

## BACKGROUND

The NHS is facing a funding crisis. This is likely to be made worse by an increase in chronic conditions including obesity, diabetes and dementia. In 2007, obesity and overweight cost the UK economy £15.8 billion<sup>1</sup>. Many of these chronic conditions may be prevented by adoption of healthy behaviours (e.g. regular physical activity, healthy eating, not smoking).

One might expect that hospitals, which 'embody the reality of the NHS for most people'<sup>2</sup>, would do all they can to promote healthy behaviours. However, hospitals frequently market unhealthy food to patients, staff and visitors. A situation where a patient recovering from a myocardial infarction can buy a Double Whopper on their way to a cardiology appointment can only occur in a system which has lost its way with respect to promoting health. For staff, the working environment and culture often does not support optimal mental and physical health.

There are also compelling financial arguments. Health is a strong predictor of an individual's productivity and their likelihood of being at work<sup>3</sup>. In the NHS, investment in health and well-being services might reduce sickness absence by around one third, equivalent to an extra 14,900 whole-time equivalent staff<sup>4</sup>.

We believe hospitals (and indeed the whole 1.4 million people engaged in running the NHS) have a duty to lead by positive example. Hospitals need to change. We believe such change is best led by front line staff supported by senior management.



## HEALTH 4 HEALTHCARE

We formed a group of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals called *Health for Healthcare*, with the aim that all hospitals should actively support and create a physical and cultural environment that promotes healthy behaviour, from healthy food, to facilities that enable cycling to work, to exercise classes during the day.

### The Question

How can we lead change in a large, often 'arthritis' system such as the NHS?

### Our Approach

- Ideas of 'adaptive change'<sup>5</sup> and 'Positive Deviance'<sup>6</sup>.
- Support staff to change their workplaces themselves.
- Bottom-up approach, engaging front-line workers with support from senior trust executives.

### What we did

- Led 'networking' events to bring together passionate colleagues and brainstorm ideas.
- Found places where positive behaviour or changed mind-sets were already in play.
- Got a seat on the newly-formed Health and Wellbeing committee
- Connected with the deputy medical director, who mentored us and kept the board informed.
- Worked closely with newly appointed Health and Wellbeing Promotion Specialist.

Initially, discrete projects & 'quick wins' to build momentum behind the movement:

- A physiotherapist worked to introduce posters to our hospital walls, encouraging stair use rather than the lifts.
- A series of ward sisters and house keepers introduced recycling to their wards.
- An initiative with Waitrose where fresh fruit was provided on two wards, free of charge, to staff, patients and visitors.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### References & Notes

1. FORESIGHT. Tackling Obesities: Future Choices – Project Report 2nd Edition Government Office for Science
2. Hospitals Without Walls. BMJ vol 347.
3. NHS Future Forum. The NHS's role in the public's health.
4. Boorman S. NHS Health and Wellbeing Final Report. November 2009.
5. Heifetz R and Laurie D. The Work of Leadership. Harvard Business Review, 1997.
6. An innovative Management in Medicine programme at Green Templeton College introduced us to ideas of 'adaptive change' and significantly to the 'Positive Deviance' approach pioneered at Tufts University, used internationally to confront some intractable issues in communities such as malnutrition, female genital mutilation, and even MRSA in hospitals.

## HEALTHY HOSPITAL DAY AND BEYOND

Working together with the Trust's Health and Wellbeing Group, our initial efforts culminated in the first 'Healthy Hospital Day' at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

### The day had 3 main objectives:

- 1) To promote the positive steps that enthused staff had already taken
- 2) To engage as many staff, patients and visitors as possible
- 3) To further understand the views and expectations of those who pass through the hospital's doors.

### 15 stalls & several new initiatives, including:

- Centre for Occupational Health and Wellbeing (advising on smoking cessation, stress management etc).
- Oxfordshire Travel Hub offering healthy and sustainable travel options.
- Age UK's Generation Games, which supports activities for the elderly.
- Healthy cooking demonstrations by an expert nutritionist.
- New healthy options (salads, healthy breakfasts) in main restaurant.



### Results of evaluation:

- Nearly 1000 people participated in the day,
- 94% of interactions with visitors were recorded as positive
- 97% of people surveyed said that hospitals should set an example regarding healthy living and offer information and advice to this end.

### Encouraging Developments:

- Following the day, we met with the Trust Chief Executive, who agreed to support a submission to the board from the Health and Wellbeing committee on making the hospital healthier.
- Healthy Eating Working Group was formed, made up of all groups that sell food on site (including vending machines!), with Trust management support.
- New Public Health Strategy, linking the hospital's Health and Wellbeing agenda with that of Oxfordshire.
- Further HH Days will take place at other OUH Trust hospitals in the coming months.



## KEY MESSAGES

- We are just one small part of a wider social movement. But the key to sustaining such change – both at our Trust and beyond – will be finding ways to connect across the system, accelerate and amplify new behaviours.
- We believe that through our demonstration of 'positive deviance' we can bring the concept of the 'Healthy Hospital' into peoples' consciousness, and facilitate a culture change by empowering staff to change their environments.
- We also believe that by engaging with Boards, we and others will prove the financial and public health case for healthy hospitals, and in doing so, move a step closer to our aim of all hospitals actively promoting health.
- We would encourage others to pursue similar strategies within their organisations to ignite the debate about healthy healthcare and build the momentum to change.