clear strategy for engaging their staff in their work and the wider organisation, including shared values and goals.



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## Recommendation 5. Training and development

Organisations should invest in training and education for their workforce and provide high-quality appraisals for staff, investing in their development and recognising their achievements.



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## Recommendation 6: Monitoring and improvement

Organisations should work towards improving the working lives of staff, regularly monitoring and measuring staff health and wellbeing to ensure continuous improvement.



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## Recommendation 7: Recruitment

Organisations should look at different ways to recruit staff, including the use of social media, visits to universities, colleges and schools, and the introduction of childcare support via shared crèche facilities



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## **Recommendation 1: organisational culture**

*Organisations should work to embed a culture of staff wellbeing within their services. Health and wellbeing should inform and drive organisational culture. Visions and values should be clear, meaningful and embraced by the whole service. Organisations should aim for an open, honest, transparent, collaborative and compassionate culture which values the mental and physical wellbeing of their staff. This will be driven from a good leadership culture that models these values.*

### **Positive practice in mental health example: Langley Green Hospital – Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

Sussex Partnership Trust believe that supported staff means happy staff. They are committed to 100% supervision rates each month, and don't ignore the power of a simple thank you and a box of chocolates. This sits alongside weekly development programmes and monthly learning forums, which drive a learning culture, not a blaming one.



Sussex Partnership's implementation of the leader/leader model at Langley Green has inverted the traditional organisational hierarchy, with power and responsibility distributed throughout. Every staff member is supported and invested in, and the programme is role modelled from the leadership team down, with management doing shifts in large numbers, being very present on the wards and having open door policies. Time is taken for informal support, and to smile, say hello and say thank you.

Langley Green have reduced agency use, with one ward being agency-free, and have saved £25,000 in just 2 months through reduced hours at the end of 2017.

Sickness levels have decreased, with one ward having 2 months of 0% sickness. Supervision levels never fall below 90%, and there are regular forums to learn from, in ways that do not place blame (as can sometimes be the case in 'learning lessons forums') as well as a weekly development programme. Away-days are held every 3 months, allowing teams to reflect on their vision and

priorities for that period. Further initiatives by Langley Green can be found in the [Support](#), [Communication](#), [Engagement](#) and [Recruitment](#) sections.

### **Positive practice in mental health example: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust – Wearing 2 Hats**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, through their staff survey and examining their sickness data, found that poor mental health was one of the main reasons for working days lost, and that they could be doing more for staff wellbeing.

In response to this, they established an initiative called Wearing 2 Hats (W2H). This programme supports staff with long-term conditions in mental or physical health, staff who care for loved ones, managers who are supporting staff with lived experience, and the organisation as a whole to be more a more compassionate and caring place to work.



*W2H is developing our culture and interactions so we are more supportive, better equipped and not afraid to have positive conversations about mental health and any other long-term condition.*

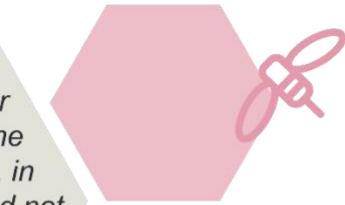
– Sharon Gilfoyle,  
Head of Inclusion

There are three work streams: peer support, policies and procedures, and anti-stigma. The work is fully supported by the Trust's chief executives and senior leaders. The group have worked in partnership with human resources to develop and review policies, and have also developed a checklist and practical guidelines for managers supporting staff who are experiencing mental health problems.

They have also been instrumental in working towards a reciprocal agreement to ensure staff can access inpatient support in a neighbouring trust.

The W2H group is part of the support network that keeps people well and at work. A 'buddy' scheme has also been added – an initiative that evolved out of the Wearing 2 Hats group – and is designed to provide a listening ear to colleagues within the Trust who have their own mental health challenges, or are in work but may be having a particularly bad day.

*I was fortunate to be involved in the W2H and peer support groups almost from the beginning and having them within the Trust has helped it to feel a lot more human and supportive than other Trusts I have worked for. It has given me the opportunity to support colleagues and (...) I, in turn, have benefited from that listening ear and not felt the least bit stigmatised or disrespected for having the need. It has also exposed me to others in the organisation who really care about their colleagues and encouraged me that despite it being a huge organisation we can, little by little, influence it for the better.*



*I am so thrilled that we have developed our W2H forum, I am able to be open and honest about my mental health challenges in a safe, welcoming and compassionate environment.*

### **Positive practice in mental health example: Mersey Fire and Rescue Service (MF&RS)**

MF&RS mental health leads have developed and embedded initiatives within the service to reduce the stigma attached to mental health problems, and to enable staff to speak more openly and access help and support, as and when required. They are committed to offering their staff the same support for their mental health and wellbeing as they do for their physical health, so each year they continue to build and improve on their current psychological wellbeing initiatives. Further initiatives by MF&RS can be found in the [Engagement](#) section.



## **Recommendation 2: support**

*Organisations should ensure that staff have easy access to a range of support and treatment, for example counselling services and occupational health support.*

*Regular supervision with a suitably trained professional is a fundamental part of this support and should be available to all staff. Organisations should provide a safe and confidential environment for staff to reflect on and discuss their work, and their personal and professional responses to work.*

*The values of an organisation should embed health and wellbeing support from trust and board level.*

### **Positive practice in mental health examples: Mersey Care Foundation NHS Trust – Health & Wellbeing @ Work**

Mersey Care recognise that the health of their staff will impact on how they deliver perfect care to their patients. The Trust has an extensive Employee Health and Wellbeing @ Work offer which includes a wide range of interventions to support the psychological, physical and financial needs of their staff. The offer has been developed following a comprehensive health needs assessment of the workforce, which in turn has informed the key health and wellbeing principles within their Organisational People Plan.

Historically, the Trust had internal occupational health and staff support services as stand-alone models. Following a review in 2014, with investment from their board, the stand-alone services were restructured to provide staff with a 360-degree model of health and wellbeing.



*As a Trust we strive to deliver ‘perfect patient care’. However, we acknowledge that without our staff, our greatest asset, our ultimate delivery aims cannot be achieved. – Amanda J Smith, Head of Health & Wellbeing, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust*

This means that staff can access a range of support and clinicians to help them with their physical and mental health. The employee assistance programme (EAP) ensures that staff have easy access to services such as occupational health, physiotherapy and psychological support, as well as ensuring that human resources are aware and the individual is being supported in their work.



*This support to our staff has a direct impact on the care we offer to our patients and service users as if our employees are well they are able to support them effectively. The analogy of putting one's own oxygen mask on to enable us to help others is clear, especially within the NHS with current pressures at work.*

— Amanda J Smith, Head of Health & Wellbeing, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust



*I've accessed counselling and physiotherapy in the last 3 months - both were hard and painful at times, however I feel like a new person and been able to stay in work – thank you.*

The cohesion between the different services has been key, as an individual may require support from more than one at a time. Services work individually, but there is a dialogue between departments that exists under the Health and Wellbeing at Work umbrella.

### Positive practice in mental health example: NAViGO

Over the past year, NAViGO have promoted EAP services to their staff, comprising advice for a wide range of subjects including life coaching, family matters, finance and counselling services. They have also established links with Open Minds IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) for direct referrals for staff. For more complex and sensitive cases, they have recently expanded their confidential services to include a direct referral to a highly experienced counsellor independent of their organisation.

Occupational Health is now also able to refer staff directly to NAViGO's 'Simply You' holistic therapy services, to help staff manage mental and physical health

problems including long-term and acute conditions. They provide therapies such as reiki, reflexology and aromatherapy; staff who book therapies for relaxation receive a 10% discount on already below-average prices, and staff referred through Occupational Health receive the service free of charge. For example, one person who was unwell for a long time following a cancer diagnosis regularly received a variety of relaxing massage and reiki treatments. They reported that the treatments helped them immensely over this low period. Further initiatives by NAViGO can be found in the [Communication](#) section.

### **Positive practice in mental health example: The TEWV Employee Support Service – Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust**

The TEWV Employee Support Service team provides support to members of staff who are unwell to help them engage with the organisation. Their service covers an area of 4,000 square miles following the expansion of its boundary when it merged with York and Selby in 2016, and the team travels to see people at a location of their choice. The service can be entered through several routes, including self-referral (staff can refer without their manager's knowledge), manager referral, via the Sickness Absence Team or via Occupational Health who can refer staff with enduring physical, medical or mental health problems.

Some staff lose confidence when they are unwell, which can have a big impact, especially when they are unwell due to their mental health. The team helps them regain their confidence, and reconnects them to the organisation and to work, which is an important part of their lives.



The team acts as a listening service and works with staff by: conducting stress risk assessments; co-producing phased return plans; exploring reasonable adjustments; signposting staff to appropriate services and/or support outside the Trust's remit; providing self-help tools and toolkits, information and resources; and working with staff around the importance of a positive work-life balance. All of this is done in co-production with the staff member. The Employee Support Service team wants staff to feel valued and aim to make their experience of the team, and their return to work, as positive as possible. Further initiatives by TEWV can be found in the [Training and development](#) and [Monitoring and improvement](#) sections.

### **Positive practice in mental health example: MF&RS**

MF&RS recognise that not everyone will wish to access support through the usual formal channels. Because of this, the MF&RS mental health lead introduced and developed a more informal peer support network within the service. The network is available to help support colleagues at times when their health and wellbeing may be affected due to various life difficulties. The network is made up of volunteer staff who are passionate about supporting their colleagues' health and wellbeing. They provide confidential support, which colleagues may be more comfortable with compared to more formal interventions. Peer support is designed to be used in conjunction with existing welfare systems, with peer supporters referring staff to occupational health services such as counselling and the EAP, and giving their colleagues the support and confidence to seek further assistance when they need it. Further initiatives by MF&RS can be found in the [Organisational culture](#) section.

### **Recommendation 3: communication**

*Organisations should have a clear, comprehensive communication strategy which seeks to maximise staff engagement. Organisations should ensure communication is used a means to inform, engage, listen to staff, and together explore ways of improving their mental health and wellbeing.*

#### **Positive practice in mental health example: NAViGO**

NAViGO sees communication as central to supporting staff engagement. This is accomplished by, for example, posting an all-staff ‘brief blog’ outlining the key points after every monthly membership board meeting. This also applies to the Horizon Scanning meetings, to keep teams up to date about upcoming events and business developments. The communications team produce a monthly news bulletin that features a ‘team in the spotlight’ and provides staff with the opportunity to understand the different roles and teams in the organisation. Furthermore, NAViGO hold ‘Listening Exercises’ which seek feedback from staff through senior management. The CEO and directors maintain a high degree of visibility, holding regular staff briefings at the various NAViGO locations to inform and update staff on the organisation and future plans. NAViGO constantly seek ways to improve communication with staff and are exploring social media such as Twitter and ‘Facebook Workplace’ as a tool for all staff. Further initiatives by NAViGO can be found in the Support section.

#### **Positive practice in mental health example: Langley Green Hospital, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

An away-day is held every 3 months, and managers, matrons and clinical leads take the time to write cards or buy little gifts to say thank you to staff. They feel that these actions contribute towards a happy, motivated team with good staff retention. Each ward has weekly reflective practice, and the staff have outstanding engagement with people on the ward and with the service leaders, from the charge nurse to domestic staff. The leadership team has a WhatsApp group for fast, effective communication. They also have regular peer support workers who come onto the ward each week. Further initiatives by Langley Green can be found in the Organisational culture, Support, Engagement and Recruitment sections.

## **Recommendation 4: engagement**

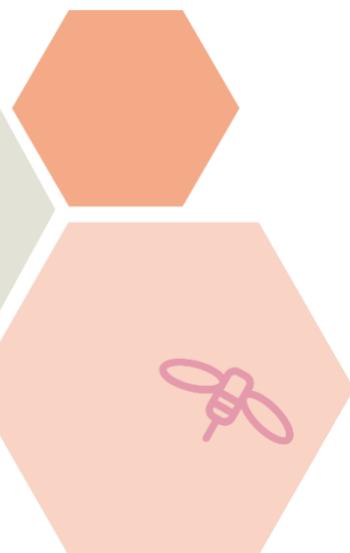
*Organisations should have a clear strategy for engaging their staff in their work and the wider organisation, including shared values and goals.*

### **Positive practice in mental health example: Certitude**

Certitude believe everyone has the right to a good life, which applies to people they support, their loved ones and staff. They seek to support the physical wellbeing of their services users and their staff equally, and focus on staff engagement and ways to improve mental wellbeing through reflective practice and wellbeing tools.

*When I first joined Certitude a year ago, I was taken aback by how happy staff were to work for Certitude. I met colleagues who have worked for Certitude for many years who told me they feel valued, challenged, supported and that they work for an organisation they are proud of. I think this sense of pride and engagement plays a big part in the wellbeing and happiness of our staff, as displayed by our staff engagement survey – with 79% of respondents telling us they are proud to work for Certitude.*

– Liz Durrant, Director, Certitude



In addition to more common staff supports such as cycle-to-work schemes, EAPs and gym memberships, Certitude have been working to further support people's wellbeing. This includes 'wellbeing at work weeks' and a 'wellbeing tool' to help staff identify ways to improve their physical health, and to help people identify indicators of any decline in their wellbeing and agree a plan with their line manager about how best to support them. Staff are also encouraged to start their own initiatives – a current example is a Certitude football team for service users and staff.

A positive example of their approach is Certitude's Solidarity in a Crisis Service. This service is delivered by people with lived experience of mental health problems, who provide telephone and face-to-face support to people experiencing a crisis. This can involve peers employed in this service drawing on difficult feelings and memories, so they have the option of being employed on a bank contract whereby they can flex their hours according to their wellbeing.

Peers use wellbeing tools, and their insight and awareness of what can trigger a decline in wellbeing are an inspiration to others. They receive regular supervision and support from the team manager, who has psychological skills training and receives clinical supervision from a Psychologist to support her in this work. The success and positivity of Certitude's openness, support and focus on wellbeing leads them to want to ensure that similar and appropriate support options are in place across all teams. Further initiatives by Certitude can be found in the [Monitoring and improvement](#) section.



### [Positive practice in mental health example: Langley Green Hospital, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust has developed a strategy for staff engagement, and one of the aims is to have a positive impact on staff health and wellbeing. The strategy includes: improving opportunities for staff to have their say (for example in open forums); enabling staff to share and process difficult experiences and emotions that they encounter in the workplace; a comprehensive communications strategy; and 'management of change' training for managers. The strategy also encourages staff to take actions that are appropriate to their local staff group. Further initiatives by Langley Green can be found in the [Organisational culture, Support, Communication](#) and [Recruitment](#) sections.



## **Recommendation 5: training and development**

*Organisations should invest in training and education for their workforce and provide high-quality appraisals for staff, investing in their development and recognising their achievements.*

### **Positive practice in mental health example: The TEWV Employee Support Service**

In addition to mandatory training, the TEWV NHS Foundation Trust design and provide training for staff induction, team sessions, leadership courses and courses on embedding the Trust's values. Training is also providing in areas such as 'stressbusting, wellbeing and resilience'. They have developed a wellbeing toolkit and a toolkit to help guide managers to support their staff. Further initiatives by TEWV can be found in the [Support](#) and [Monitoring and improvement](#) sections.

## **Recommendation 6: monitoring and improvement**

*Organisations should work towards improving the working lives of staff, regularly monitoring and measuring staff health and wellbeing to ensure continuous improvement.*

### **Positive practice in mental health example: Certitude**

Certitude records data about staff wellbeing, turnover, recruitment, supervision, annual reviews and other key performance indicators, which are monitored monthly and quarterly at senior management and board level. Certitude also undertake a staff survey every two years, which has had a response rate of 73%. Local teams co-produce actions between local leaders and staff to improve staff experience locally. There is also an organisational project on employee mental wellbeing. Further initiatives by Certitude can be found in the [Engagement](#) section.

### **Positive practice in mental health example: North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust**

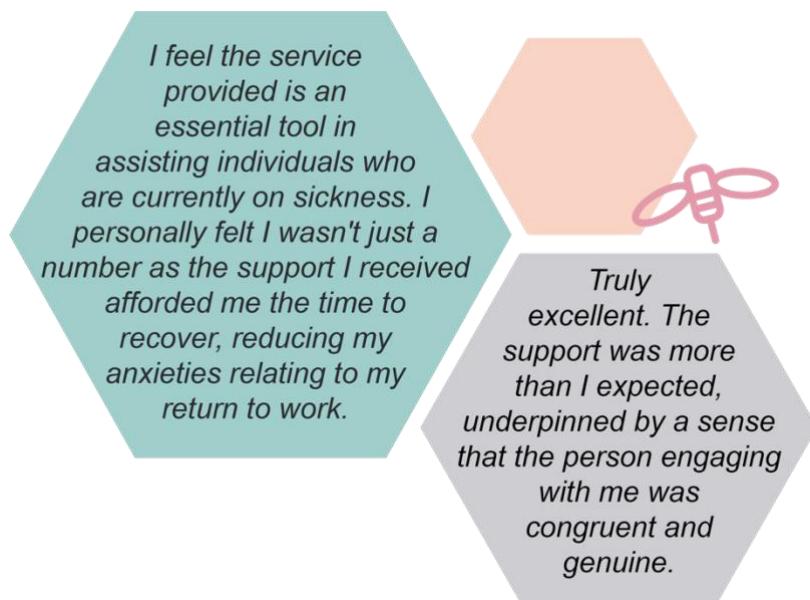
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust use a stress monitoring tool called ZOKENS – a live front-line tool that enables managers to respond to individual staff in a timely manner. This has the benefit of being an early warning system, allowing for proactive intervention, boosting morale and giving positive support, improving relationships, and being a temperature gauge of teams and the organisation.

The ZOKENS tool is currently available for all staff on the staff intranet. It is accessible to all inpatient team leaders, with plans to roll it out to community team leaders.



## Positive practice in mental health example: The TEWV Employee Support Service – TEWV NHS Foundation Trust

The employee support service enables staff to return to work with support packages in place. In the longer term, staff who have been off work with long-term physical or mental health problems have returned to work sooner and have been able to sustain their attendance at work for longer periods of time between absences. Staff who have previously accessed the service are more likely to contact them again if they begin to feel unwell, and are also more likely to refer their colleagues. Further initiatives by TEWV can be found in the [Support](#) and [Training and development](#) sections.



## **Recommendation 7: recruitment**

*Organisations should look at different ways to recruit staff, including the use of social media, visits to universities, colleges and schools, and the introduction of childcare support via shared crèche facilities.*

### **Positive practice in mental health example: Langley Green Hospital, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

Recruitment has dramatically changed, with 13 nurses joining the team in September and October 2018. The service was recently featured in the Channel 5 documentary *Healing Minds*, which has contributed to the ongoing quest to remove stigma while also drawing attention to the hospital's recruitment work. Twitter, as well as a hospital blog, are utilised to drive recruitment and transparently promote vacancies and jobs. Three nurses have been recruited directly through Twitter in 2018. Further initiatives by Langley Green can be found in the [Organisational culture, Support, Communication](#) and [Engagement](#) sections.

### **Positive practice in mental health example: Certitude**

Staff are recruited based as much on their values and attitudes as on their experience. Everyone is welcomed to the organisation by Certitude's CEO as well as by someone with lived experience. Support workers undertake a 3-month induction, which includes training, time with different teams, reflective practice and experiential learning. They also undertake development activities to achieve the care certificate that is linked to Certitude's values and which ensures staff are equipped to perform competently in their support roles. They focus on assets and encourage all support staff to focus on people's abilities and potential rather than limitations. We encourage people to uncover the skills, talents and interests of the people they support. Further initiatives by Certitude can be found in the [Engagement](#) section

## **Summary**

Many positive actions, strategies and outcomes have been identified in these services around the country, whether they are NHS, third sector or, as in one example, fire and rescue services. The services listed are by no means exhaustive – other services are working in similarly progressive ways. However, the organisations described in this report have demonstrated their ability to provide particularly good care for their employees.

It may not be possible for the NHS to implement all of the initiatives described in these pages, but in this time of partnership working, the authors agree that they should all be included.

Mersey Care, Sussex Partnership, TEWV and North Staffordshire Combined NHS Foundation Trusts, NAViGO, Certitude and MF&RSs are all outstanding examples of organisations that work for the good of their staff, while valuing their contributions and caring for their physical and mental health.

There is no easy solution to solving staff recruitment issues in some traditional healthcare disciplines. Fresh and innovative thinking is the key to increasing recruitment to mental health services, by equipping potential new workers with different skills as well as offering opportunities for people, in roles such as healthcare assistant and peer support workers, to progress in their careers.



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## Acknowledgements

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Written and compiled by the Secretariat of the Positive Practice in Mental Health (PPiMH) Collaborative and the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (NCCMH).

