

STAFF ARE AN EMPLOYER'S BEST ASSET

Meaningful workforce engagement helps employers ensure patients receive the best care, says Stephanie Jones Berry

Nurses' employers should do more to look after their staff, according to a report drawing attention to the connection between happy employees and good patient care.

The Point of Care Foundation report stated that just 27 per cent of nursing staff say they are engaged with their work, despite most NHS employers claiming staff engagement is a priority.

The report, *Staff Care: How to engage staff in the NHS and why it matters*, brings together evidence that staff engagement with their organisation matters, along with their attitude towards it.

Jill Maben, director of the

National Nursing Research Unit at King's College, was a member of the report's expert advisory group. 'Managers often get the principle that engaging staff is important, but do not always know how to do it well, or perhaps have their priorities elsewhere,' Professor Maben says.

'We need to see staff as our best resource. That does not just mean money, it means time, consideration and support to help staff deliver good patient care.'

The report defines staff engagement as a two-way process, with employees feeling engaged with each other and with their organisation. The report highlights the links between staff satisfaction and patient mortality rates, the strongest correlation being with nursing staff. Professor Maben says: 'If you improve staff wellbeing it absolutely has an effect on patient care.'

'Staff engagement needs nurturing to help staff to re-engage with what brought them into the profession.'

'Nurses often do not feel that anyone is listening to them. Part of [solving] this is about giving staff responsibility.'

To engage employees, the Staff Care report recommends:

- ▶ Well-structured appraisals and training and support for personal and career development.
- ▶ Line managers trained in people management skills.
- ▶ Well-defined teams that review progress regularly.
- ▶ Space for staff to reflect on patient care challenges.
- ▶ Setting coherent goals for quality and safety, from board to ward.
- ▶ Action on staff feedback; letting staff make identified improvements.
- ▶ Use intelligence about staff experience and morale to seek out problems and target support for solutions.

The report identifies four 'enablers' of good staff engagement: organisational integrity, a strong employee voice in the organisation, engaged managers, and a strong strategy.

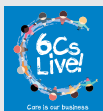
At the Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust in Liverpool, the Walton Way encompasses staff summits, executive walkabouts, award schemes, a staff-led improvement programme,

Nurses often do not feel that anyone is listening to them, says Jill Maben



MARCELO SARATVA CHAVES

NOTICE BOARD



6Cs Live Two online communities have been set up on the chief nursing officer's 6Cs Live website. The CNO's Black and Minority Ethnic Advisory Group and the Commissioning Nurse Leaders Network provide a hub of information. Community members have quick access to information on resources, events, webinars, bulletins, discussion forums and associated networks. www.6cs.england.nhs.uk/pg/groups/world

Sickle cell The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has published a national quality standard for the care and support of people with sickle cell disease. The standard outlines how professionals should manage sickle cell episodes, use pain relief and check for acute chest

syndrome. The Sickle Cell Society believes the standard should be used by all NHS commissioners and service providers to ensure consistency, and should form the basis for care pathways for the range of sickle cell disorders. guidance.nice.org.uk/QS58

Research A one-day meeting to celebrate the diversity of research, education and innovation undertaken by nurses, midwives and allied health professionals will be held in Nottingham on June 12. Part of the Nottingham University Hospitals Engage, Enthuse, Empower research and education festival from June 9 to 13, the event will showcase innovative ideas and will be an opportunity to learn about aspects of research. The day is free to trusts staff and Nottingham University students. tinyurl.com/NUHEEE

sports programmes and access to occupational health services.

RCN regional officer for Liverpool, Paul Wood, says the Walton Way offers a common identity for nursing staff, and a leadership that listens to its employees. 'The organisation has a vocal staff side that – in my opinion – is listened to by the nursing leadership.' Mr Wood also praised the trust's nursing awards scheme and its support for the RCN's Principles of Nursing.

Professor Maben says it is important for organisations to look at what motivates staff to work well. 'Organisations need to work out what works best for them,' she says.

'Staff engagement is not an add-on – the best asset in any organisation is the staff. Support for staff needs to be central to organisational strategies to improve patient care, productivity and financial performance' **NS**

Stephanie Jones Berry
is a freelance journalist

RESOURCES

Staff care: How to engage staff in the NHS

tinyurl.com/PoCStaff-report

The Walton Way

tinyurl.com/Walton-Way

RCN Principles of Nursing Practice

tinyurl.com/RCNPoNP

Nicola Davies has a strategy for dealing with difficulties

For every problem, a solution

Learning to problem solve effectively is one of the most valuable techniques nurses can learn. There are many models to choose from but it is important to select a process that works for you.

A popular example that can be used in nursing, is the AIDOSE problem-solving model, developed by Steve Kneeland, author of *Thinking Straight*.

Using the AIDOSE acronym is a valuable way to break down, assess, and find solutions to dilemmas in your working life.

Awareness Being aware that a particular problem exists is the first step towards finding a solution. The problem, its urgency, importance and who is responsible all need to be defined.

Information Gathering information about the problem can be divided into

the basics: who is involved? What happened? When, how and why did the problem occur?

Definition Defining the problem means understanding the circumstances.

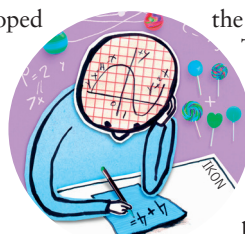
Options After gathering this information, the options for resolving the problem may become clear.

Think of all the possible solutions to the problem and test them hypothetically.

Selection Choose the best solution from all the options.

Execution Put your chosen plan into action.

The more you become familiar with using the AIDOSE model and others like it, the better you will become at problem-solving.



Nicola Davies is a health psychology consultant

The AIDOSE model in action

A staff nurse, Diana, is observing a patient, John, following surgery and sees a rash on his arm. Diana is not aware of any allergies, and questions the family in order to gather more information to help her define the problem and broaden her options. John's wife confides that John has never worn condoms during their

marriage. Knowing that a simple blood test can diagnose an allergy, Diana asks for this. She discovers a box of latex gloves by his bed. Her solution is to replace the box and she asks the ward manager to remove any other boxes immediately. John's blood tests reveals he has a severe allergy to latex. The appropriate actions are taken.

Anticoagulation The Quality in Care (QiC) anticoagulation awards programme recognises, rewards and shares good practice in anticoagulation management, education and patient care. The QiC anticoagulation programme includes a recognition event and dissemination opportunities for finalists to share good practice and demonstrate the adaptability of their initiatives to a wider healthcare audience. The entry deadline is June 27. www.qualityincare.org/awards

Specialist nurses The Apollo online specialist nursing resource helps specialist nurses communicate their work to others for the benefit of patients. The resource consists of help with job planning, recording the work of specialist nurses, making the case for jobs retention, justifying specialist nursing roles, undergoing a service review and writing annual reports. The

resource is new and its authors want to hear from specialist nurses about the needs and issues they would like included in the site. www.apollonursingresource.com

ACTION ON HEARING LOSS

Toolkit A new toolkit to help nurses improve care for older patients with hearing loss has been published by Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust and Action on Hearing Loss, formerly the Royal National Institute for Deaf People. The toolkit follows research by the charity that discovered how more than 70 per cent of older patients did not understand fully what staff were saying to them. The kit includes tips on how to improve communication, recognise hearing loss, train staff to understand hearing loss and how to care for hearing aids. www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk