
Good Governance Institute and Reset Health

Investing in staff health and wellbeing: looking after staff, the new trust code of governance and what boards can

Staff wellbeing event write-up

October 2022



“Perhaps the biggest priority is addressing workforce issues in health and social care”

- Matthew Taylor, NHS Confederation chief executive in a recent BBC interview

What are the key staff health and wellbeing challenges in the NHS? How can and are they being addressed?

What is the role of the board in this especially in the context of the new trust code of governance?

On Thursday 13 October, the Good Governance Institute (GGI) and Reset Health – a care provider and thought leader on employee wellbeing and long-term health conditions – convened a virtual panel discussion involving more than 40 healthcare senior leaders looking at one of the biggest challenges facing health and care services: staff health and wellbeing.

The purpose of the event was to explore, in the context of the new provider trust code of governance put out for consultation in the summer by NHS England, answers to the questions posed above and to look at:

- key challenges around staff health and wellbeing in the NHS
- opportunities and areas for experimentation and innovation
- new solutions and good practice happening across trusts and ICSs.

The discussion was chaired by GGI executive director Mark Butler and featured contributions from:

- Marie Burnham, Chair at South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS FT
- Leslieann Osborn, Director of Wellbeing and Engagement at Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust
- Simon Hall, Principal Consultant at GGI
- Grant Harrison the Chief Strategy Officer and Co-Founder of Reset Health.

There was a lot of focus on practical solutions, outcome-driven approaches and ideas for innovation. Marie Burnham spoke about the quadruple aim approach at her trust and the development and flexibility of their evolving staff wellbeing offer. Leslieann Osborn spoke about the impact of the health and wellbeing work at her trust, which is using Reset’s services, which is in the top quartile for all health and wellness measures and has of the lowest sickness levels for work-related stress and anxiety at 0.2%.

Below is a summary of the key discussion points from the session, including more information about the work happening in Marie and Leslieann’s trusts as well as insight from Grant about the impact of Reset’s care model in different settings.

The scale of the NHS staff workforce challenge

Mark Butler introduced the session by setting the scene around the scale and significance of the NHS workforce challenge facing boards.

Quoting NHS Digital figures, Mark spoke about the significant rise in staff sickness and absence rates through the pandemic in 2020 at the start of the pandemic and these have stayed fairly high, with a number of trusts seeing absence rates of 10% and over, especially in the North East and Midlands. But also to their variable causes – aside from Covid-related absence, stress and depression, musculoskeletal and gastro are high contributors, with obesity and diabetes on the rise as well as long-Covid and sheer exhaustion.

Mark spoke about the substantial recruitment issue and the scale of vacancy rates across NHS regions with some, like London, standing at over 10%, and the associated challenge of retention. The disproportionate impact was also drawn to attention with higher rates of staff absence among the lowest paid NHS roles, which are also those most susceptible to the consequences of the cost-of-living crisis.

Mark also talked about the burning nature of the problem with its stark consequences as a strategic risk for health and care providers on a number of fronts:

- The significant cost of staff absence
- Its implications for service provision quality and safety
- The challenge it poses for operational planning.

Integrated care, market solutions such as Reset Health's and the emphasis on staff wellbeing in the new trust code of governance create a landscape of opportunity.

GGI and Reset Health research on staff wellbeing and the new code of governance for providers

Simon Hall spoke next, starting by emphasising the importance of staff health and wellbeing. He said: "Healthier staff are happier, more productive and less likely to leave. A strong health and wellbeing offer and environment is also an increasingly strong recruitment draw and differentiator."

Simon talked about the new code of governance for provider trusts put out for consultation by NHS England in May 2022 – the first revision since 2014, coinciding with the formal constitution of integrated care systems.

Simon then introduced the research that GGI and Reset Health have been doing on the new code and staff wellbeing, interviewing 14 trust chairs, chief executives, chief people officers and directors of governance and strategy. Centred around what the new code of governance for providers will mean for boards on staff wellbeing responsibilities set out in point 2.3:

"The board of directors should assess and monitor culture. Where it is not satisfied that policy, practices or behaviour throughout the business are aligned with the trust's vision, values and strategy, it should seek assurance that management has taken corrective action. The annual report should explain the board's activities and any action taken, and the trust's approach to investing in, rewarding and promoting the wellbeing of its workforce."

Simon presented some of the key points from the research:

- He welcomed the focus that the new emphasis in the code brings but was sceptical about how much it would change board's already do invest and report.
- Acknowledgement of the scale of the issue and the cost.
- The conditions are driving out lots of staff and making it increasingly hard to recruit.
- That Covid has put a renewed emphasis on staff health and wellbeing.
- It's an increasingly complex picture and staff require increasingly tailored support.
- The cost-of-living crisis is a real threat and is exacerbating the challenges.
- There is a genuine desire and sense of intent to do more but this is constrained by financial pressures.
- There is a genuine desire and intent to do more to care for staff and improve their health.
- Generally pretty shallow understanding of staff sickness and absence on a number of boards.
- Lack of focus on the workforce challenges against other pressing issues.
- There are significant variations in how well equipped and engaged boards are to address the challenge –use of data, engagement on the issue, skills.
- Variability of board ownership and leadership on staff wellbeing.
- Evidence of some really good pockets of good practice and creative ways to fund staff health and wellbeing.

Governance and staff wellbeing

Marie, a former NHS acute trust chief executive and now chair of mental and community health trust, spoke about the new code of governance and the relationship between governance and staff wellbeing.

Alluding to one of Mark's comments, Marie made the point that indeed the trust code of governance's new emphasis on staff wellbeing investment was welcome, but this wasn't anything that trusts weren't already doing.

Marie spoke about the strength and importance of the 'softer' aspects of governance such as values and behaviours. She talked about how at SWYFT values and behaviours were a vital part of the organisation's identity and genuinely a driver for a culture that had cultivated a sense of belonging and 'one team', which in turn had a tangible impact on staff wellbeing.

Marie also talked about All of Us, the trust's staff wellbeing offer, which includes regular exercise sessions for staff, creative minds, where staff can take part in creative artwork, and things like support for holiday opportunities. Marie said that much of All of Us had been shaped by input from staff with channels in the organisation and governance structures set up so that the workforce had the opportunity to have a say about the kinds of support they felt would be most beneficial. This staff agency, for Marie, was essential: "It's an important thing is for staff to have agency and be able to speak out about and shape the help they get. Our offer evolves and develops on this basis."

Wrapping up, and acknowledging her trust still had some way to go, Marie concluded that overall SWYFT provided a culture where staff feel safe and connected to each other and a framework of support. She reflected on the challenge of retention and postulated that this is perhaps one area ICSs can help given the significant issue of trusts competing for and taking staff from each other.

A strategic approach to staff health and wellbeing

Next to speak was Leslieann, who gave some background on her trust as a medium-sized acute trust with about 4,500 employees. Leslieann took over responsibility for staff wellbeing in August 2020, having previously been in strategy roles, and her strategic approach to the workforce challenges has yielded some incredible results.

Talking about the trust's strategy, Leslieann said: "Our strategy here is joy at work, and the health and wellness element is ensuring our staff are happy, healthy and heard." She said her trust had adopted a holistic approach, merging the wellbeing and occupational health departments into a single staff health and wellness team.

She said Dartford and Gravesham had a weighing machine that gives staff their BMI and risk indices for conditions such as stroke and heart attacks. Leslieann contacted Reset Health when she realised that 10% of trust staff were at risk. The trust is currently on its sixth cohort of 50 staff members going through the Reset programme, which means around 300 staff have benefited from it.

The benefits of the programme are clear, she said. "It has reversed staff diabetes, it has reversed hypertension, it is improving their health. We are in the top quartile for all health and wellness measures on model hospital, and we now have probably one of the lowest sickness levels for work-related stress and anxiety. We're currently at 0.2% of our staff are off for stress related conditions."

Leslieann said there was a strong focus on mental health support at the trust, with clinical psychologists and mental health support nurses on site. They have also looked at complementary therapies, including reflexology, Indian head massage and Reiki.

She said the programme had cost nearly a million pounds to deliver so far, adding: "If you're going to do it and do it seriously, you have to put staff wellbeing on par with patient care. It's got to be viewed as that important. We cannot deliver excellent patient care if we don't have staff that feel cared for, valued, healthy and happy."

Leslieann said the trust has been exploring ways to develop the programme with Reset Health, as well as looking into ways to develop relationships with the local community and businesses – particularly with colleges and universities – exploring how to offer mutual support. She added that they were looking at possible commercial opportunities with local organisations, including Amazon and Tesla.

Occupational Health and Wellbeing came together in July 2022 to form the Health and Wellness Team	
DGT were highly commended in the HSJ Awards in 2020 coming 2 nd to the national vaccination programme	DGT Doers Band 2 – entry point role into the NHS, Doers support the whole organisation
On site Mental Health support via Time to Talk Team, Counsellors, OH Nurse, Health Psychologist, Clinical Psychologists and Incident Support Team	Reset Health Programme (currently at cohort 6); resets staff key health indicators such as BMI, hypertension, cholesterol, pre and type II diabetes, plus improved MH
Wellbeing Wheel and Conversations in place, all staff have a Wellbeing Objective as part of their PDR	Wellness Programmes include: Menopause Clinics and M Café; Acupuncture; Sophrology (Sleep)
Mindfulness & Meditation Sessions, The Retreat, Wellbeing Events, KMPT Project Wingman Talking Wellness Bus	Physical Health support via Staff gym, Reflexology, Indian Head Massage, Reiki, Walking Club, Cricket Team, Long Covid Clinics, vaccinations (flu and Covid boosters)
Dedicated Wellbeing areas, include a marquee, igloos and lounges, plus upgrade of all staff rooms	Moving and Handling Training and ergonomic assessments in place
Wellbeing Days given (extra day leave – 3 to date)	EDI Networks set up for LGBTQ+, Disability and Gender
Achieved Gold Accreditation in the Kent and Medway Healthy Workplace Programme	Full Occupational Health service in house and offered to external organisation
High pressure areas supported with snack bags if unable to leave area for lunch during peak periods	Staff Welfare and Hardship Fund in place to support staff struggling with the cost of living
Agile and Flexible working policies in place	Wellbeing Areas stocked with free refreshments for staff

Thinking differently about staff wellbeing

Grant Harrison from Reset Health spoke about the importance of innovation in this space. He said Reset Health's primary focus was on obesity and reversing type 2 diabetes, which they're focusing on with a number of organisations including the NHS, Transport for London, National Rail, and HM Prison Service.

He said around half of the workforces Reset is working with are either overweight or living with obesity. And about one-seventh of people have type-2 diabetes, with 30% being pre-diabetic. He added: "We've found that they could reverse these conditions, generally without drugs and very cheaply. We're seeing a metabolic impact, physical improvement, we're seeing HbA1c improvements, and we're also seeing anxiety and depression improvements.

"This mental wellbeing improvement is being picked up by clients who say to us: 'We'd hoped we'd get a sickness absence benefit, but we didn't realise we'd get a happier workforce'. If you can turn around these metabolic conditions within 12 weeks, as we are, and then continue to make improvements, people get really evangelical, and they start offering to mentor people in their own organisations."

Grant said Reset was leveraging these mentors as part of the programme, paying them to advise others, which magnifies the impact of the doctors, nurses and Reset's technology. He said: "We've realised that financial health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing so we're extending the mentor rewards programme so that mentors who are helping other people can earn between £1,000 and £5,000 per month on top of their salaries.

"We've realised that metabolic health is best improved with a connected solution of clinicians and patients. Of the revenue we get in, we're probably giving half of it back to mentors now because we've realised that mentors help to change behaviours and have a massive impact on people's health. We see it as a sort of community of wellbeing and it makes a lot of sense for us, financially, to put our money where our mouth is.

"Our challenge as a business is finding organisations that say, first of all, 'yes, health and wellbeing is important', then identify the health and wellbeing problems that they have, and then say 'actually, we're going to spend some money on it'."

Biographies

About the chair

Mark Butler, Executive Director, Good Governance Institute

Mark Butler is a partner and executive director of GGI and convenor of the National Commission on the future of governance in the public sector, funded by GGI.

Mark is a national expert in cultural and organisational transformation, specialising in governance reviews, place-based and system governance, board development, public and staff engagement, and investigations. With an appetite for complex problem solving and new thinking, Mark also leads GGI's work on new products and practice.

Before joining GGI, Mark held chief executive, chair and senior leadership roles in health, higher education, the arts, and national government. He was a visiting fellow at the University of Stirling for ten years and on the advisory board for the Edinburgh Napier Business School for five years.

At GGI, Mark has pioneered new approaches to formal reviews, which allow leaders to drive cultural and governance development while meeting regulatory requirements. This includes the national maturity matrix used in 25 GGI reviews of universities and the added value approach to well-led reviews now used across all types of NHS trusts.

Mark was one of the youngest chief executives in the NHS, guiding Worcester Royal Infirmary's whole hospital new build PFI project to completion. He also served as a board director at the University Hospitals Birmingham. Before this, he won both the Health Service Journal award and the RIPA/HAY award for managerial innovation for the involvement of the public in the design of the new Derbyshire Children's Hospital.

As one of the most senior civil servants in Scotland, Mark served as both director of human resources for the NHS and led on public sector reform in the Performance and Innovation Unit, the Scottish equivalent to No 10's Strategy Unit.

About the speakers

Marie Burnham, Chair, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Before becoming Chair of the South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Marie was the Independent Lay Chair for the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Joint Committee, which is made up of five clinical commissioning groups and is part of the area's integrated care system.

Marie has a wealth of expertise and understanding regarding the importance of joined up care for people and communities across all health and social care sectors, which includes being the Independent Chair of the Central Lancashire Integrated Care Partnership since 2018. Other roles include being a Committee Chair for NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence), the most recent being chairing the Weight Management Committee. Marie is also the Chair of Pennine Multi-Academy Trust, where she has worked on a volunteer basis since 2017.

Marie brings with her over 30 years of leadership experience from health services and the charitable sector, including NHS executive and non-executive roles with responsibility for performance and governance. Prior to this she was a registered nurse."

Simon Hall, Principal Consultant, Good Governance Institute

Simon Hall joined GGI on secondment in June 2022 as principal consultant (system strategy). Before GGI he worked as transformation director in the North East London ICS, where he led the Covid vaccination programme, delivering 3.6 million jabs to local people.

Simon has 34 years' experience in the NHS, local and central government. He is experienced at navigating the balance between system and place, and developed the system response to the NHS Long Term Plan for NE London. He also serves on the London HIV Fast Track Cities Leadership Group (to eliminate HIV and the stigma attached to it) which won the International Excellence Award for HIV Services in October 2021.

Simon has led transformation programmes across all of north east London including cancer services, maternity, end of life care, children and young people's health and care, and sustainability. As managing director of Tower Hamlets CCG (2016-18) Simon established governance arrangements for joint commissioning, led the transformation of GP services focused on quality improvement methodology, and led the Tower Hamlets Together Vanguard. During his leadership of the CCG, it achieved an Outstanding rating from NHS England twice, was nominated for 2017 Health Service Journal CCG of the Year, and achieved high rankings for patient and public involvement and staff satisfaction.

Simon has always been a community activist and has been actively involved in a number of voluntary organisations and societies at board level since 1986. Since 2018, he has been a trustee of Metro (an equality and diversity charity in south east London) and has been its treasurer since 2019. He is also an experienced trustee of a multi-academy (schools) trust, with schools in the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Greenwich. He is also a passionate internationalist and a proud parent.

Grant Harrison, Chief Strategy Officer and Co-Founder, Reset Health

Grant designed, launched and managed Tesco Clubcard becoming the youngest Tesco Director at 32 years old in 1997. His subsequent career built on customer experience and innovation and then moved into healthcare, setting up Virgin Pulse in the US and leading Customer Innovation at Humana in Louisville, Kentucky.

Grant is now the Chief Strategy Officer and a Founder of Reset Health. Reset Health uses time-restricted eating, intermittent fasting, psychology and nutritional guidance to literally reset the body's metabolic physiology over a period of 12 weeks. During this period, Reset Health offers 24/7 support from its specialist clinical team and every participant is allocated a mentor who has already been through the process to provide support and guidance based on their real-life experience.

Using video, instant messaging and phone calls instead of face-to-face consultations means the programme is much easier to fit into a busy working life. Once this vital change has been made, the Reset Health support system continues for a further nine months to help ensure that diet and lifestyle changes stick.

Leslieann Osborn, Director of Wellbeing and Engagement at Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust

Leslieann graduated in 2015 in the Nye Bevan Programme and is a director widely experienced in strategy, planning, commercials, QIPP, 18ww RTT, IMT, contracting, performance management and service improvement/transformation. As a natural leader she is focused on managing, developing and motivating teams and individuals with the aim of ensuring excellent care for patients, meeting targets, objectives and personal ambitions.

Leslieann is dedicated to developing and maintaining high quality standards and services and has excellent people skills and robust budget management with specialities in leadership, motivation, negotiating, service improvement, change management, performance management, contract management.

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