

TACKLING BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

- 70 main stations
- 5,000 staff
- Sickness absence rate in December 2015 - 5.4 per cent and December 2016 - 5 per cent
- Turnover rate in December 2015 - 13.5 per cent and December 2016 - 9.5 per cent
- Serves a population of more than eight million people
- Dispersed workforce with most spending their working time in ambulances or fast response cars

THE SUMMARY

In 2015, London Ambulance Service (LAS) became the first ambulance trust to be placed in special measures by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and concerns were raised about bullying and harassment. The trust took immediate action and recruited a bullying and harassment specialist, nominated a non-executive director sponsor and setup an HR and OD committee. A phased action plan was developed and progress is reported on a monthly basis to the non-executive director which keeps resource, energy and focus on initiating cultural changes throughout the organisation.

CHALLENGES

Work demands and pressures are high across the NHS, which can cause the atmosphere to become frantic. To address this, the bullying and harassment specialist bought training sessions to different areas of the organisation to reach as many people as possible; addressing everything from what could seem minor communication issues between colleagues to perceptions of unfair treatment by management. Time was taken at the end of each session to talk about the work that LAS is doing to tackle bullying and begin to change the culture.

STEPS THE TRUST IS TAKING

Bullying and harassment awareness workshops were created to equip employees with practical tools to help make the workplace more respectful. The sessions explore the difference between robust management and bullying, discuss 'banter' and how it can tip into harassment, and explain practical ways to ensure cultural sensitivity.

Round table sessions LAS commissioned an external specialist company, Total Conflict Management, which specialises in mediation skills, to train 50+ members of staff to become facilitators of round table conversations. Since the training, LAS has seen an increase in dialogue at all levels within the organisation. Twelve sessions have been requested by staff so far, and early anecdotes from staff say they have been helpful in getting people communicating.

A day in the life of events LAS has held three day in the life of events over the past twelve months, which over 120 employees attended. Teams open themselves up to visits and questions for over a week to encourage colleagues to spend time in services that they would not normally interact with, such as control rooms, legal services, NHS 111 and the hazardous area rescue team. Employees have seen this as a meaningful way to break down working in silos.

Training staff in investigating bullying and harassment allegations. To provide consistency in the speed and quality of the investigations and of the reports provided, the trust trained 70 staff to undertake investigations into bullying and harassment allegations, and seek a timely resolution.

HR training bespoke training was provided to the HR team through specific workshops covering issues such as, legal aspects of bullying and harassment, round table skills for HR managers and skills in investigating bullying and harassment investigations.

OUTCOME

LAS has begun to change culture and people are encouraged to have early conversations so that issues can be addressed quickly.



The Bullying and Harassment policy name has changed to Respect and Dignity at Work policy. Respect and Dignity ambassadors have been piloted in the organisation to help support staff and colleagues and, if successful, this trial will be rolled out. Staff have commented that they like the concept of reducing conflict as early as possible using peers, versus a formal approach, and are willing to attend training to offer this skill. The trust has held 61 workshops to explore bullying within the workplace and discuss solutions which over 750 staff have attended.

Staff turnover has improved, and the number of employees who would recommend LAS as a place to work has increased in recent friends and family test results.

TOP TIPS

- Recruit a board lead to fully support your agenda – this impact will go a long way to improve the culture in your organisation.
- Changing the policies around bullying and harassment to reflect dignity and respect is a good place to start but role modelling is even more important at all levels within the organisation to effect long term culture change.
- Engage with staff and ask their opinions and views on culture on an on-going basis, staff will tell you what is working and what is not, within the organisation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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