

The staff engagement toolkit

**An online resource, supporting
you to increase staff engagement
in your organisation**

Updated December 2013 ([see section 5](#))



Staff engagement in the NHS: a quick guide

Staff engagement – making a difference within your organisation

gives you an introduction to the key points about staff engagement in the NHS. After reading this, you can navigate your way around the rest of the resource to get detailed information to help increase staff engagement for you and your organisation.

NHS Employers has produced a series of [factsheets for workforce leaders](#).

If you need to prepare something urgently, use the links below to skip through the pack:

- Help with preparing an [engagement strategy](#)
- Help with convincing the board – as well as the article above, the following may be useful:
 - [Executive summary](#)
 - [Business case for staff engagement](#)
 - [Note on financial benefit](#)
- Skip straight to [Resources section](#)



Introduction

This resource provides you with the information and tools you could need to help increase staff engagement in your organisation.

There is a wide range of information, from an introduction to staff engagement, to practical working examples, to evidence on the benefits your organisation can achieve from having an engaged workforce.

Fostering staff engagement will depend on HR working with leaders across the organisation, especially line managers and clinicians. This resource therefore includes information of relevance for all workforce leaders, although it is designed primarily for HR professionals.



User guide

This resource is a 'click and go' guide which enables you to find the information you want on specific topics quickly and directly.

The [contents page](#) shows what each section of the document covers. Click the section you want and you will go straight to it.

When you are at a section page, click on the topic you are interested in to find out what information and tools are available. You can click on the  button at any time if you want to return to the contents page.



Navigation guide

To help you navigate your way around the resource there are a number of clickable buttons that take you back or forward to set places in the resource:

-  takes you back to the beginning
-  takes you to the contents page
-  takes you to the 'quick guide' page
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Section 1: Introducing staff engagement in the NHS

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What is staff engagement?

- Engaged staff think and act in a positive way about the work they do, the people they work with and the organisation that they work in.
- There are many definitions of what staff engagement is, but all share a common theme, especially describing how people behave when they're engaged.
- We all know what staff engagement is when we see it, be it in the way work colleagues act, or in the way staff act in other workplaces, for instance when you go shopping.
- Read more on [How staff engagement is defined and what it looks like](#)



How is staff engagement measured in the NHS?

- It is possible to measure staff engagement in a number of ways. The most precise and widely used are staff surveys.
- In the NHS this is done through the [NHS Staff Survey](#). Trusts can also do their own survey or add their own question to the national one. Other methods for assessing staff views can include focus groups, large-scale discussions known as 'big conversations', and on-line communication forums. Engagement is also indicated by the degree of involvement of staff in the organisation, for example participation in events and response to consultations. There are other measures of organisational engagement, and a specific set of metrics has been developed for [medical engagement](#).
- As staff engagement covers a number of behaviours and ways people go about their work, it is possible to ask sets of questions that will show how engaged staff are at any point in time.
- Find out more detail on how staff engagement is measured and reported in the NHS, by reading about: [How is staff engagement measured](#)



How can I improve staff engagement?

- It is possible to influence levels of engagement among staff in any organisation.
- To improve staff engagement you need to examine all parts of the system that impact on it.
- The [staff engagement star](#) is a visual representation of the key factors that will contribute to a sense of engagement from staff. It could provide a framework to help increase engagement.
- More information on:
[How to improve staff engagement](#)



National staff engagement developments

A range of national levers work together to ensure that NHS organisations aim for high levels of staff engagement, now and in the future:

- The [NHS Constitution](#) sets out in one place the rights and [pledges](#) that staff can expect. The [NHS Constitution](#) is currently under review. The [Staff Pledges](#) are a commitment by employers to provide a working environment which supports staff engagement. [Staff Pledge three](#) in particular commits the NHS to involving staff in decisions.
- [Equity and excellence: liberating the NHS](#) confirms the Government's commitment to staff engagement.
- The [Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2012/13](#) refers to the need to improve staff experience and take account of staff survey results.
- The [standard contract](#) requires providers to complete the NHS staff survey.
- [Quality Accounts](#) guidance recommends including NHS staff survey results in returns.

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National staff engagement developments

Continued

- The [Care Quality Commission](#) makes judgements about providers based on information that it receives from a range of sources, including staff experience information.
- The NHS Commissioning Board has recognised the links between engagement and patient experience. [Everyone counts: planning for patients 2013/14](#).
- Other organisations, including the economic regulator, Healthwatch, and health and well being boards, may use staff experience to inform their views on local service provision.
- NHS Commissioning Board chief executive, Sir David Nicholson, has argued that a fall in staff engagement can be a warning indicator on quality.
- In future, commissioners may take account of this type of data.
- Recent guidance recognises the clear link between staff and patient experience.
- The willingness of staff to recommend the services provided by their organisation is already assessed in the staff survey. In future, this information is likely to be more prominent as trusts publish more information on patient views as part of the [friends and family test](#). Data on staff views may also be used in the future.



Summary of the pledges to staff in the NHS Constitution

The NHS commits:

- to provide all staff with clear roles and responsibilities and rewarding jobs for teams and individuals that make a difference to patients, their families and carers and communities
- to provide all staff with personal development, access to appropriate training for their jobs and line management support to succeed
- to provide support and opportunities for staff to maintain their health, well-being and safety
- to engage staff in decisions that affect them and the services they provide, individually, through representative organisations and through local partnership working arrangements. All staff will be empowered to put forward ways to deliver better and safer services for patients and their families.

(Section 3a. *Staff – your rights and responsibilities* p10 [The NHS Constitution for England](#))



Do all organisations providing NHS services have to address staff engagement?

High levels of staff engagement lead to better patient outcomes and better use of resources. These are outcomes that all organisations providing NHS services will be interested in. They are outcomes that every organisation will be contracted to achieve.

The Health Act 2009, which came into legal force on 19 January 2010, creates a statutory duty for all NHS bodies, primary medical services and third sector and independent providers of NHS services in England to 'have regard to' the NHS Constitution when performing their functions. This duty also covers Monitor and the Care Quality Commission.

There are now a range of providers helping to provide NHS services. Some independent sector and social enterprises have developed new approaches to staff engagement. Circle healthcare, for example, is a part employee-owned company which puts a great emphasis on staff engagement. Those social enterprises that provide community services tend to score highly on staff engagement. The key elements of their approach is to support line managers, improve communication and highly visible leadership. For more information, please contact the NHS Employers organisation.



The staff engagement star: excellent staff engagement results from a number of factors



Section 2: The benefits of staff engagement, the evidence

Better staff engagement means better patient outcomes

Better staff engagement means better staff experiences

Better staff engagement means better overall performance

Better staff engagement means better financial performance

Financial efficiencies can be achieved as a result of high levels of staff engagement

High levels of staff engagement have a positive impact

Experiences outside the NHS

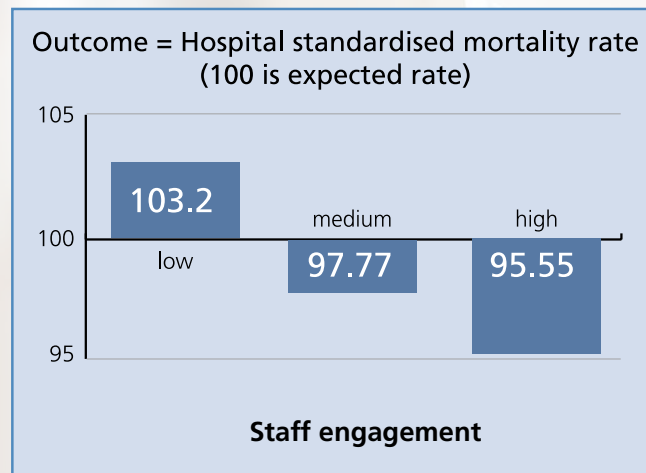
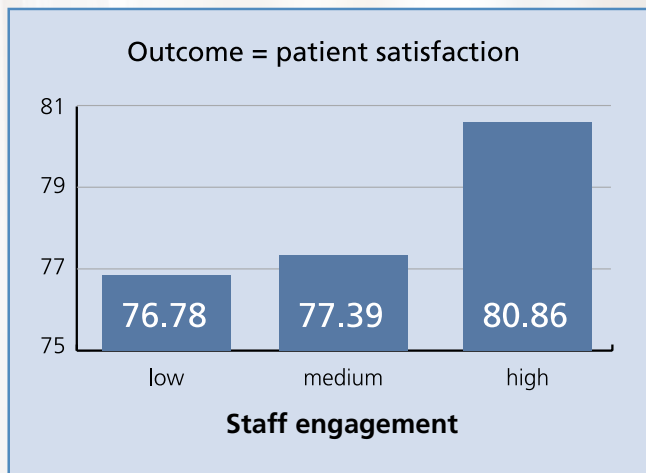


Better staff engagement means better patient outcomes

Using the results of the staff survey data and other performance data, researchers have established a clear link between levels of staff engagement and patient experience.

Research shows that where staff engagement scores are high, scores are also significantly **higher** for patient satisfaction and **lower** for standardised hospital mortality rates.

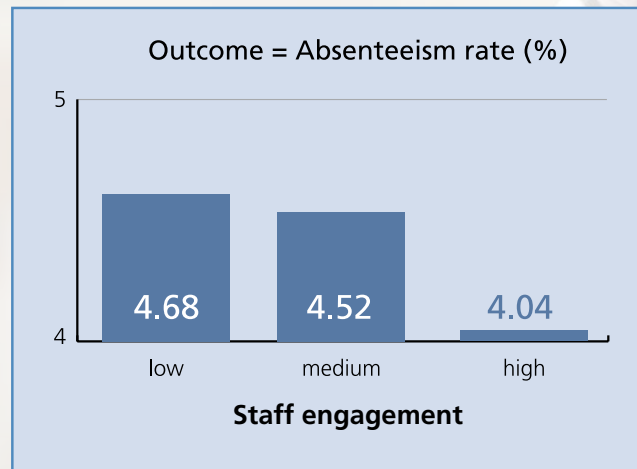
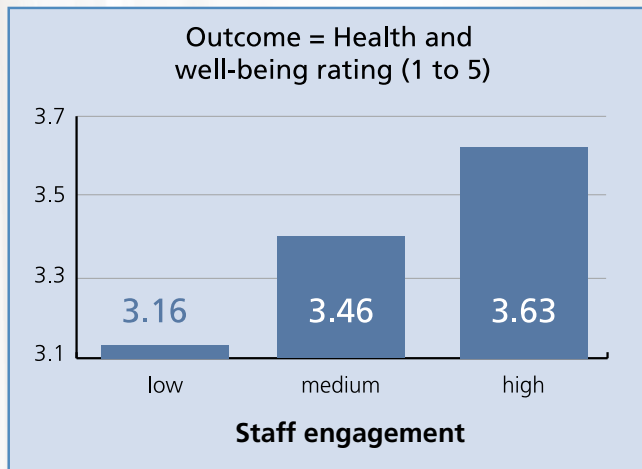
The charts below illustrate the links between staff engagement and levels of staff engagement. In particular, they highlight how a move from a medium to a high level of engagement makes a significant difference to patient outcomes.



Better staff engagement means better staff experiences

Research shows that where staff engagement scores are high, scores are also significantly **higher** for staff health and well-being and **lower** for staff absenteeism.

The figures below show these results and that moving from medium to high levels of staff engagement makes a positive difference to staff experiences:



For a detailed insight on the importance of staff health and well-being visit:
[Staff engagement and health and well-being](#)

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Better staff engagement means better staff experiences

Staff recognition

A large number of organisations use various forms of recognition scheme to foster and reward staff engagement. In the main, in the NHS these schemes do not use financial reward. Schemes either involve “staff member of the year” or similar events or, in some cases, offer non-financial rewards.

An NHS Employers review showed over 30 such schemes operating despite the current financial environment.

Some organisations, such as Yorkshire Hospital Foundation Trust, have won awards from the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) for their initiatives, including:

“Non-financial elements such as voluntary benefits, staff recognition, total reward statements and health and well-being initiatives. They created a programme of recognition events such as a monthly ‘star performer’ award and Oscar-style achievement events.” HPMA 2012

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Better staff engagement means better staff experiences

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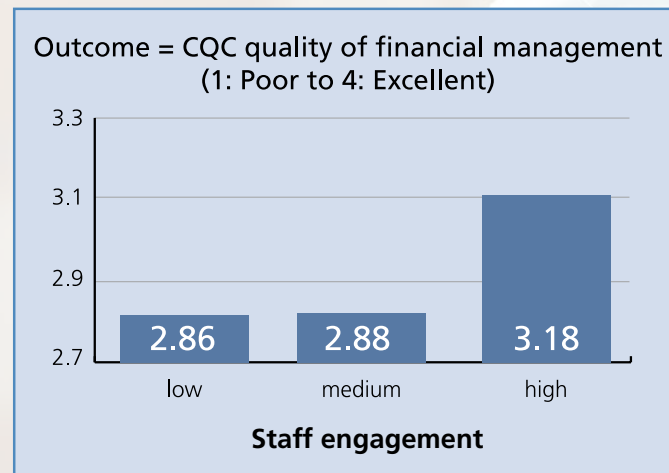
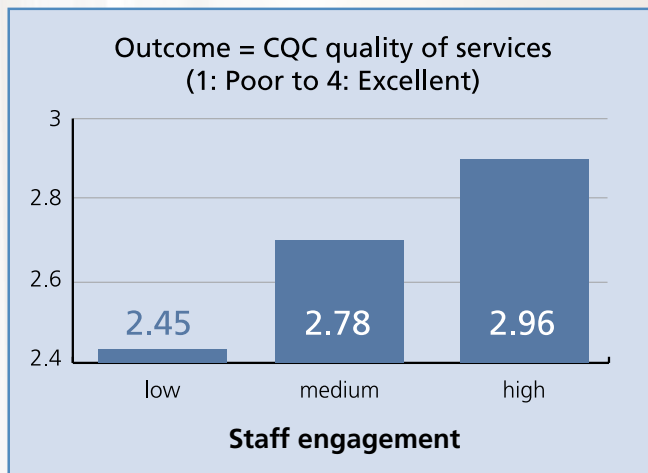
Formal schemes are not of course the only way recognition can be shown. Even simple “thank you” gestures can have an impact, especially if they come from line managers, although tokenistic or patronising gestures can backfire. In many cases, the cost of events can be partly offset by working with external stakeholders. Where, due to high levels of staff engagement, staff are generating efficiency ideas, the savings arising from these are, in some cases, used to fund improvements for staff.



Better staff engagement means better overall performance

Research shows that where staff engagement scores are high, scores are also significantly **higher** for performance as measured by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) through its Annual Health Check Standards.

The graphs below show these results and moving from medium to high levels of staff engagement makes a positive difference to the results of the headline CQC measures:



Better staff engagement means better financial performance

High levels of staff engagement are linked to measures of financial performance.

For example, reduced absenteeism associated with high staff engagement will save an average trust £235,000 a year in salary costs alone.

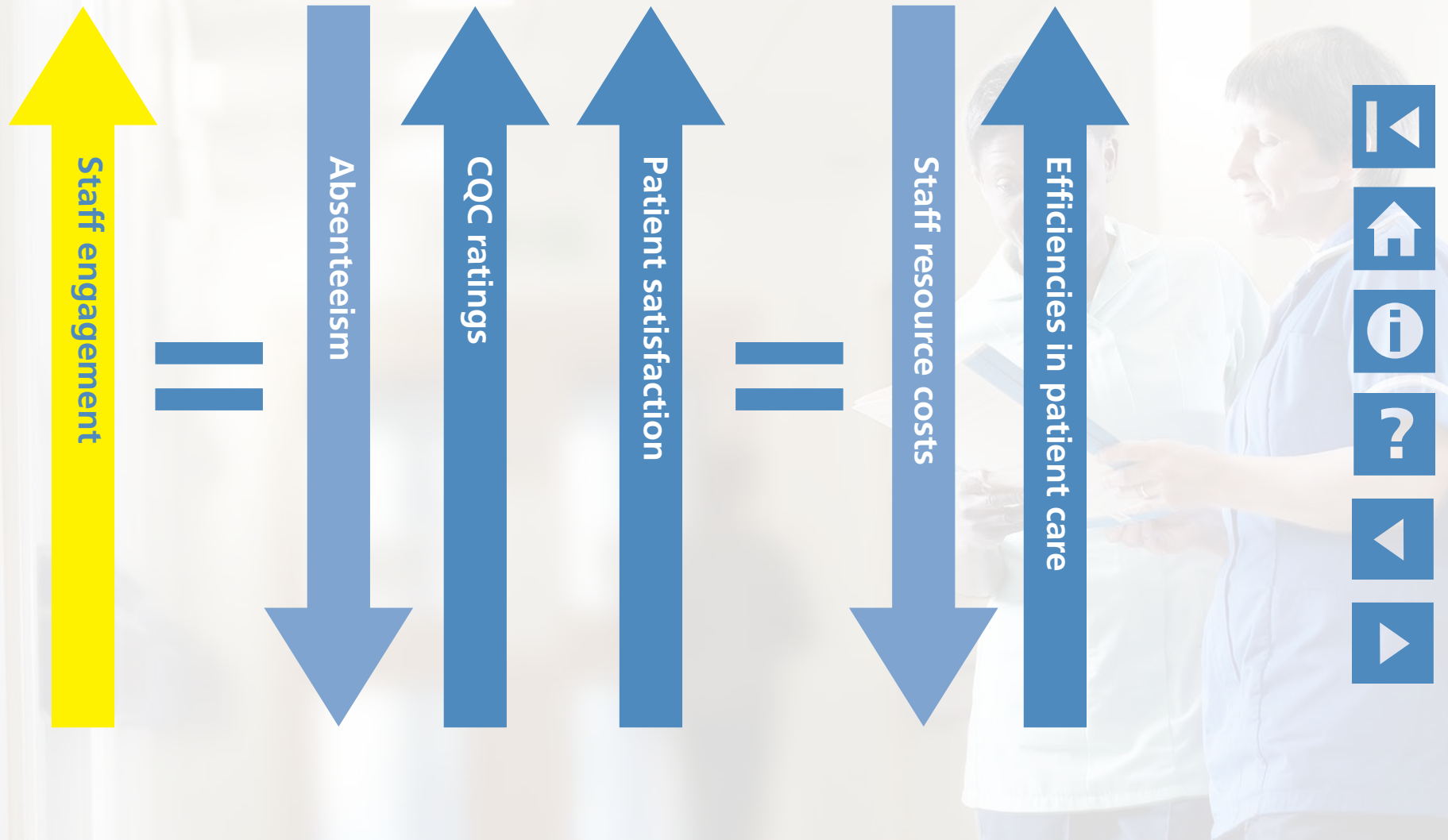
For a detailed explanation of the implication of these findings and how savings might be achieved, click on the link below:

[**Staff engagement insight: high engagement scores link to financial efficiencies in the NHS**](#)

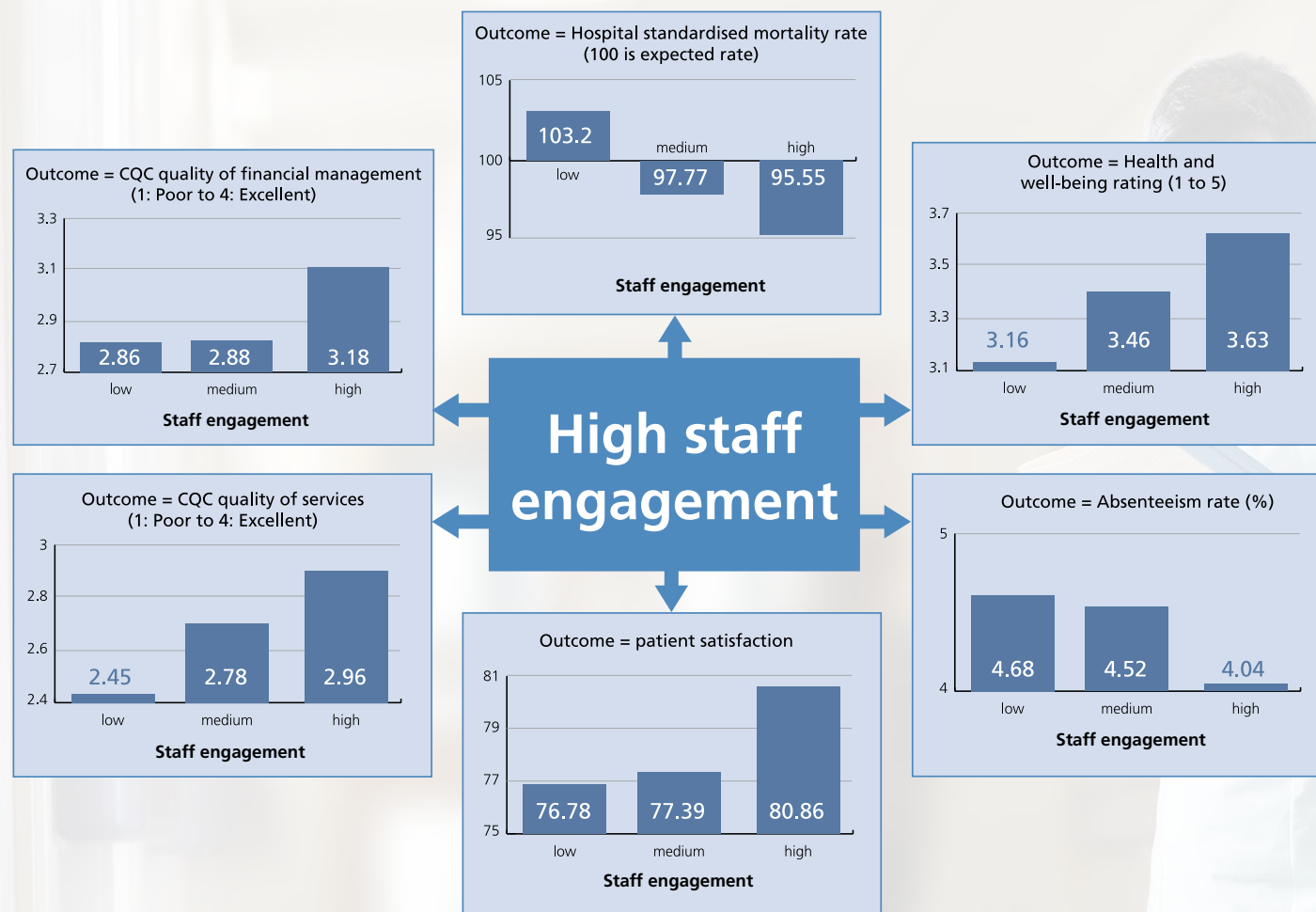
For a summary diagram [click here](#)



Financial efficiencies can be achieved as a result of high levels of staff engagement



High levels of staff engagement have a positive impact



Experiences outside the NHS

The benefits of staff engagement are recognised by a wide range of organisations, both large and small, across varied sectors, both private and public. There are many detailed sources available to show you the evidence, listed within:

1) Engage for Success website

The Government has sponsored Engage for Success, an initiative to promote staff engagement across the economy. The Engage for Success website has many examples of organisations outside the NHS which have had successful approaches to staff engagement. The manufacturing, retail and finance sectors are especially active on this issue. Some examples are included below and on the next two pages.

2) *Engaged: unleashing your organization's potential through employee engagement*. Linda Holbeche and Geoffrey Matthews (Briefcase Books)

3) The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development



Experiences outside the NHS

Below are some examples of organisations that realise the benefits an engaged workforce can bring.

Nationwide Building Society uses its employee survey to track links with customer experience and branch profitability. First Direct has invested in improving staff experience in its call centres to avoid the high levels of disengagement usually found in call centres.

The [Cooperative Bank](#) emphasises its distinct values as a means of fostering staff engagement and attracting talent in a highly competitive sector.

John Lewis is well known as an example of an employee-owned enterprise with high levels of staff engagement. It has built up its approach over many years and, although it is not possible to 'transfer' its structure wholesale into the NHS, lessons can be learned from its experience. For example, honest and clear communications retain staff confidence, and staff ideas are essential for innovation.



Experiences outside the NHS

Staff engagement levels in the NHS compare well with those in the wider economy and are amongst the best in the public services. Some local authorities have developed models which may also be useful for the NHS to look at. Two examples are given in this toolkit. More examples can be found at www.lga.gov.uk

For more detailed examples, visit:

[Engagement and the bottom line \(Sainsbury's\)](#)

[Engagement for improving public services \(Lewisham and Birmingham councils\)](#)



Engagement and the bottom line (Sainsbury's)

In 2004, Sainsbury's was losing market share and profits were at risk. A new chief executive identified staff disengagement as one cause of customer dissatisfaction. They developed a new business strategy to help improve staff engagement levels, which included:

- changing the way line managers manage, for example, introducing a daily meeting to allow instant staff feedback on operational issues
- introducing a new annual conference event to help update staff on its strategy and get their views
- development of an online communication tool to allow staff feedback, in addition to its annual staff survey
- tracking of the links between staff and customer experience so that HR can focus on areas of concern
- bringing HR and customer service functions under the same directorate.

Sainsbury's believes its approach to staff engagement has been a key element in its more recent business success.



Engagement for improving public services (Lewisham and Birmingham councils)



Lewisham and Birmingham councils have implemented innovative staff engagement strategies to help improve efficiency and services for local people.

Birmingham Council has been operating its staff engagement strategy (BEST) since 2009. BEST is based on “engagement leaders” whose main focus is to support staff to develop ideas for improving council services. Further information on the BEST programme is available at www.local.gov.uk

“The Lewisham Way” is a local set of values which govern how staff are expected to work. Operational directors hold open meetings where staff can raise issues. Ideas generated from staff have not only led to improved services and savings, including major reductions in absence levels, but also an improvement in staff engagement levels (70 per cent of staff feel they understand the goals of the organisation) and resident satisfaction.

The NHS Employers organisation is constantly updating examples of staff engagement outside the NHS in both public and private sectors. One of the most successful examples of staff engagement this year was during the Olympics. For further information on this and other examples see the [NHS Employers website](#).



Section 3: How to embed staff engagement in the NHS

Click on the links below for examples of trusts that are working to increase staff engagement, including the steps they took and what they have achieved so far.

[Health and wellbeing and staff engagement](#)

[Delivering great management and leadership](#)

[Enabling involvement in decision making](#)

[Ensuring every role counts](#)

[Supporting personal development and training](#)

[Involvement and improvement – making it happen](#)



Health and wellbeing and staff engagement: Calderstones NHS Trust

The links between staff engagement and health and wellbeing are strong. Many organisations have therefore sought to coordinate their activity on health and wellbeing and staff engagement.

Calderstones NHS Trust is a learning disability trust in the North West. From 2011 the trust decided to link its work on staff engagement with its health and wellbeing programme and brought them together into a single strategy. As part of a new approach to health and wellbeing, it improved access to occupational health services, including therapies, as well as providing an on-site gym. Managers were trained in how to identify and help tackle stress. It reviewed and improved communication with staff, with more opportunities for staff feedback and input. The policy was developed with staff side involvement.

These initiatives appear to have had a positive impact, with reduced sickness levels, cost savings and higher staff engagement. The trust raised its staff engagement score against the national trend, putting it in the top quartile of mental health trusts.



Delivering great management and leadership: South Essex University Hospital Foundation Trust (SEPT)



High-quality leadership and management at all levels is a vital component of staff engagement.

The South Essex University Hospital Foundation Trust (SEPT) is a mental health provider. It has had a long standing commitment to staff engagement and this approach is led by its chief executive.

- Engagement is encouraged at all levels and the chief executive and other senior leaders have an open approach to communication, with a focus on listening to the views of front line staff, especially around service redesign and change.
- A lot of effort is made to explain the organisational objectives and values. Line managers are supported to enable them to develop engagement with their teams and there is delegation of decision making to teams.

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Delivering great management and leadership: South Essex University Hospital Foundation Trust (SEPT)



Continued

- Since January 2012, SEPT has appointed a team who specialise in the health, wellbeing and engagement of the workforce. This demonstrated to staff that SEPT has its people at the forefront of future plans. As part of the team's remit, listening exercises have been developed. These sessions allow staff to work with engagement and trade union reps to highlight any positive or negative concerns they may have. The information is directed through the appropriate director to feed back to staff. SEPT also has a health and wellbeing fair throughout the day for staff to gain information on staff services at the trust.

[Click here](#) for further information on SEPT.



Enabling involvement in decision making: The Royal Bolton Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Being involved is a key element of achieving a sense of engagement.

The Royal Bolton Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is a large acute provider. In 2009 it embarked on a project with the aim to “make Bolton Hospital a great place to work”. The aim was to embed engagement into the trust through a series of listening events with staff aimed at getting their ideas and thoughts to support ongoing service improvements.

- The trust used a range of methods to involve staff, ranging from ‘big conversation’ style events to taking soundings from a wide range of staff and smaller ‘focus group’ type events.
- It sought to develop initial actions that could be taken to secure improvements in the short term, known as ‘just do it’ actions. In the longer term they have identified that action needs to be taken in areas such as line manager training, appraisal systems and local values.
- The work on engagement has been conducted in partnership with their local staff side and with support from the national Social Partnership Forum.
- The trust has implemented a new training and support programme for line managers and a new appraisal process based on the assessment of how far staff are implementing the agreed behaviours and values.



Ensuring every role counts: The Derbyshire Community Trust

The Derbyshire Community Trust (DCHS) has developed a programme known as 'the Derbyshire Way' to help ensure all staff understand how their role contributes to its services. This includes the twin aims of being the best provider of services and a great place to work.

- The trust developed a local values statement (e.g. to act with compassion, and respect and value everyone's contribution).
- Linked to this, it developed a set of expectations (e.g. what staff can expect from DCHS and what DCHS can expect from staff). These include a set of behavioural standards linked to appraisal processes and performance indicators.
- Its strategy also covers areas including health and wellbeing, leadership development and communication.

This has been the basis for changes to recruitment – to recruit on the basis of the DCHS values – and to induction, to ensure new recruits understand the context in which they are working. One of the expectations DCHS has is that staff will promote the reputation of DCHS. These approaches have helped DCHS improve staff engagement scores during a period of organisational change.



Supporting personal development and training: Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust



Personal development has a positive link to high levels of staff engagement. It can increase effectiveness and provide opportunities for individuals to progress and can help staff to feel valued by the organisation.

Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust is a large acute provider in the North West. In recent years it has focused on training and development and, in particular, improving appraisal rates and take-up of the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF).

- The trust sought to simplify KSF processes and ensure that it was seen as useful by line managers and staff. This has new core dimensions including safety and quality. It also links KSF assessment to training via its personal development planning process.
- This is part of an overall programme of staff engagement activity at the trust.
- It is a top rated acute trust and has an excellent staff survey score for effective team working and staff believing their role makes a difference to patients.

[Click here](#) for further information on Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust.



Involvement and improvement – making it happen

The Hull and North East Yorkshire Trust is seeking to involve its staff in a variety of ways to improve how care is delivered. Based on wide-ranging conversations with staff, led by the chief executive, it has:

- developed 'link listeners' – volunteers from all sections of the workforce who develop ideas for how their teams could improve services. They have access to funds via a 'make it happen fund' to put ideas into practice
- introduced an 'enabling people' scheme which is designed to develop ideas for longer term organisational improvements.

The University Hospital Nottingham is overhauling how it delivers care through its 'Better Care for You' programme. Clinician-led teams have generated substantial recurrent savings, kick-started with initial investment, working across a range of clinical areas to redesign care around patients' needs.

[Continued on next page](#)



Involvement and improvement – making it happen

Continued

Similar programmes based on staff involvement are ongoing at many trusts across the country, including Northumbria Healthcare and University College Hospital London. In some cases, such as Sherwood Forest and Countess of Chester, these have been delivered in partnership with commercial partners, such as Unipart Expert Practices or IHG. In others, they are led by in-house teams.

The NHS Employers organisation is building up its knowledge base of improvement initiatives. For more information, please contact NHS Employers and look out for updates on our staff engagement pages. You can also join the [NHS Employers QIPP community](#) for QIPP-related information.

The NHS Employers organisation is also aiming to develop new ideas in 2013 for how staff can be engaged in service improvement. More information will be made available on the [NHS Employers website](#).



Section 4: Resources

Practical advice for increasing staff engagement

- [Providing better patient care](#)
- [Achieving financial efficiency](#)
- [Improving productivity and efficiency](#)
- [How is staff engagement defined?](#)
- [How is staff engagement measured?](#)
- [How can I improve staff engagement?](#)
- [Staff engagement and the NHS Outcomes Framework](#)
- [Top tips on improving staff engagement](#)
- [How to develop a staff engagement strategy](#)
- [Tool for continuous assessment of staff engagement](#)
- [Communicating and involving your staff](#)
- [Line managers and staff engagement](#)
- [Induction](#)
- [Staff engagement and partnership working](#)
- [Making effective use of the staff survey](#)
- [Support and resources](#)

Headline messages

- [Executive summary](#)
- [Business case for staff engagement](#)

Useful links

- [The NHS Constitution toolkit](#)
 - [Living local values](#)
 - [Medical engagement](#)
- [Test your understanding of this resource](#)
 - [Give us your feedback](#)
 - [Key contacts and further help](#)



Providing better patient care: The Northumbria Healthcare Trust

The Northumbria Healthcare Trust provides a range of community, mental health and hospital-based services across north east England. It has a strong commitment to staff engagement and, in particular, has strengthened medical engagement through its devolved clinical budgeting and leadership development programmes.

It also makes extensive use of patient feedback to improve services. It is able to collect and share patient feedback with staff on wards, including suggestions for change. It collects and shares data, including data by consultant, to help improve performance and services. The trust has high scores in the patient survey and high levels of staff engagement.

Devolved management led by clinicians has enabled the trust to implement changes to services to provide higher quality and more accessible care.

Other trusts which have engaged staff around improving services for patients include St George's Healthcare Trust, which ran a programme to support staff to visit other organisations to help "put themselves in patients' shoes". A number of trusts are using patient feedback to help improve services.

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Providing better patient care: The Northumbria Healthcare Trust



Continued

The links between staff engagement and patient experience are now well recognised. Data on staff willingness to recommend the organisation they work for will become more public as the Friends and Family Test is developed in 2013. The NHS Employers organisation will keep employers updated on developments in this area via [our website](#).



Achieving financial efficiency: Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust



Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust is a high performing hospital trust in the North West. Like all NHS organisations it needs to make a recurrent cost reduction (£48m over the three year period to the end of 2012-13).

It has sought to get staff to help find ways to reduce waste, improve performance and [efficiency](#).

Staff can make suggestions through a scheme called 'Smart Health = Smart Savings'. This has attracted hundreds of ideas. These are considered on a monthly basis, the best ones being selected for development and consideration for encouragement awards and higher levels of recognition. Ideas have been highly practical, for example new scrub brushes in operating theatres.

This initiative is part of a wider programme which includes major changes to staff appraisal linked to the development of local values and performance management.

Improving staff engagement can help achieve the objective of the Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) programme.

[Click here](#) for more information and resources on QIPP.

The [University Hospitals Nottingham Trust](#) has embedded staff engagement and improvement into its 'Better way' programme, which has helped deliver substantial savings through the removal of wasteful and unnecessary processes.



The NHS Constitution toolkit

The NHS Constitution, its pledges, principles, values and responsibilities need to be fully embedded and ingrained into everything the NHS does.

All NHS organisations are under a legal obligation to have regard to the NHS Constitution in all their decisions and actions.

To help you do this, the Department of Health and the NHS Employers organisation have produced a suite of guidance and tools which can be found by clicking the link below:

[NHS Constitution toolkit](#)



Living local values

The NHS Values underpin the rights and responsibilities that the NHS has to patients and staff and provide everyone in the country with a common vision of what the NHS stands for.

Working with the staff, many employers have developed their own local values. The NHS Employers website has examples that look at the actions that have been taken to involve staff in the development of a set of local values, how this was done and offers tips for other trusts carrying out similar work.

Developing a set of local values can help support engagement. It needs to be done in conjunction with staff and to be linked to changing behaviour. For example, The Walton Centre has developed a set of values known as the Walton Way which is linked to appraisals and helps support high levels of engagement and quality of care. For information on this and other examples please [contact NHS Employers](#).

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Living local values

Continued

Despite progress in many areas and the existence of equality duties, the staff survey results show that staff experience is not always equal and that as a result levels of engagement may be affected. Organisations should look at their staff survey results analysed by equality characteristics and, in particular, look at variations in levels of engagement. This can then be the basis for action on any issues which may need to be addressed.

[Click here](#) to visit the NHS Employers website section on living local values.



Improving productivity and efficiency

The NHS faces an unprecedented challenge to improve productivity to save £20bn by 2015. A range of tools and techniques have been developed to assist local organisations in improving productivity.

The Productive Series supports NHS teams to redesign and streamline the way they manage and work. This helps achieve significant and lasting improvements – predominately in the extra time that they give to patients, as well as improving the quality of care delivered whilst reducing costs.

The key to the success of The Productive Series is that improvements are driven by staff themselves, by empowering them to ask difficult questions about practice and to make positive changes to the way they work. The process promotes a continuous improvement culture leading to real savings in materials, reducing waste and vastly improving staff morale.

[Continued on next page](#)



Improving productivity and efficiency

Continued

One approach has been to look at reorganising how services are organised through applying 'lean production' principles originally developed in manufacturing. Trusts have adapted these to the healthcare context. For example, Bolton Hospital Foundation Trust implemented this from 2008, seeking to redesign whole systems to remove waste and improve safety. It made major improvements in waiting times and improved safety as well as providing better value for money.

Nottingham University Hospitals is redesigning its processes through a programme known as 'Our way' – the flow of patients, how services are organised and removing wasteful steps. The programme has begun to deliver savings and improved patient experience.

Sherwood Forest Hospital Trust has worked with consultancy Unipart Expert Practices (UEP) to redesign its care processes and has secured major productivity gains. UEP seeks to develop improvement skills amongst staff to create a "culture of continuous improvement".

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Improving productivity and efficiency

Continued

Staff involvement and engagement is central all these cases with teams of front line staff lead by clinicians working together to improve care.

The NHS Institute has worked with over 100 trusts through its “productive programme”. These tools support staff to analyse and redesign work processes to reduce waste and improve value for money. The programme began with a focus on ward-level improvement in hospitals but has now includes a wider range of settings.

Staff engagement has been identified as a key element in successful use of these tools. [NHS Institute Productive Series](#).

See also the [NHS Employers QIPP community](#) for QIPP-related information.



Medical engagement

The Medical Engagement Scale (MES) is a tool designed to assess medical engagement in management and leadership in NHS organisations.

The MES differentiates between the individual's personal desire to be engaged and the organisation's encouragement of involvement.

It also includes a framework of organisational strategies to enhance medical engagement and performance. The scale is particularly useful in respect to strategic planning and service delivery.

For further information and resources [click here](#) to visit the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement website.

The engagement of medical staff is critical to the success of staff engagement programmes overall. NHS Employers has developed materials to support this including a [briefing for medical directors and a case study of successful medical engagement programmes](#).

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Medical engagement

The Medical Engagement Scale

The Medical Engagement Scale has been developed by Warwick University researchers to assess the level of medical engagement in an organisation and provide diagnostic data on how to tackle challenges.

[The King's Fund](#) has also developed resources to support medical engagement and the [Faculty for Medical Leadership](#) is doing work on how to support clinical leadership.

It is essential that clinicians are fully involved in developing approaches to securing efficiency and high-quality care under the QIPP programme. NHS Employers is working to develop ideas in this area. You can join the [NHS Employers QIPP community](#) here.

There are a range of steps that employers can take to support greater engagement by doctors. These include finding ways to get input from doctors to support career development. Devolved budgeting and approaches such as service line management appear to be linked to greater medical engagement. For more information, see the [NHS Employers web pages on medical engagement](#).



Test your understanding of this resource

A survey has been designed to help test your understanding of this resource and the main points you need to know about staff engagement.

Complete the survey at: www.nhsemployers.org/staffengagement



Give us your feedback

This is designed to be a growing resource and new information may be added at any time.

Please help us to keep this resource up to date by letting us know of any problems you find. Email: staffengagement@nhsemployers.org

You can also leave feedback online at
www.nhsemployers.org/staffengagement



Key contacts and further help

If you want to find out more about any aspect of staff engagement there is a wealth of information in [section 4: tips, tools and resources on staff engagement](#)

If the information in this or any other section does not answer the questions you have, please email NHS Employers at:

staffengagement@nhsemployers.org



How is staff engagement defined and what does it look like?

We know that staff engagement can be seen in the way people think and behave at work. People with high levels of engagement will think and behave positively, which will enable them to have high levels of performance at work.

This is summed up very well by Lord Currie, former Dean of Cass Business School in the Macleod review of staff engagement in the UK¹ who says:

“You sort of smell it, don’t you, that engagement of people as people. What goes on in meetings, how people talk to each other. You get the sense of energy, engagement, commitment, belief in what the organisation stands for”

The main question this way of thinking about staff engagement raises is, ‘if we can sense what staff engagement is, can we define it?’

Previous work looking to answer this question shows that there is not one simple catch all

definition that covers what staff engagement is.

Importantly, staff engagement means different things to different people, in different places at different times.

Instead of a simple definition, a wide range of descriptions of engagement are now available, mostly developed from research with employees in different settings, focussing on what engaged staff will feel, how they will act and the behaviours they will display.

What can be done is to look at these descriptions and pick out the important themes that are considered by most to be central to describing staff engagement, in terms of what staff feel and how they act. These are summarised as:

- When at work, engaged staff will experience a blend of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, involvement in

the direction of their own job and a feeling of empowerment

- Engaged staff will be advocates for their organisation and the work it does
- Engaged staff will have a desire to improve the way things are in their organisation, both for themselves, their colleagues and the outcomes of the organisation itself
- Engaged staff will work well in teams, encouraging and facilitating the development of others to achieve positive outcomes for the team

Achieving engagement is two-way. Organisations must work to engage their staff, who in turn will have a choice about the level of engagement to give back. Over time, each will reinforce the other.

Overall, it needs to be stressed that the wide range of available definitions and their different aspects is not a bad thing.

1. [*Engaging for Success: enhancing performance through employee engagement*, MacLeod D. and Clarke N., 2009](#)

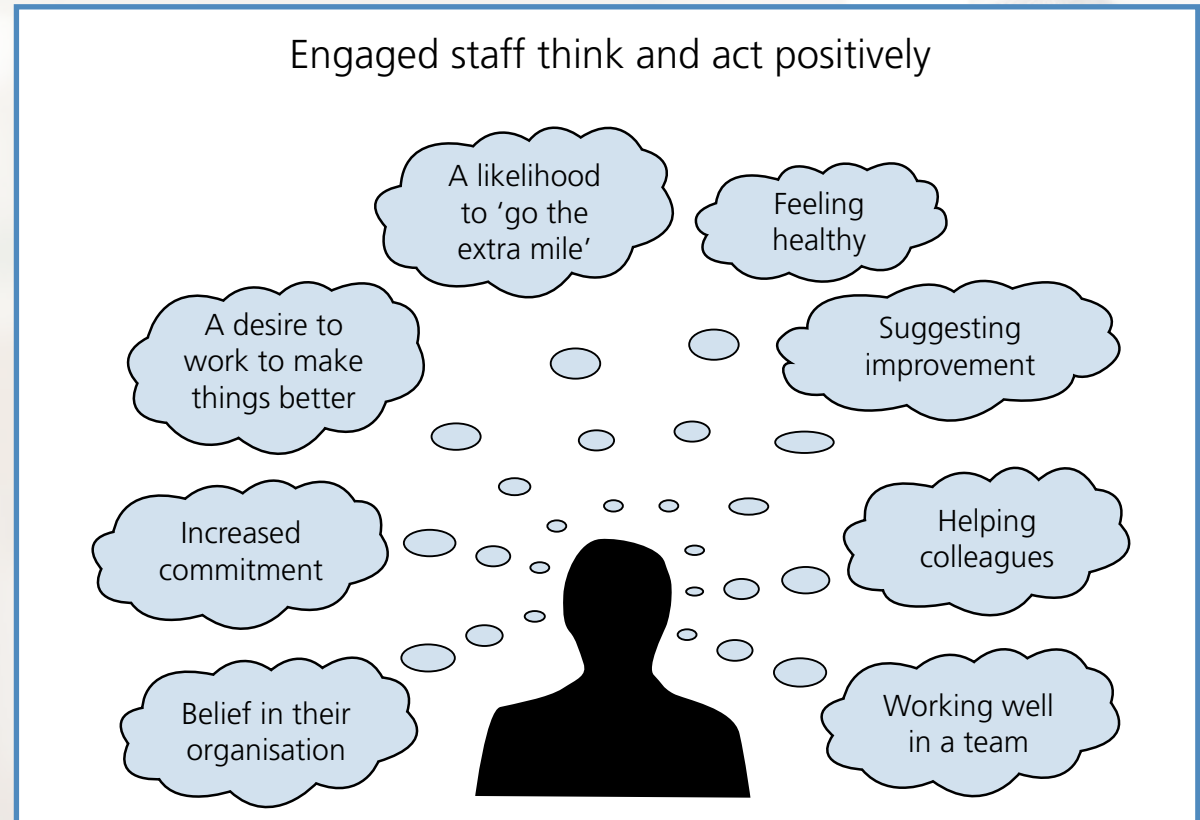
How is staff engagement defined and what does it look like?

The variation in definitions suggests that any work on staff engagement has to be tailored to suit the specific factors that are most relevant in any organisation or specific local workplace within that organisation.

Considering all the aspects that previous work has uncovered, the image opposite sums up some of the key ways in which an engaged member of staff might think and act at work. This can also be interpreted to give an explanation of what staff engagement might look like when observing how people work.

Focusing on ways to help staff achieve these positive behaviours has been the key point of staff engagement work that has been undertaken in many companies.

In reality, it doesn't matter how staff engagement is defined, as long as strategies can be implemented that deliver an engaged workforce.



How is staff engagement measured in the NHS?

Levels of staff engagement are usually measured through an overall score calculated from responses to a number of questions in surveys given out to staff in organisations.

Because we know that there is not one universal definition of staff engagement, each survey can ask different questions to make up the overall engagement score, usually dependent on the structure of the organisation taking part in the survey, and the type of work that it does.

To enable specific measurement of engagement levels in the NHS, a staff engagement indicator has been introduced to the annual NHS staff survey, which is currently completed by all NHS trusts and will be a contractual requirement for all organisations delivering NHS-funded care.

To develop the staff engagement indicator in the NHS staff survey, stakeholders across the healthcare system worked with experts to develop a score that covers the factors that we know help create staff engagement.

The overall score is calculated from responses to questions that cover three key components of staff engagement in the NHS:

Involvement

- How staff feel about their role in decisions and changes that affect them and the place they work.

Advocacy

- How positive staff are about the quality of their organisation for patients and themselves.

Motivation

- How staff feel about their job and how they feel when doing it.

The results from the following questions in the survey are used in the calculation of the overall staff engagement score:

Involvement

- I am able to make suggestions to improve the work of my team/department
- There are frequent opportunities for me to show initiative in my role
- I am able to make improvements happen in my area of work

Advocacy

- Care of patients/service users is my trusts top priority
- I would recommend my trust as a place to work
- If a friend or relative needed treatment I would be happy with the standard of care provided by this trust

How is staff engagement measured in the NHS?

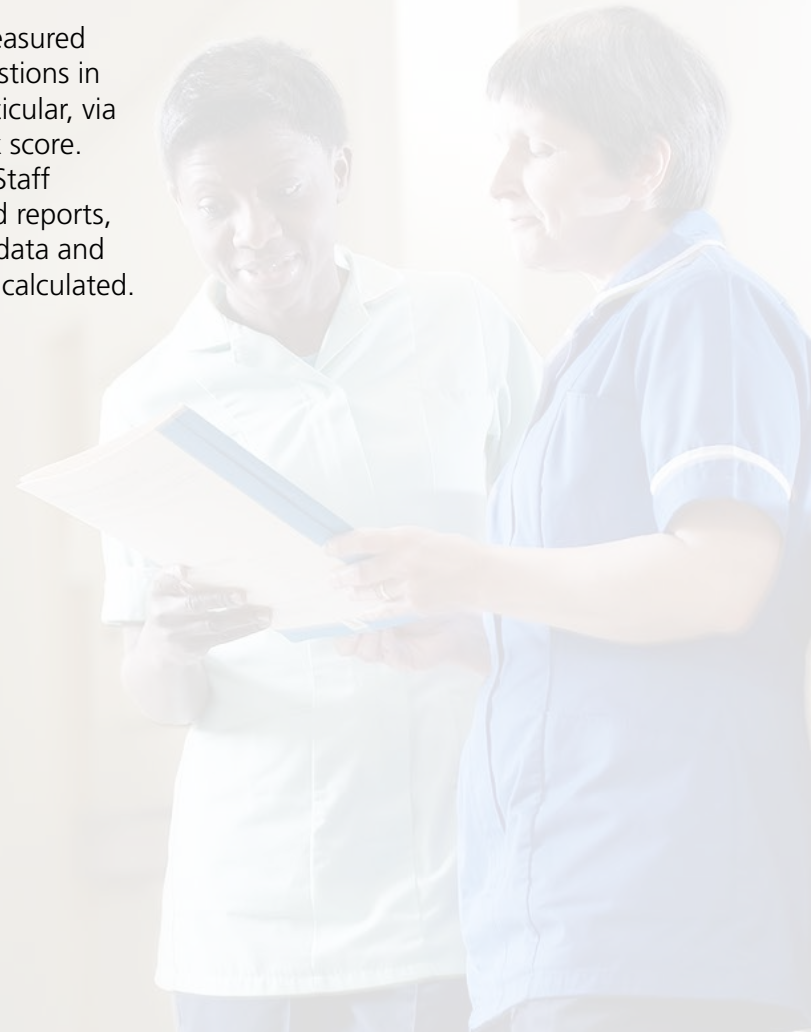
Motivation

- I look forward to going to work.
- I am enthusiastic about my job.
- Time passes quickly when I am at work.

All of the questions are answered on a five point scale, where one is the lowest score you could give, and five the highest. With the numbers corresponding to either how much staff agree with the question, or how often it happens.

These scores are then combined to give an overall engagement score between one and five, with five being the highest that could be achieved. As an illustration, in 2009 the overall score for acute trusts in the NHS was 3.64.

Staff engagement in the NHS is measured through the staff engagement questions in the [NHS Staff Survey](#) and, in particular, via the overall Staff Engagement Index score. This is published each year on the Staff Survey website along with standard reports, which give a set of benchmarking data and an explanation of how the score is calculated.



How can I improve staff engagement?

We know that staff engagement is seen in the ways that people behave, think and act. Influencing these things in a positive way will increase the level of engagement that staff have at work.

The below model shows the parts of the system that can be worked on by organisations and individuals in the NHS to get excellent staff engagement.

In the model shown in this image, each factor on the five points of the star feed into staff engagement.

The five factors points are all interlinked in two ways:

- 1) Getting one point to work really well will mean the other elements are more likely to be developed at the same time.
- 2) Once all the points are in place and operating effectively, this is when higher levels of staff engagement will be achieved and NHS staff survey scores will improve.

The staff engagement star: excellent staff engagement results from a number of factors



How can I improve staff engagement?

Great management and leadership, which among other factors, includes visibility, accountability and good communication, needs to run throughout the organisation, from the board, through to senior managers and as important, to first line managers.

If this flows in the best way it can, both down and back up through your management structure you will have one of the key components of staff engagement in place.

Involvement in decision making means making sure staff feel they have influence on the direction of their work, changes made to working practices and other decisions that affect patient care taken across the organisation.

This process cannot be a one off exercise and to be most effective has to include a circular process of consulting staff, acting on what they say, asking staff about the consequences, making adjustments as necessary and then consulting staff again.

Ways to achieve increased staff involvement include working in partnership with the unions, having an effective communications programme and promoting proactive work

on the NHS staff survey results in your organisation.

The right training and development needs to be identified and provided to suit the needs of both individual staff and the organisation over time.

Through using the principles of great management and leadership, together with involvement in decision making, the organisation as a whole will more easily identify areas for development both in teams and for individuals. This can help achieve a better quality of work for colleagues and a consequential improvement in care for patients.

Making every role count is a crucial factor in aligning staff engagement with the vision and aims of the organisation itself.

Each and every staff member has to be enabled to understand how their role fits into the overall structure of the organisation and how they actively help achieve the ultimate outcome of better patient care.

If the three key factors above this are effectively implemented, by their nature they will combine to help achieve making every role count in your organisation.

A healthy, safe, work environment needs to be provided and maintained so that staff have high levels of health and well-being and feel protected and secure at work at all times.

Where this type of environment exists in your organisation, staff can work more effectively in their day to day jobs and will be more receptive to the other key factors in the model.

For you to improve staff engagement, you need to start by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation against each of the factors in the staff engagement model and then think about how you can address the weak areas while maintaining or improving the strong areas.

The staff engagement star is a visual representation of these factors. In practice it may not be possible to address all areas at once and you should use staff survey data to help focus on priority areas. Some factors affecting staff engagement are outside of the star as they are outside the remit of the employer, such as mergers, employment reductions and views on wider policy developments.

Staff engagement and the NHS Outcomes Framework

"A dip in staff morale is the first sign of a dip in quality."

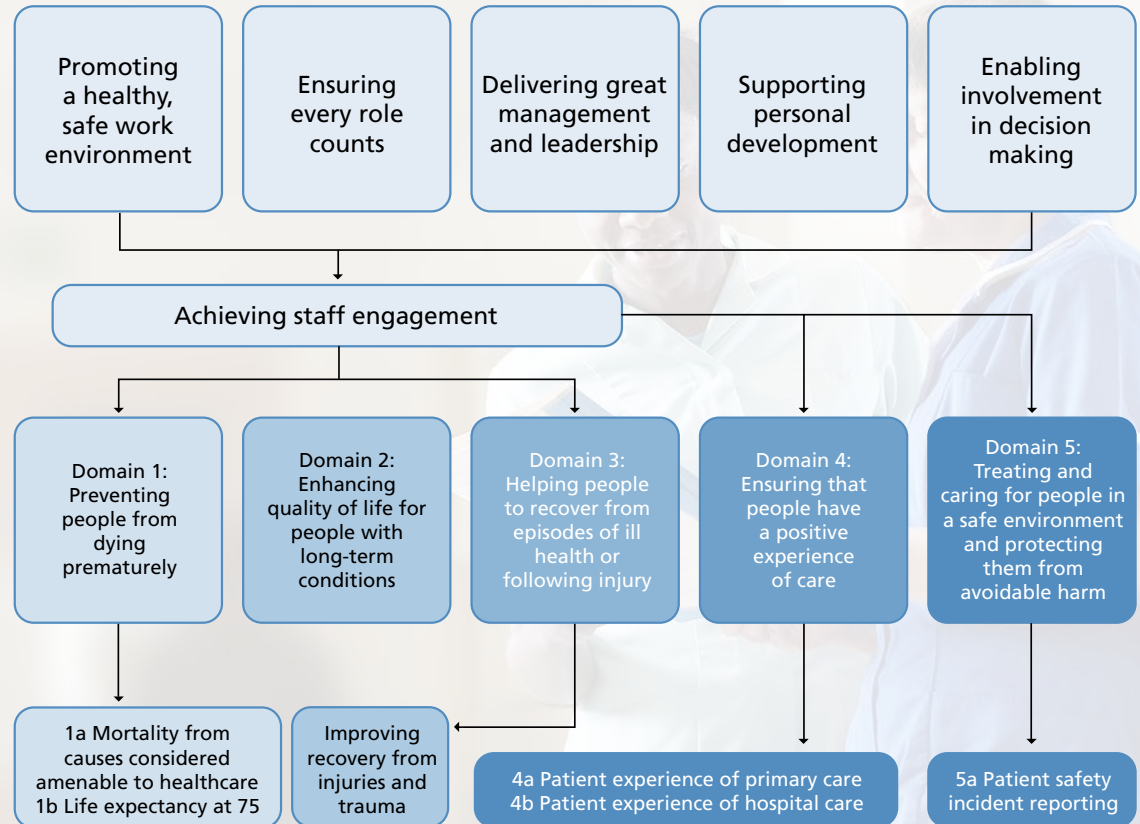
(Sir David Nicholson, SPF Feb. 2011)

Evidence from public and private sectors shows that high levels of staff engagement can be achieved if an NHS organisation supports staff in five key areas:

- promoting a healthy, safe work environment
- ensuring every role counts
- delivering great management and leadership
- supporting personal development
- enabling involvement in decision making

Evidence also shows direct links between these areas, staff engagement and the domains and improvement indicators that form the Outcomes Framework.

The diagram shows what can be achieved in the NHS Outcomes Framework as a result of supporting staff engagement.



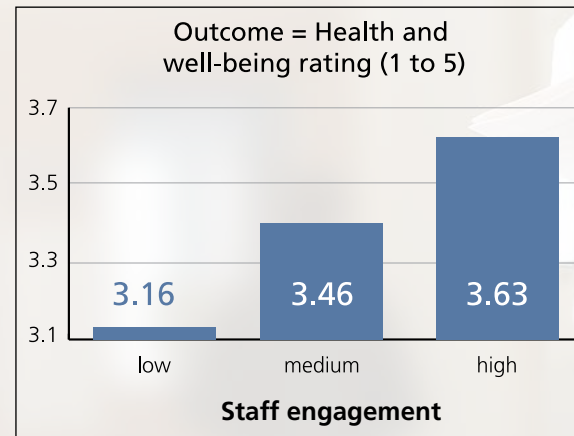
Staff engagement insight: High levels of staff health and well-being are closely linked with high levels of staff engagement in the NHS

New research findings show that staff engagement is directly linked with multiple aspects of the experience staff have at work. This gives organisations that provide NHS services more evidence that building and increasing levels of staff engagement can lead to improvements in a wide range of outcomes.

An important connection that has been highlighted by the research is between staff engagement and the health and well-being of staff. An increasing body of evidence, such as the Boorman review of health and well-being in the NHS, show that the level of general health and well-being of any workforce is a key indicator of, and contributor to, increasing organisational performance.

To test for links between health and well-being and staff engagement in the NHS, researchers at Aston Business School performed statistical analyses to compare the two factors and found:

Where NHS trusts have high levels of staff engagement, there are correspondingly high levels of staff health and well-being.



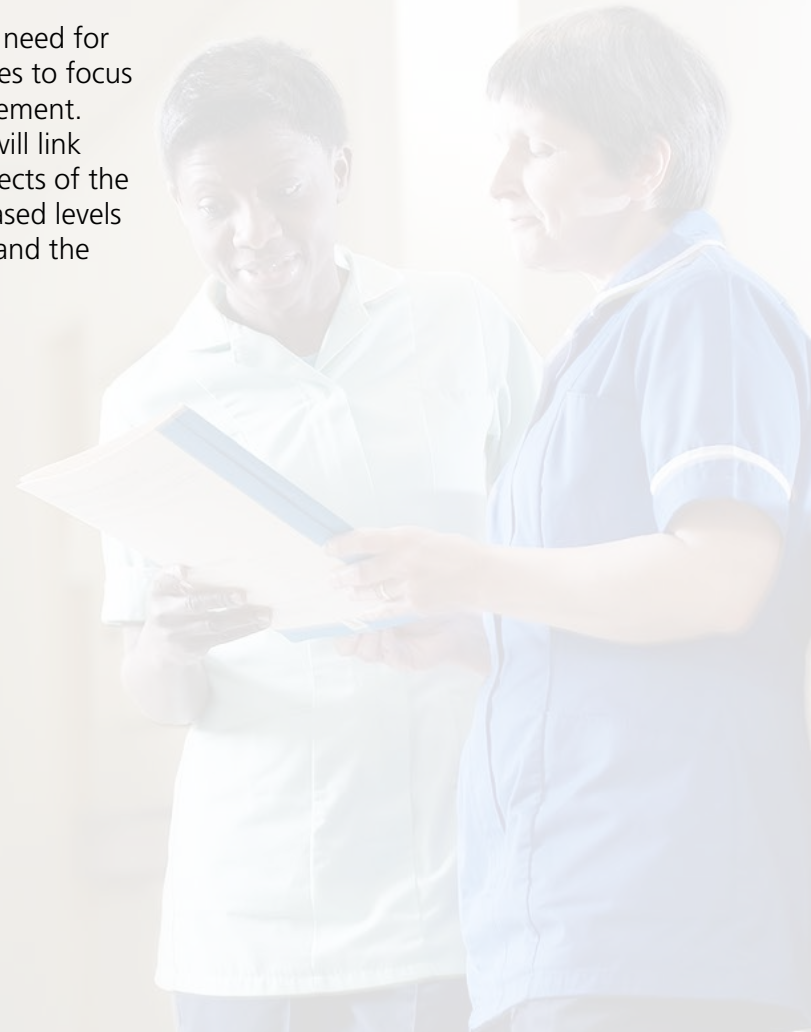
- The chart below shows that the lowest levels of staff engagement are associated with the lowest health and well-being in NHS trusts.
- Those trusts ranking in the lowest 10 per cent of staff engagement scores show much lower overall levels of health and well-being than the middle ranking trusts, suggesting that even a small improvement in engagement levels could lead to significant improvements.

Staff engagement insight: High levels of staff health and well-being are closely linked with high levels of staff engagement in the NHS

The benefits of moving from low to high levels of health and well-being are documented widely and can be seen for both individuals and subsequently for the organisations in which they work:

- Individuals with high levels of health and well-being have lower absence rates, are at a much lower risk of long term health factors and are more likely to display positive behaviour changes, such as increased morale over time.
- These high levels of health and well-being for individuals also translate into benefits for whole organisations, helping them function more effectively in terms of both financial management and delivery of quality care. Lower sickness absence and turnover deliver efficiencies through resource savings that can then be used across the organisation. Where individual staff display positive behaviours, patients are much more likely to not only receive higher quality care, but report it themselves in survey results.

This new evidence strengthens the need for organisations delivering NHS services to focus on policies to promote staff engagement. Achieving high staff engagement will link into high levels for many other aspects of the staff experience. In this case, increased levels of health and well-being for staff, and the associated benefits from that.



Staff engagement: executive summary

What is staff engagement?

Staff engagement is a measure of employees' emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organisation which profoundly influences their experiences at work and their willingness to learn and perform.

Engaged employees are fully involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and willing 'to go the extra mile.'

High levels of engagement result from a combination of experiences at work which includes involvement in decision making, personal development and training, great management and leadership and a healthy, safe, work environment, where every role counts.

The importance of staff engagement

Through the pledges in the NHS Constitution the NHS has committed to ensure staff have a positive experience at work.

Through *Equity and excellence: liberating the NHS*, the coalition government has made a commitment to uphold the NHS Constitution and to promote staff engagement.

A range of national levers work together to ensure that NHS organisations aim for high levels of staff engagement including; *The Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2012/13*, The standard contract, Quality Accounts, and the Care Quality Commission.

Evidence tells us that highly engaged and empowered staff not only generate better outcomes for patients but there are further benefits such as:

- **improved quality of services**
- **reduced patient mortality**
- **improved staff health and well-being**
- **lower levels of sickness absence**
- **greater financial efficiencies.**

Action for senior leaders

Senior leaders within NHS organisations have the most influence in making important changes within their trusts.

To assess the need for change, the NHS staff survey reveals a great deal about staff engagement. It provides a structured, evidence-based way for employers to engage with their staff and to gather information about important areas relating to staff experience, including where staff can see potential and actual risks.

Measuring and acting on staff experience information collected from the national NHS staff survey is therefore important for delivering improvements for staff, patients and the organisation.

Staff engagement: executive summary

There are a number of ways in which senior leaders can develop a culture of engagement within their organisation, these include:

- **making a commitment to employee development**
- **encouraging employees to challenge assumptions and voice their opinions**
- **showing that employees are valued**
- **acting in an honest and consistent manner**
- **being visible and available to employees at all levels.**

In challenging times, maintaining an engaged workforce is more important than ever. Staff have an invaluable perspective on what is happening within their organisation and their views of how their service is operating provide an important perspective to inform service delivery.

Purpose of this staff engagement resource

This resource has been designed to help organisations to improve staff engagement. It contains a wide scope of information and tools from the research and evidence base to practical advice.

Senior leaders may find it helpful to read the following:

- [Staff engagement – making a difference within your organisation](#)
- [Staff engagement insight: high engagement scores link to financial efficiencies in the NHS](#)
- [The business case for staff engagement](#)

In addition, the following report provides comprehensive information on the role of leadership in staff engagement:

- Hockey and Ley (2010) *Leading for engagement: how senior leaders engage their people. A study into engaging leadership practices* (National School of Government).

Top tips on improving staff engagement

Staff engagement is an integral part of employment policy.

1. The organisation should:

- have a clear business strategy that has been discussed with staff
- have communication mechanisms to allow dialogue with staff
- ensure staff understand how their role supports overall objectives.

2. Line managers should engage staff by:

- ensuring the team meets regularly and discusses how to improve its effectiveness
- encouraging senior managers to involve staff in decision making
- ensuring effective communication between senior management and staff encouraging staff to suggest and explore new ideas for improving services.

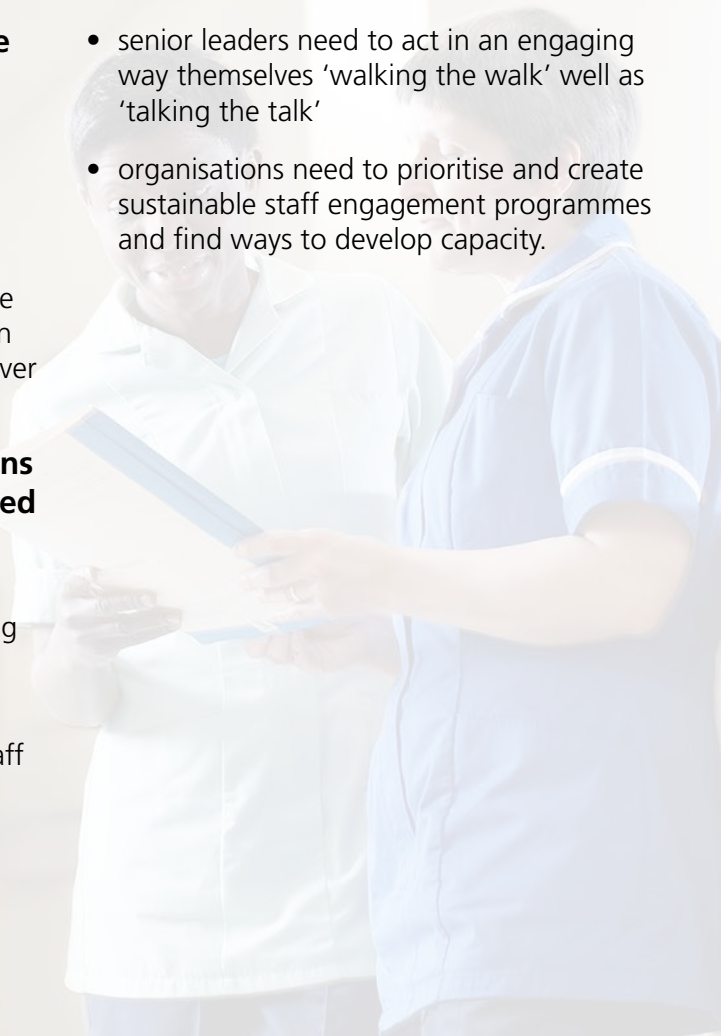
3. The organisation should measure and monitor staff engagement through:

- local staff surveys (see section on [continuous assessment of staff engagement](#) for advice)
- the national NHS staff survey – using the national staff survey individual trusts can benchmark their level of engagement over time and against similar organisations.

4. Experience in those organisations which have successfully improved staff engagement include:

- staff engagement is part of wider staff experience and is particularly challenging to maintain during a period of major organisational change
- there needs to be strong support for staff engagement from senior leaders and the board giving support to HR, and HR also needs to involve communications colleagues

- senior leaders need to act in an engaging way themselves 'walking the walk' well as 'talking the talk'
- organisations need to prioritise and create sustainable staff engagement programmes and find ways to develop capacity.



How to develop a staff engagement strategy

It is essential that staff engagement strategies are developed according to local conditions and based on discussion with key stakeholders.

Developing your approach to staff engagement may feel like an overwhelming challenge. Given the range of other issues facing the NHS, it may even feel like a distraction. Improving staff engagement is however a key part of meeting these challenges as it is linked to better financial performance, increased staff health and wellbeing and improved services for patients.

First steps

- Assess the current levels of staff engagement for an overview of current issues and areas for action. See [making effective use of the staff survey](#) and [tips for continually assessing staff engagement](#) for advice of how to do this.
- Secure support for the new focus through a discussion with the board/senior leaders.
- Organise direct engagement between senior leaders and front line staff. This needs to be done carefully to avoid being tokenistic or unsustainable.
- Ensure line managers understand and feel they are part of the new approach, for example, by running briefing or training sessions.
- Review and improve internal communications, making best use of all available communication methods and ensuring dispersed staff are kept informed. See [Approaches to engaging staff](#) for more advice.
- Run an engagement exercise around a particular issue, for example, the reorganisation of services in a particular area.
- Make the links with patient satisfaction and improved quality and productivity. See [section 2: The benefits of staff engagement, the evidence](#) for more information. Some organisations have implemented approaches which get staff to put themselves in patient's shoes or give staff direct access to patient feedback.
- Link to other priority areas, such as [health and well-being](#). It is clear that staff engagement influences issues such as staff absence levels.
- Make reference to local values statements that build on those contained in the [NHS Constitution](#)
- Refer to the [staff pledges in the NHS Constitution](#) and especially the pledge of staff involvement.

How to develop a staff engagement strategy

Developing the strategy

- Your activity on staff engagement should be linked to the overall workforce strategy of the organisation rather than a separate initiative.
- It is recommended that the development of policy on staff engagement is not led solely by HR. There needs to be visible support for the policy from the board/ chief executive and involvement of operational managers and clinicians. The communications team will have a key role to play.
- One approach would be to form a working group of HR and other senior managers to take forward the plan and develop ideas (a group of five to seven people is the best size). You should share your plans with other stakeholders such as staff side representatives to help shape the strategy and give it more credibility.
- It is essential that your staff engagement strategy is one which has a broad appeal. Non-HR managers will be most interested in the operational rather than employment

relations benefits. For example, explaining the links between engaged teams and better performance may help you convince line managers. Clinicians will be most interested in the impact on patient satisfaction. You should work with communications colleagues to develop communications messages around staff engagement which are appropriate for the differing audiences.

- The staff engagement policy should set out clear objectives. These will range from running specific events to increasing scores in the national staff survey. As with any objectives, these should be measurable.

Measures of success

- The staff engagement strategy needs to have some short term evaluation criteria for example, attendance at staff engagement events or feedback from staff. In the medium term the staff engagement scores in the staff survey results will be a key outcome measure. In the short term the organisation will need interim measures. One method of

assessing this is through what are known as “pulse” surveys, which allow the organisation to gain an understanding of employee opinion on a more limited range of topics. In the longer term you should seek to evaluate the impact on overall organisational performance, although this is hard to assess.

- A key snapshot indicator of the level of staff engagement is the willingness of staff to recommend their organisation as a place to work or be treated.
- The NHS Staff Survey provides a single composite indicator of the level of staff engagement and trends in this should be the key measure of progress. The 2012 Operating Framework asks organisation to use data from the staff survey to improve staff experience and highlights the benefits of staff engagement.

The business case for staff engagement

The business case for staff engagement is a strong one. The evidence base for the economy has been summarised by the [Engage for Success Taskforce](#) and for the NHS is set out on the [NHS Employers website](#).

The business case for staff engagement is compelling. The Engage for Success Taskforce has summarised the evidence for the economy as a whole as “overwhelming”.

The evidence for the NHS is summarised in section of the toolkit and also in the [NHS Employers briefing for finance directors](#). In particular, organisations with high levels of engagement are better placed to get ideas on [efficiency savings from staff](#) and also to implement productivity programmes effectively, according to the NHS Institute review of the productive time programme.

Engagement evidence

The most recent review of the evidence clearly demonstrates a positive link between engagement and organisational outcomes*.

There is also a strong clinical case, with staff engagement showing that engagement is linked to better patient experience and even appears to be correlated with lower patient mortality, although this relationship is complex.

This evidence is summarised in [briefings NHS Employers has produced for clinical leaders](#).

There is also evidence of a link between high levels of staff engagement and turnover and better relationships with supervisors.

Experience in the UK economy

A number of UK studies have demonstrated positive benefits from staff engagement strategies and successful examples of staff engagement can be found in sector leaders such as Sainsbury's, Tesco and Nationwide Building Society. Investment in staff engagement played a key role in the revival of B&Q and Marks and Spencer. As an employee owned enterprise, John Lewis has had a long-standing commitment to

staff engagement. Local authorities who have high levels of staff engagement such as Birmingham and Lewisham also appear to improve wider performance.

Engaged employees

Employee engagement has a strong link to key measures of employee effectiveness such as improved attendance, higher productivity and greater “discretionary effort”. Engaged employees may also be less likely to leave the organisation especially in the early stage of their career. They have higher levels of trust in management and greater understanding of their role within it. This can help when the organisation needs to make difficult decisions during challenging periods. High levels of staff engagement can also support successful organisational change.

* [Meta-Analysis: The relationship between engagement at work and organizational outcomes, GALLUP 2009](#)

The business case for staff engagement

Engagement and the NHS

Evidence from research by Aston Business School has looked at the relationship between engagement scores in the NHS staff survey and overall assessment of organisational performance. This is discussed in [Section 2: The benefits of staff engagement](#), the evidence and shows clear links between high levels of staff engagement and overall organisational effectiveness. In particular, staff engagement appears to be linked to financial effectiveness, patient satisfaction and to some measures of clinical effectiveness. They found:

- higher staff engagement scores are associated with higher performance as measured by the Care Quality Commission Health Check measures and patient satisfaction

- staff engagement appears to have a strong link to improved health and well-being and as a result, trusts with high levels of staff engagement have lower levels of absence
- there are also many examples of trusts with high levels of staff engagement that have successfully involved staff in the improvement of services and in helping make financial savings. Engaged employees can also act as an advocate for the organisation
- engagement is also a key issue during periods of change, for example during mergers and the integration of services. See also [Making integrated out-of-hospital care a reality](#).



Tool for continuous assessment of staff engagement

The staff engagement score reported in your NHS staff survey results gives something that can be used at any time to keep you up-to-date with what is happening with staff engagement across your organisation.

Conducting periodic snapshots of staff engagement will give you extra information to help you:

- a) assess the affect of any work your organisation has done
- b) find out how wider factors or one-off occurrences might be affecting levels of staff engagement.

How to take snapshots of staff engagement in your organisation

Many organisations have found it useful to collect additional data as well the staff survey. This can be done through additional surveys to samples of staff (known as a pulse survey) or smaller discussion groups (known as focus groups).

A systematic approach is preferable to collate data so it is recommended that the same questions are used as are found in the staff

survey, although you may wish to concentrate on some aspects, for example involvement or willingness to recommend. A number of commercial survey providers can also supply survey you can use.

Social media and electronic discussion forums can also be a valuable tool in securing staff feedback, especially with dispersed staff or staff that are familiar with these types of communication. If possible, organisations should facilitate this as a low-cost method of securing staff feedback in line with existing IT policies. To take a snapshot of engagement levels you need to:

- collect the data by asking people the same set of questions that are used in the NHS staff survey
- collate the responses to get an overall score.

Before you start on this type of assessment and monitoring exercise there are a few technical issues that you will need to know about.

Technical guidance to understand before conducting snapshots

When taking a snapshot of staff engagement there are a few issues that you must always remember to think about to make sure you get usable results and to protect the people who are filling in the survey:

- think about how many people you need to respond to your survey to get a reliable result. Organisations with around 3000 staff need about 340 responses, but 1000 staff need 280. For exact numbers, sample size calculators are available free on the internet
- think about how to make the responses anonymous so that people can't be linked to their answers
- make sure the responses are stored in a safe place or destroyed.

There is a lot more detailed guidance and information about what you need to consider when conducting surveys like this on the internet. Key search terms that you can start with are 'survey sample size', 'protecting survey data', 'confidence intervals and 'conducting surveys'.

Tool for continuous assessment of staff engagement

Tool to measure staff engagement

This tool can be completed by anyone in your organisation to give their staff engagement score. The process you need to follow is to send it out, get the responses sent back, and collate and analyse the results.

To send it out you can email it, or print it out for people to fill in manually. The electronic version will automatically give the engagement scores. If it is filled in manually you will need to calculate the scores yourself – see next page for guidance.

Once your responses are all back (and you have calculated the scores where needed) you need to put all of the individual scores together (we recommend in an excel file) then add them up and divide by the number of overall responses to get your overall engagement score.

Guidance on calculating your scores

If you choose to send out the questions in a paper format, to calculate the engagement scores you need to get the responses back and then:

- 1) Assign a value from one to five for the response to each question, on a scale where strongly disagree is one and strongly agree is five.
- 2) Calculate the average score for each of the three elements of engagement by adding up the responses to the relevant questions and dividing the total by three.
 - The advocacy questions are the first, second and third.
 - The involvement questions are the fourth, fifth and sixth.
 - The motivation questions are the seventh, eighth and ninth.
- 3) Calculate the overall engagement score by adding up the scores from the three elements listed above and dividing the total by three.



Communicating and involving your staff

This section provides some ideas on the process of involving your staff, which is one element of achieving a highly engaged workforce.

Good communication is key to maintaining an engaging culture within an organisation, whether this is from senior leaders keeping staff informed of business developments to managers telling their staff about things that affect their work.

Good quality communication is not only vital in engaging colleagues with their work and with that of the wider organisation, but also in understanding current performance issues and in recognising improvement opportunities. It builds trust and rapport with team members across networks, and enables everyone to share vital information needed for the smooth running of any organisation.

Evidence tells us that staff who feel informed and involved in decisions perform better within an organisation and have improved morale and a greater sense of well-being. Good communication within and between teams is key to this.

Top tips for creating meaningful and engaging communications

In order to create effective communications, where your message is seen, heard and understood, there are a number of things you need to consider:

Your audience

- How well do colleagues know and understand the issue to be discussed?
- How are they likely to feel about the issue?
- Are there any specific issues to be aware of, for example, levels of cynicism, cultural differences?
- What do I want them to do as a result of this message?
- What new attitudes, perceptions and behaviours will they need to adopt to be and feel successful?

What to say

- What do people need to know?
- What do you want to tell them?
- Where can they go for more information?
- What's 'in it for them'?

When to say it:

- Will my message compete with other messages or be affected by other events?
- How time-sensitive is it?

How to say it

There are various different methods to communicate your message. Depending on your answers to the questions above, you may consider using any or a combination of the suggestions below:

Events and conferences, intranet, staff notice boards, posters, bulletins and newsletters, podcasts,

forums, email and other internal correspondence, Internet, workshops and training events, face-to-face meetings or 1:1s, team and branch meetings, social networking (For example, Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, NHS Comms Link and NHS Networks). Use of these should be within local protocols.

There are challenges of communicating with dispersed workforces and staff that work at night.

Top tip: don't just use one method – people respond differently to different medias. To engage with as many people as possible use a combination of methods.

Communicating and involving your staff

The pledges to staff in the NHS Constitution require staff to be given the opportunity to be involved in decisions which affect their working lives. The NHS staff survey looks in detail at the degree of involvement that staff feel in their organisation.

Involvement can be developed in a range of ways ranging from formal negotiation and consultation forums and representation on the trust board to informal team based.

Improving communications in response to the NHS staff survey

Measuring and acting on staff experience information collected from the NHS staff survey is important for delivering improvements for staff and patients.

The NHS staff survey provides a structured, evidence-based way for employers to engage with their staff and to gather information about important areas relating to staff experience, including where staff can see potential and actual risks.

Read about how [Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust and Lincolnshire Community](#)

[Health Services NHS Trust](#) have both taken steps to address an issue with communication between staff members and the executive team, highlighted by the results of their staff survey.

You don't have to wait until the annual survey results are available to understand staff opinion. Providing staff with opportunity to give regular feedback will help you keep on top of any problems. Regular discussion forums or conducting pulse surveys (see [Tool for continuous assessment of staff engagement](#) for more advice) throughout the year can help maintain an engaging culture.

Shared learning

Creating a culture of engagement can take time, but small steps in the right direction can add up to bigger benefits. Several trusts have already shown how small changes can make a big difference and examples can be found in this resource pack and on the [NHS Employers website](#)

Two techniques to support staff engagement include 'The Big Conversation' and

Listening into Action. Both involve regular discussion between frontline staff and senior management. A number of NHS organisations have used these approaches either in-house or with partners.

- See the example from [The Royal Bolton Hospital NHS Foundation Trust](#) who used 'The Big Conversation' type model.
- Visit the NHS employers website to see how [Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals](#) used the Listening into Action model.
- You can also use methods such as social media and even 'suggestion schemes'. You can get assistance on these issues from a range of organisations.

Communicating and involving your staff

Creating an engagement network

Social networking is a great tool for sharing and communicating ideas within and beyond your organisation.

You can register and join an existing staff engagement network at www.networks.nhs.uk (staff engagement) or www.nhscommslink.nhs.uk (strengthening staff engagement) and start sharing your experiences today.

Staying informed

You can keep up to date with staff engagement news by joining the NHS Employers virtual community. Simply email your details to staffengagement@nhsemployers.org



Line managers and staff engagement

High quality leadership and management at all levels is vital to successful staff engagement. Staff need to have confidence in the leadership of their organisation and believe it is well managed, but it is line managers that have the biggest influence on employee outlook and behaviour.

Leaders need to set the agenda for the organisation by having a clear strategy and ensuring employees understand what the organisation is trying to achieve.

Leaders throughout the service can lead by example in developing an 'engaging' managerial style. This is about valuing colleagues, encouraging questions, and listening. It does not mean avoiding difficult decisions or not addressing performance. Engaging managers delegate and build up skills in their team.

Line managers who supervise staff have a key influence on the work environment, how employees are treated, and on communication between the organisation and staff. In particular, they play a crucial part

in ensuring that staff understand how their role contributes to the overall objectives of the organisation.

Research¹ shows that the role of line managers can make a significant difference, where positive, engaging behaviour by line managers can increase engagement among staff. Conversely, negative behaviour, such as continual lack of support for staff and unacceptable conduct, bullying or harassment has a disengaging effect.

Unless line managers are fully involved in attempts to improve staff engagement, any initiatives instigated by trusts are unlikely to be successful or enduring. Support from senior leaders, although necessary, is unlikely to be sufficient on its own and without line manager involvement, staff engagement strategies from human resource departments will not be sustained.

Line managers have the most immediate impact on the experience of staff. The way they interact with staff and the approach they take to managing staff will be key in

sustaining engagement. Towers Perrin, a global HR consultancy firm, described this relationship as 'pivotal' and estimate that up to 40 per cent of differences in performance can be explained by the role of the line manager.

New Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) research, [*Managing for sustainable employee engagement: developing a behavioural framework*](#), has shown how managers can generate higher levels of engagement. The report highlights how managers who were calm under pressure, invested time in getting to know staff as individuals and who discussed workers' career development, were likely to benefit from higher levels of employee engagement and lower levels of stress and absence. The study found that managers were more likely to motivate and retain their employees if they consulted people rather than simply told them what to do, took responsibility if things went wrong or mistakes were made, and asked after workers' wellbeing.

¹ [*For example: The drivers of employee engagement, Institute for Employment Studies, 2004*](#)

Line managers and staff engagement

Private sector organisations that have invested in staff engagement, such as Tesco, B&Q and Sainsbury's, have sought to improve the training of line managers in engagement skills, highlighted engagement within appraisal systems, and in some cases linked managerial reward to engagement levels in their teams.

Impact of an engaging style

Research demonstrates that if managers develop an 'engaging' managerial style they will achieve better results. For example, a recent large-scale study by Beverley Alimo Metcalfe, (Professor of Leadership at Bradford University School of Management) into the characteristics of high-performing community mental health teams, found that those teams whose managers were described by staff as 'engaging', were more successful across a range of measures. The presence of an engaging leadership style was the most

significant predictor of performance taking context into account².

What does an engaging style consist of?

The Chartered Institute for Personnel Development identifies the key features of the engaging leader as someone who:

- values others and encourages involvement
- helps others to develop critical thinking
- works with others to build a shared vision.

Research by the Institute of Employment Studies (IES) identified some common characteristics of managers that develop staff engagement in their teams (see box below). Engaging managers appear to undertake broadly the same functions as other managers but differently. Engaging managers do not see engagement as a separate initiative but as part of the way they undertake their managerial role³.

Engaging managers are also good at explaining the link between the role of the team and the overall objectives of the organisation. Ashridge Business School has identified that whether employees understand this link is a key factor in sustaining engagement, especially in challenging times⁴.

Engaging managers are not 'soft' and do not delay when urgent or difficult decisions are needed. They are able to combine toughness with understanding and empathy. They can break bad news by explaining why decisions are being taken. This ability of engaging managers to explain change will be vital in current times when organisations need to defend difficult decisions.

The IES did not find that any one personality type made for a better manager and did not find any magic formula for 'engagement skills'.

² [*The impact of leadership factors in implementing change in complex health and social care environments: NHS plan clinical priority for mental health crises resolution teams, Alimo-metcalfe B., 2007*](#)

³ [*The engaging manager, Institute for Employment Studies, 2009*](#)

⁴ [*Motivation and employee engagement in the 21st Century: a survey of management views, Ashridge Business School, 2009*](#)

Line managers and staff engagement

Common characteristics of managers that develop staff engagement in their teams

This list can be used as a guide for managers to improve their skills and as a checklist in appraisals/for staff to provide feedback.

An engaging manager:

- acts as a mentor, guide and coach and aims to lead by example, inspire their team, sets out expectations clearly, and explains them to staff
- deals fairly and effectively with performance issues
- communicates well and in particular is a good listener and accepts feedback
- creates an environment where staff are able to make suggestions for improvement and can implement their ideas
- is good at providing guidance and support to enable employees to deliver to their full potential
- values and recognises the contribution of staff and provides praise where appropriate
- can give constructive criticism and enable employees to learn
- reflects on their own performance and accepts they can learn from their staff
- is loyal to the organisation but also prepared to defend the interests of their team
- accepts responsibility for the actions of the team and does not play 'blame games'
- has good interpersonal skills and is able to manage any tensions between team members
- combines technical competence with broader leadership skills
- maintains a positive attitude and seeks to motivate their team in challenging times
- gain the loyalty of their teams who then 'go the extra mile'
- cares about the health and well-being of their team.

How to develop engaging managers

There are many ways to support line managers to foster staff engagement:

- recognise their role, involve them in developing staff engagement approaches, and provide them with skills training
- publish a set of values that managers and staff can support
- build engagement into the managers' appraisal process for managers
- use recruitment and talent management to identify people with appropriate skills and develop them
- line managers need to ensure they get the basics right such as knowing your team and taking a personal interest in them.

Line managers and staff engagement

Lessons from outside the NHS

B&Q implemented a major staff engagement programme, in 2006, following a financial crisis seen as linked to poor staff experience and interaction with customers. The programme aimed to re-engage the business with its staff. A new team briefing system and staff survey were introduced and the business retrained managers and included staff engagement in their appraisals. It also introduced regular one-to-one meetings between staff and their line managers.

When BP introduced its major change programme in 2000 it decided to focus on its first line leaders with a development programme to raise their skills and acknowledge their importance. It also made staff engagement part of the appraisal of leaders.

Greggs, the bakers, sees its store managers as key to securing engagement and improving retention. It aims to train them to build motivated teams and resolve staff conflicts. As a result it has higher than average levels of staff retention.

Another method for fostering engaging managers is to use 360 degree appraisal techniques. This allows staff to give feedback about their manager as part of the appraisal process. This needs to be implemented carefully to avoid damaging managerial engagement. Organisations also need to ensure continual support for line managers alongside adequate training and development.

Line managers and staff engagement

Line managers in the NHS

In the NHS, line managers often have a clinical background and have been promoted based on clinical expertise rather than people skills. In many cases they may also carry out clinical duties. Their span of control can be quite large, with some responsible for up to 25 people.

According to the 2010 NHS Staff Survey, staff generally see their manager as good at assisting them with their work, supportive in crisis, and taking an interest in health and well-being. However, they are seen as less successful at communication and consultation.

Some NHS organisations have developed their own local values and 'behaviour statements' to help managers develop staff engagement. Others have developed and adapted the [Knowledge and Skills Framework](#) and appraisal to support this process. A number of organisations are now looking for 'engagement skills' when selecting line managers.

A number of trusts have implemented new approaches to supporting line managers. [The Royal Bolton Hospital Foundation Trust](#) seeks to provide training and support for line managers to develop their engagement skills. It has also included engagement within its appraisal criteria, including 360 degree appraisal in some cases. [Salford Royal Foundation Trust](#) worked with the Robertson Cooper consultancy to develop a leadership programme for its clinical leaders.

There are a number of issues specific to the NHS which create engagement challenges. Line managers in the NHS are usually clinicians who generally will not have had any specific management training. In many cases, they also retain a clinical workload. Clinicians will need support to develop their engagement skills.



Induction is an opportunity to strengthen engagement for new staff

Top tips

What to think about:

- ☐ Design induction to suit local conditions and the job area
- ☐ When to conduct the induction
- ☐ Length of tenure
- ☐ How to get feedback on the induction process

What to include:

- ☐ An introduction to the organisation
- ☐ Principles, values and behaviours of the organisation
- ☐ Overview of organisational structure – who's who
- ☐ Business plan and objectives of the organisation
- ☐ Overview of policies for example, overtime, childcare, confidentiality
- ☐ Summary of NHS staff survey results
- ☐ Opportunity to meet key personnel
- ☐ Buddying or mentoring scheme
- ☐ Mandatory training and essential procedures (health and safety, fire drill)
- ☐ Appraisal, Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) and personal development



Making effective use of the staff survey

The [national staff survey](#) is a key resource in assessing staff engagement.

There are a number of tools available to make sense of your staff survey data. Key points to look at are historical trend and comparative performance, and benchmarking data is available from the staff survey reports given to trusts.

It is essential that organisations use the staff engagement data from the staff survey to inform their work on staff engagement. The survey will provide insight into which areas of engagement are the most challenging and levels of engagement within particular areas and between different occupational groups. It should be supplemented and cross-referenced with data from other sources such as focus groups or pulse surveys. It should also provide a basis for partnership working with staff side colleagues on areas of mutual concern such as health and wellbeing.



Staff engagement and partnership working

Staff engagement policy should be developed within the framework of the existing employment relationships with staff side representatives and complement partnership working. Staff engagement policies in particular in relation to involvement of staff should be developed in partnership with staff side representatives to sustain staff engagement.

Staff engagement is closely linked to key areas of employment where there will be locally agreed policies, for example job design, health and well being and training related areas such as appraisal. During periods of organisational change relationships with staff side representatives will be particularly important.

Improving staff engagement has a number of dimensions including improved communication and greater involvement of staff in decision making.

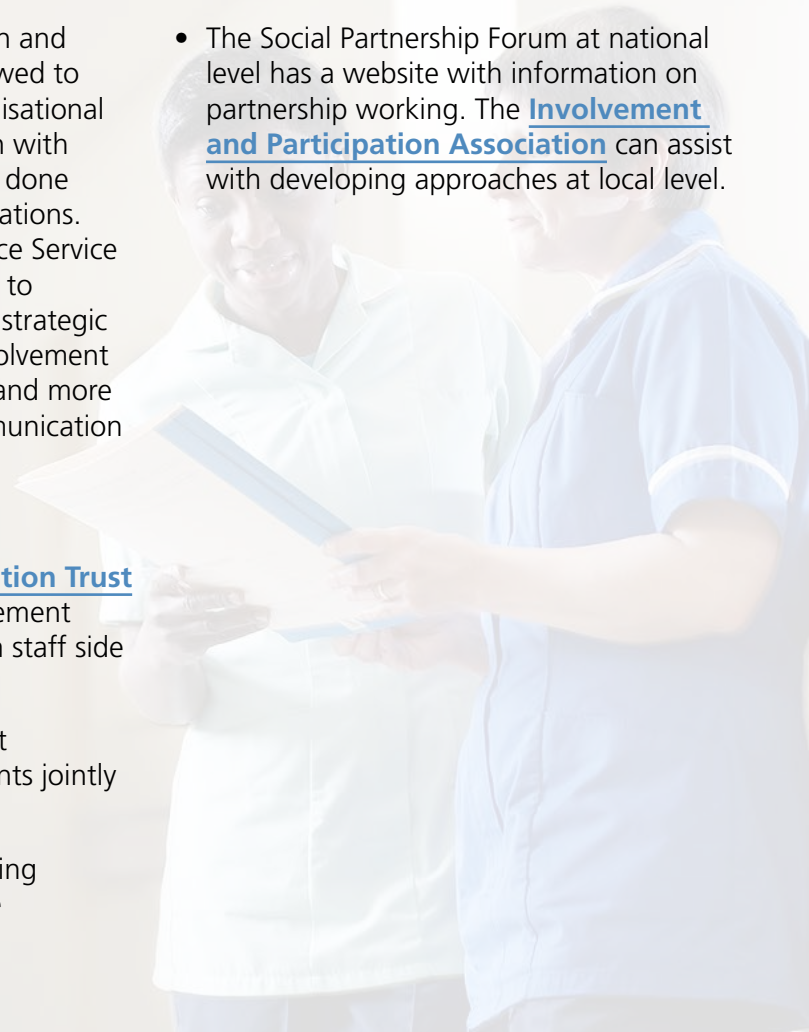
Improved direct communication methods with employees should run alongside improved communication with staff side representatives.

The scope and remit of consultation and negotiation bodies should be reviewed to facilitate wider discussion on organisational issues and exchange of information with staff representatives. This has been done successfully in a number of organisations. For example, the London Ambulance Service has developed a partnership forum to involve staff side representatives in strategic decisions, as well as promoting involvement in decision making at station level and more senior management visibility, communication and leadership.

Other examples include:

- The [Royal Bolton NHS Foundation Trust](#) which developed its staff engagement policy with full involvement from staff side representatives.
- The Barnet and Chase Farm Trust organised staff engagement events jointly with local staff side.
- An example of partnership working from the USA can be found here www.impartnership.org

- The Social Partnership Forum at national level has a website with information on partnership working. The [Involvement and Participation Association](#) can assist with developing approaches at local level.



Support and resources

There are a number of organisations which work in the engagement field and can provide support of various kinds. The NHS Employers organisation does not endorse any organisation and the following are listed for information only.

Involvement and Participation Association – has a focus on partnership working and engagement.

Optimise Ltd – developed the “Listening into Action” staff engagement programme and is currently working with over 20 trusts to improve staff engagement.

Psy Ltd – has a focus on how to improve staff engagement by line managers.

The Institute of Employment Studies – has a longstanding interest in staff engagement and, in particular, has done work on line managers and staff engagement.

Roberston Cooper – has worked with NHS organisations on staff engagement and health and wellbeing issues.

Engage for Success – is a network of organisations supporting staff engagement across the economy. The NHS Employers organisation works with the taskforce. Many examples of practice in the private and public sector can be found on its website. It also has an active ‘engage for success practitioners’ network’ to share experiences and ideas. See www.engagefor success.org

The Mind Gym – is a consultancy which seeks to help organisations improve their performance. It has recently worked with a number of public service organisations, including HMRC, and has produced a briefing on “the engaged employee”. See www.themindgym.com

Woodreed – is a consultancy that specialises in supporting communication and branding issues relevant to staff engagement. It has worked on staff engagement issues with a number of not-for-profit bodies. See www.woodreed.com

Employee Engagement literature – there is a large academic literature on staff engagement issues. A good introduction to the issues of engagement is *Engaged* by Linda Holbeche and Geoffery Matthews (Wiley 2012).

UK Work Organisation Network – specialises in staff engagement around improvement of work organisation. See www.ukwon.net

Section 5: December 2013 update – new developments

[New policy areas](#)

[Implementation of staff engagement](#)

[Case study: implementation of staff engagement in the West Midlands](#)

[Appreciative inquiry](#)

[Tips for running staff engagement events](#)

[Learning from others](#)

[Case studies: staff engagement in Essex County Council/Morrisons](#)



There are a number of new policy developments which have a bearing on staff engagement policy in the NHS. The main one being the response to the Robert Francis QC's report, [read the full response](#). The report highlighted the risks to patient care that can arise in the event of sustained disengagement of staff. The report and subsequent reviews, such as Sir Bruce [Keogh's review](#) also highlighted the research evidence on the links between engagement and patient care.

The Department of Health's response to Francis identified the need for organisations to take steps to improve staff engagement in the NHS. There are a number of new programmes of work that now include specific reference to staff engagement and these are outlined below.

Staff engagement and nursing

The chief nursing officer at NHS England is providing leadership through **Compassion in Practice** – the vision and strategy for nursing in England. Key action areas include:

- developing a set of tools that enable organisations to measure their culture

- providers undertaking a review of their organisational culture and publishing the results
- reviewing implementation of the cultural barometer once pilots have taken place
- set strategies to secure meaningful staff engagement
- commissioning leadership role (build into action area 4 in Compassion in Practice)
- commissioning an approach to ensure that staff feedback is being used to develop the cultural health of front-line staff.

Nurses are the largest single occupational group in the NHS, staff engagement therefore needs to take into account the Compassion in Practice framework. Nursing directors will be working on the Compassion in Practice framework and HR colleagues should liaise with nursing colleagues to develop local approaches that develop a coordinated approach.

The staff survey data for nursing staff will provide a starting point for assessment of nursing engagement and it will also give an

assessment of the organisational culture of the institution. Research demonstrates that an engaged workforce will be able to deliver compassionate care.

Key action areas for nurses

- Appraisal has a key role to play and will help ensure staff feel valued. The appraisal needs to be effective to have a positive impact, currently only half of all appraisals are considered so. Supervisors need training and support to develop their skills in this area.
- Many trusts have developed their own local values which need to be linked to behaviour standards, which can then be assessed in the appraisal.
- Performance management is a key part of the appraisal process, and research has shown that failure to manage performance can have a de-motivating effect on all staff.
- Nurses will also look to have opportunities for personal professional development and the appraisal also needs to look at this.

- The relationship between the first line supervisor and nurses is a critical factor affecting the level of engagement. In nursing particularly, this relationship has great importance due to the type of teams that nurses work in, which are generally small (eight to 12) and led by other nurses.
- Staff survey data indicates that the first line supervisors in nursing are generally seen as supportive and have good clinical skills. They are not seen as providing good opportunities for involvement and are variable in how they treat feedback. A number of organisations have developed interventions aimed to address this – for example, University College London Hospitals (supervisor training), Bolton Healthcare (an engaging manager programme) and Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust (leadership development for all clinical staff). For more information, contact NHS Employers.
- The NHS Constitution provides the basic underpinning of how care in the NHS is delivered, and through staff pledges it sets out the expectations and obligations of

staff. The majority of organisations have also developed local values, building on the national ones. It is important to ensure that these values are seen as relevant and justifiable for nurses. In particular, they should support the delivery of compassionate care. Disengaged staff will not be able to provide compassionate care. Research has demonstrated the close links between good people management, staff experience and patient care.

One strategy or many?

NHS Employers recommends that staff engagement strategies in the NHS should cover all staff and not be developed separately. Generally, they should also be part of a wider workforce strategy, not a separate document. The approach, however, should take account of the specific features of nursing using national and local data, developing ideas with nurses and taking into account the Compassion in Practice framework. The staff survey indicates that nurses have high job motivation and satisfaction but are less involved than they could be and wish to be. Nursing jobs can

be very demanding and, over time, staff can become tired out. In addition, although overall advocacy levels are high they are variable and could be improved.

Many organisations are looking at how to provide better and more compassionate care, for example, Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. More information on this will be added to the NHS Employers website in the near future and is available on request. The NHS Employers Care Makers programme can also assist in developing ideas for more change to provide for more compassionate care. Compassionate care is the priority for the NHS and will not be achieved without good staff engagement.

Staff engagement and organisational culture

It is clear that organisational culture has a major impact on levels of staff engagement. Staff engagement will only be developed and sustained in an organisational culture where there is trust in senior leaders, an open culture and staff contribution is valued. The

staff survey can give an indication of the views of staff on these questions as it has on questions such as:

- Do you feel senior leaders have patient care as a priority?
- Would you be willing to raise concerns?

In addition, by the end of November a new cultural barometer tool will be published, which organisations can use to assess their organisational culture. NHS Employers has an active programme of work in the area of [organisational development](#), which may be of relevance.

Current plans for Staff Friends and Family Test

NHS England has been asked to develop a staff version of the Friends and Family Test, which will be implemented in April 2014. This will ask all staff on a regular basis whether they would be prepared to recommend the organisation in which they are employed to their friends and family, either as a place to be treated or a place to work. It would build on the existing question in the NHS staff

survey but be asked of all staff on a quarterly basis. It is also planned to link the progress on this question to payments under the CQUIN scheme.

The recommendation test is also known as an 'advocacy' score, as those that are willing to recommend are termed 'advocates' for the organisation. Scores in this area are generally good, although there is a lot of variation. There is ongoing discussion over the phrasing of the question and also the level of the 'performance bar'. The evidence suggests that overall levels of staff engagement are the key driver of advocacy scores.

For more detail on the Staff Friends and Family Test, see [staff advocacy](#) and also our recent [news pages](#) where developments will be highlighted. More information will be made available as soon as practicable. HR leaders need to be raising the organisational and resource implications of these plans with their boards, and in particular with finance and clinical colleagues. This development does provide an opportunity to raise the impact of staff engagement on overall performance.

Other developments

It is clear that the regulators, especially the Care Quality Commission (CQC) but also Monitor, are now paying much greater attention to issues of staff feedback and engagement in their regulatory framework. It is now specifically mentioned in both the revised CQC methodology and also the Monitor Governance review process.

For more information on these developments, please contact NHS Employers. We are keen to get feedback on how this has worked out in practice in areas that have been subject to review recently.

NHS Employers' work on staff engagement is developing to include more direct work with trusts around how to develop and sustain staff engagement, for example, working with boards on staff engagement analysis and delivery of training aimed at line managers, to help them become more engaging. If you would like more information, please contact NHS Employers.

Implementation of staff engagement

A number of themes have emerged in relation to the implementation of staff engagement programmes in NHS organisations. These are highlighted in the Staff involvement report produced by Public World Democracy at Work for NHS Employers. Read the [full report](#).

Considerations

- Staff engagement needs to be for the long haul, not a one-off initiative.
 - Changing the culture of NHS organisations is a slow and complex process. Workplaces can either be large or widely dispersed, so conveying a consistent message is challenging.
 - Some long serving staff may have experienced various initiatives which have been launched, floundered and then forgotten.
 - Middle managers who have the main day-to-day contact with staff may be sceptical.
 - Some may feel that staff engagement threatens or undermines their role in the organisation.
- Examples of the most successful staff engagement are in trusts where there is:
- visible leadership, which is stable and has credibility with clinicians and key opinion formers
 - human resource directors who are able to work with the board, chief executive and other key leaders to put staff engagement into practice
 - an understanding that staff engagement is a key factor in achieving overall objectives for the organisation and especially in improving patient care and not just an HR led initiative
 - the development of local values linked to changing behaviours
 - an understanding of and ability to use data from the NHS Staff Survey and awareness of the research evidence on its impact.

In essence, staff engagement needs real commitment from senior leaders, otherwise it could be seen as something that is valued in theory but not in practice. Staff will judge the commitment of their organisation to staff engagement by how it behaves, rather than by what it says.

Case study: implementation of staff engagement in the West Midlands

An in-depth study of the implementation of staff engagement in several trusts in the West Midlands highlighted a number of key issues and lessons.

Key drivers

West Midlands trusts came to the conclusion that staff engagement was needed. The NHS Constitution had provided a catalyst for considering the issue but the main drivers were local. These included:

- The existing culture was seen as holding the organisation back.
- Effective staff improvement was seen as requiring staff engagement.
- A need to move from 'compliance to commitment' if they were going to be successful in the future.
- In order to benefit patients staff engagement was seen as a means of enabling staff to appreciate a need for change and create a fundamental change in how things were done.

What they did

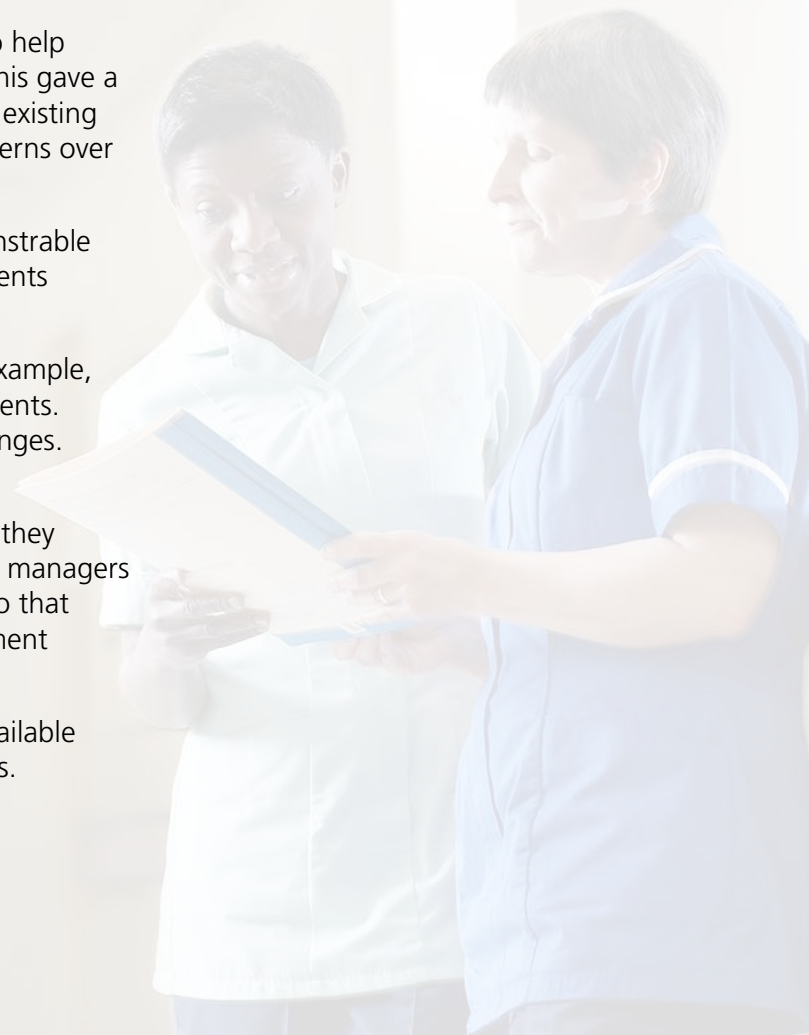
- A number of organisations in the study had worked with Optimise, using its Listening into Action (LiA) methodology.
- They engaged with the top leadership to analyse the issue and get buy in – the executive team must be willing to accept challenge.
- They connected with staff through the 'big conversation' – led by the chief executive officer for credibility.
- Mobilised and empowered staff delivered change over a defined period, worked at pace and appealed to the benefits of change. A pull strategy not a push one, which needed a team of volunteers to make the case for change irresistible.
- Early adopter volunteers worked for three to four months on a specific project with a clear clinical component to deliver visible change. Progress was reviewed and discussed.

Key challenges

- All of the organisations recognised that there would be many challenges during implementation.
- Sustaining commitment – while chief executives were key supporters, the board didn't always see this as a key priority.
- Overburdened middle managers saw this as another initiative or a threat to their role, adapting to the new way of working was a key issue.
- Organisational structures posed a logistical challenge – one trust has over 65 teams.
- Differing responses from various clinical groups – in general, nurses and allied health professionals were the most positive. Doctors tended to be least involved, it was difficult to get them to see the relevance, some struggled to identify with the organisation.
- The level of involvement developed in staff engagement programmes raised expectations of wider involvement and consultation, which was hard to meet.

Case study: implementation of staff engagement in the West Midlands

- Messages needed to be cascaded across the trusts and momentum for engagement needed to be sustained. This was the most difficult part of the process. The trusts involved felt that the programme had in general been successful. However, it was seen as important to broaden participation and ensure it was not just the usual suspects who took part. It was also important that engagement exercises were not one-off events, but instead were accompanied by other approaches, such as directorate visits and open door sessions with managers.
 - The use of external facilitators to help implement the new approach. This gave a new perspective and challenged existing ways, but there were some concerns over long-term sustainability.
 - Translated staff ideas into demonstrable improvement to services for patients provided evidence of success.
 - Started with modest ideas, for example, changing welcome signs for patients. This laid the basis for bigger changes.
 - Staffing levels needed to be at a reasonable level before staff felt they were able to take part, and local managers needed to support the process so that staff felt able to attend engagement exercises or events.
- Further details on the report are available from Steven Weeks, NHS Employers.
- Key success factors**
- Senior leaders who 'walk the walk' as well as 'talk the talk', demonstrated their commitment by attending meetings, listening and acting on issues.
 - The most successful approaches were those led at department and ward level. In one trust this involved shop floor workers and medical consultants sitting in the same room, developing ideas together.



Appreciative inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a technique that has been used in a number of staff engagement exercises in organisations such as Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. It involves a small group of staff being released to focus on key questions. It can be applied to reviewing projects through a series of structured questions covering vision, design and delivery.

- **Vision** – what would have been the effect of carrying on as before?
- **Design** – what changes did you put in place and how did you evaluate them?
- **Delivery** – what changes were implemented and how did you sustain them?

Benefits of the process

The benefits were the clearest for the staff involved in the exercise. Staff felt that they were listened to and were able to contribute to improvements. They also felt they had greater clarity about their roles and were more part of the team. This laid the basis for better interaction with patients, a generation

of good ideas and were part of the overall programme of service improvement.

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) rates had reduced, appraisal rates improved and sickness absence reduced. Although not all of these improvements could be wholly attributed to the staff engagement process, it's hard to separate effects of the method itself, as change can be part of better management overall. The engagement process in itself supports and strengthens good managers.

Key success elements of implementation

- The sustained and visible commitment of the most senior leader, those who listen and respond to suggestions and implement them, even if other managers are not supportive.
- Quick wins demonstrated that something new was happening.
- Celebrations of achievement were reinforcing.
- The value of role models at all levels was recognised.

- Going against traditional hierarchy and implementing new ideas by taking risks to change.
- Should be seen as part of the day job for all managers. It is best to work with volunteers and work around those that do not wish to take part. Not all volunteers will have the right combination of skills. Middle managers in particular need support to adopt staff engagement values, capability and behaviours. Those that are unsure or avoid engagement will need to be addressed. Promotion and selection can help bring new approaches.
- Listening to staff does have risks, managers may be forced to hear things that they would rather not, but it means issues are tackled. The process can help remove concerns and overcome misunderstandings.
- Listening to all staff may slow down the implementation of change, but if handled well it enables productive discussions and helps collective energy be put into problem solving.

- How an organisation handles mistakes in implementation will be a litmus test of its commitment to the process. This will be where staff decide if the approach is real. If it reverts to a blame culture staff engagement will be seen as only an ideal in theory. It has to be accepted that there will be mistakes and that lessons will be learned from them.
- In any change process there will be early adopters and resisters with most staff falling in the mid range. There will need to be multiple methods to shift most staff to the new state. Resisters can raise legitimate issues and when won over can be the best advocates. A viral effect of the good example will not be enough on its own, although it is clearly necessary to promote and share success.

Key messages

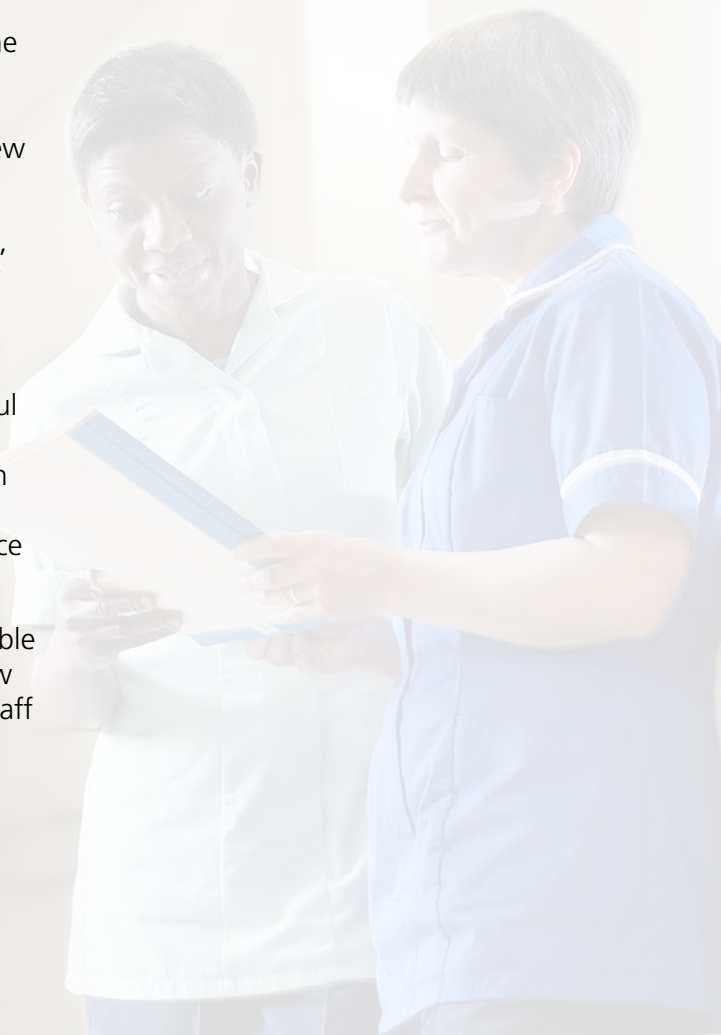
It is clear that staff engagement will only be successful where the local organisation believes it will help it achieve its objectives. As the report concluded, staff engagement can only grow in fertile ground, the harvest depends on the readiness of the soil.

- The level of resources that the trust is willing to invest will affect the outcome.
- Staff engagement can be driven by negative drivers (poor scores, bad reputation and so forth) or positive ones (what could be achieved with more involvement). It is more likely to be successful where the positive drivers are the main ones. It will also work better where staff engagement is seen as developing a two-way relationship with staff, rather than as a management tool.
- The quality of senior and middle management is key. Are they committed to staff engagement and do they have the skills to make it work?

- How prepared is the organisation to run with staff suggestions?
- Ownership of issues – success is directly linked to the degree of ownership at the top of the organisation.
- The senior team need to believe in the value of the process in order to deal with implementation issues and also convince staff. Scepticism needs to be overcome and expectations met.
- Senior leaders need to engage when workforce suggest solutions to issues.
- Symbolic issues can have great resonance, for example, the active presence of the chief executive can play a significant role in showing commitment to a new approach.
- Take criticism of how things are currently done – the trust's board needs to have courage and be willing to accept and learn from criticism, treating this as part of the process.

Appreciative inquiry

- Support needed among senior leaders, management and staff during difficult implementation. If no support is given or seen to be only half present, the atmosphere of risk aversion will persist and the flame of involvement and innovation will be extinguished before it has a chance to ignite.
- External facilitation can play a valuable role, as long as there is a process to develop champions in the organisation.
- The purpose of staff engagement must be clearly understood and conveyed otherwise tension will arise. Is it a top down communications tool led by senior managers or is it a process involving all staff? Ideally it should be the latter.
- Some trusts tended to work with volunteers who were trained up to lead the big conversation. Others sought to train all those that had a leadership role to take staff engagement into their approach. The latter approach does mean that all managers are communicated with, but can mean reluctant attendance and informal resistance.
- Organisations need to be clear about the role and purpose of staff engagement, or else it will lose steam. In one trust, staff engagement laid the basis for a new approach to working with patients.
- Staff engagement is not an end in itself, it is a means to improve the overall way things are done.
- Process measures are required, for example, delivery of events can be useful at the start, changing staff views in the medium term, but in the longer term an organisation needs to look at outcome impact, for example, on levels of absence and staff turnover.
- The most important enabler of sustainable staff engagement is how many and how well middle managers adopt genuine staff engagement values.



Tips for running staff engagement events

The following suggestions are based on experience gained across various trusts during the running of a number of events.

- Avoid lengthy presentations.
- Try to aim for an interactive approach with presentations focussed on exemplar projects, to show what can be done. Outlining key problems and potential solutions for groups to discuss.
- Staff tend to respond best to the presentation of two to three options with the provision that you can add your own answer if you have a better one rather than a blank sheet approach.
- Try to foster discussion, for example, by using cabaret tables and grouping people by area, not by status.
- Support conversation with facilitation rather than more senior staff leading the discussion.
- Check acoustics to ensure volume does not become disruptive. Call for time out if noise levels get too high or if one person is dominating discussion. Discussion leaders can help by asking open, and not closed, questions and seek to bring in those that have not spoken.
- It is not a consultation exercise but a problem-solving one so it is ok to work with those that have ideas. It is best to have volunteers not conscripts, but this may not always be possible.
- Staff will need support and training to work at their best as discussion leaders. Many work groups have natural leaders who everyone knows even if they are not actual managers. Staff side representatives may be well suited, although not all will be comfortable with this role.
- Meetings should not be completely unstructured as this can lead to wasted time and staff will not appreciate this.
- Have a clearly laid out set of questions that need to be addressed, with an agenda that everyone has access to, for example, in a handout. Allocate time to consider a question before moving on to the next one.
- Encourage staff to get up, move around and go find others who may help with their ideas.
- Let staff know that it is ok to have fun and participate even though the objective is serious.
- Try to record the ideas in the meeting, but avoid verbatim minutes. Dedicated note takers or tools such as write on table cloths can help this. Avoid sequential report backs. A wider range of staff can be encouraged to develop ideas, it is however vital to ensure that ideas are collected in.
- Senior leaders need to be prepared to take it on the chin and allow critical comments to be made and avoid personal defensiveness.
- Take all suggestions seriously and do not dismiss any out of hand.
- The senior leader needs to act more as a master of ceremonies than a formal chair. At the end, be clear about who is taking the action forward and when the response will be made. Not having a report back within a reasonable period can destroy confidence in the process.

There are a number of trusts who have developed very successful staff engagement events, for example Birmingham Childrens, Wigan and Leigh, South Tees. For more information, contact Steven Weeks, NHS Employers.

Engage for Success

Engage for Success is a movement which links up employers across the UK to share ideas and experiences on how to improve staff engagement. NHS Employers is a supporter of Engage for Success and encourages all employers in healthcare to take part in this network.

Engage for Success organises a range of meetings and other forums to support employers, and is an invaluable resource for learning about developments outside of the NHS. It also provides electronic resources and you can sign up for bulletins. Visit [Engage for Success](#).

International lessons

Staff engagement has been recognised as a priority issue in healthcare systems across the world. These approaches have been mainly in the area of staff involvement as a means of promoting engagement. These can be divided into three main types of approach:

- 1 countries where individual employers have developed approaches to staff engagement as a means of ensuring sustainability in a competitive market, eg USA
- 2 countries where staff involvement has been adopted as part of the overall response to handling the effect of the financial crisis and austerity on health, eg Ireland and Canada
- 3 countries where staff involvement is a widely understood approach in employment relations and it has been developed further in the healthcare context, this is most developed in the nordic countries.

For more information on international developments [read the briefing](#).

Staff engagement in non-NHS organisations

Levels of staff engagement in the NHS compare well with those in the economy as a whole. NHS staff have high levels of commitment to their jobs and a strong identification with the NHS as a public service. The NHS scores less well on issues such as involvement of staff, communications and on the visibility and credibility of senior leaders.

A number of other organisations face similar challenges to the NHS and it may be useful to look at their experience in improving staff engagement. Many local authorities have sought to improve engagement to help meet the challenges arising from reductions in spending. Many retail organisations have sought to improve engagement as a means of improving service for customers.

Case study: staff engagement in Essex County Council

Essex County Council

Essex County Council won a series of awards in 2013 for its work on employee engagement. It is one of the largest local authorities in the UK and a non-metropolitan county council providing a wide range of services including social care. In 2008, the council recognised that it needed to improve employee engagement and therefore created a combined employee engagement and communications team which worked across the internal boundaries of human resources and corporate services. It had a small number of staff and very little budget, but it had the active support of the senior leadership of the council.

From 2010, the council faced major challenges arising from spending reductions and organisational change. Despite the context of jobs losses, a 'pay freeze' and national dispute over pensions, the council managed to improve levels of employee engagement and generated £34 million in efficiency savings.

What it did

- They designed and delivered 'your voice' engagement day: 48 separate but

simultaneous conversations hosted by senior leaders.

- It revamped and actively promoted its existing staff survey.
- It created an employee panel to seek feedback from frontline staff to help shape policies and projects.
- Created an 'our voice' forum, a group of engagement ambassadors from all service areas.
- Created an informal 'Essex Engagers' network, involving 500 staff.
- Ran focus groups to encourage staff to produce action plans at a local level.
- Moved delivery of annual staff awards to the engagement team, resulting in a 25 per cent increase in nominations.

Encouraging line managers to support staff

The authority recognised that a key role of line managers was supporting sustainable staff engagement. In order to help them deliver improved staff engagement they:

- ran sessions for managers to help them understand their role in engagement
- provided more detailed data on levels of staff engagement in each manager's area
- linked appraisal for managers to improvement in engagement metrics.

Use of the employee survey

To increase the credibility of its employee engagement survey they provided systematic feedback on how the results were used. It produced communications for staff showing:

- 'you said and we did' – showing how feedback was used to make changes
- 'you said but we cannot because' – showing that feedback was taken into account but also explaining why it was not always possible to put into practice.

This more open and transparent approach increased the credibility of the survey. The overall organisation-wide survey was also supplemented by localised-diagnostic surveys using low-cost tools such as SurveyMonkey, and Yammer to encourage staff feedback and improve communication.

Case study: staff engagement in Morrisons

Case study: Morrisons

Morrisons is a large mid-range supermarket with a network of stores across the country. Originally a family business, it has grown through a mix of expansion and acquisition. Morrisons recognised that one consequence of its expansion had been a loss of some of the family culture of the business. It had lower levels of engagement than it wanted and variable performance between stores, with impact on customer service. Like other supermarket businesses it also had high levels of turnover in some staff groups.

Understanding the issues

In order to better understand the issues it was facing the company commissioned research into causes of staff discontent. The study identified the key issues as line manager behaviour, lack of training and development and poor communication and visibility of senior leaders in its larger stores.

What it did

- The initial programme focussed on the role of the line managers. The results of the survey were presented to the line managers with full and frank discussions. The supporters of an engagement approach believed it was essential to seek to win over influential managers even if they were sceptical or hostile. The new strategy was explained and some old style managers opted to leave the organisation. Training and support was provided to line managers to help them adapt to the new approach.
- The company worked with line managers and staff to develop a new set of values for Morrisons. This was based on the original approach of the founders, but adapted to the new more competitive environment. The new values and expected behaviours were publicised to all staff.
- As part of the new approach, 360 degree appraisals were introduced for store managers and supervisors.
- It was also expected that staff would seek to put the values into practice and in particular take greater responsibility to come forward with ideas for improvement. A number of ideas were generated, which helped improve services for customers. Rather than enforced scripts for handling customer interaction, the approach was based on supporting employees to want to help customers and have autonomy to do so.
- The company also increased investment in training and development in response to the concerns raised. Even though in a high-turnover industry this was in effect training for the competition, it felt that the benefits in terms of engagement were clear. In a low-margin highly-competitive sector the organisation was not able to raise wages or improve conditions beyond sector standards. By its new approach it has improved employee engagement and overall consolidated market share.