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## **CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**

### **A WEIGHT MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE FOR STAFF**

#### **The organisation**

Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH) NHS Foundation Trust comprises both Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Rosie Hospital in Cambridge. The trust employs more than 8,000 staff and provides accessible high-quality healthcare to the population of Cambridge. Together with specialist services, the trust also deals with rare or complex conditions on a regional, national and international level. The weight management programme is a joint initiative between the CUH health and wellbeing team and KasTech Ltd, a company that develops health and weight management software.

#### **Background**

Improving staff health and wellbeing forms a key part of the trust's wider staff engagement strategy, led by the director of workforce. By analysing data from national and local staff surveys and patient listening events, the trust's health and wellbeing committee created the 2015/16 strategy. In specific relation to physical and mental health priorities of the strategy, data collated by the dietetics department showed that 40 per cent of staff were trying to make positive changes to their diet and over 60 per cent had expressed an interest in health and fitness assessments and/or screening.

In light of this feedback, the trust knew that promoting and encouraging staff to sign up to a healthy lifestyle and weight management programme would be seen as a proactive initiative. It could also support staff in other ways such as helping them to reduce and manage high levels of stress and demonstrate to staff that they are valued within the organisation.

#### **The challenge**

Members of the health and wellbeing committee invited a local dietetic consultant, who was leading a weight management programme for GP patients, to discuss running a pilot for staff within the trust. The idea was to

base the pilot on her community programme that had been running for over seven years in Cambridgeshire for GP-referred patients. The programme had won best practice awards from the Association for the Study of Obesity (ASO), National Obesity Forum (NOF) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP).

The outcome of the talks was a joint initiative that offered NHS employees a brief health and fitness assessment and seven fortnightly healthy lifestyle and weight management workshops, called ProHealth*Choices4u*, over four months.

## Barriers

The health and wellbeing committee assessed the likely barriers to the workshops before they began, to ensure that any obstacles could be tackled head on. These included a few challenges, restricted funding meant that this pilot limited staff numbers able to participate. Staff expressing early interest were asked for preferred days and times to pilot the workshops and the most popular time was selected. Although the initial pilot workshops had a set time, multiple communications with participants were used, including email and telephone calls. If participants were unable to attend a workshop, workshop displays would be repeated and individual resources distributed to participants.

Secondly, a common barrier to the success of any group-based weight management programme is the one-size-fits-all approach. The ProHealth*Choices4u* workshops were designed to meet individual needs. Participants attended small group induction sessions with a dietitian, registered nutritionist and fitness instructors. This was to gather individual information including weight loss goals and eating and activity preferences. Participants were able to discuss and select personalised changes they wanted to make, including individual lifestyle changes and setting short-term goals by following energy restricted healthy-eating plans, such as the 5:2 and low carbohydrate meal plans.

Workshops included activities that were led by fitness instructors and a staff physiotherapist. This allowed participants to discuss specific activity suggestions, for example exercises for back pain, arthritis or bad knees. The workshop format allowed individuals to arrive 30 minutes prior to the workshop starting or stay at the end of the workshop for a brief chat.

The committee found that the weight management pilot workshops attracted interest from staff with similar needs and expectations as those in the GP-referred programmes. Participants reported regularly struggling with their weight, with over 60 per cent saying they had tried popular weight-loss programmes on four or more occasions. While 89 per cent reported they were motivated to lose weight, only 65 per cent felt confident of success.

Some hospital staff may struggle with weight management partly due to the additional challenges that NHS staff face, such as short staff breaks due to work demands, having reduced healthy eating options available during all shifts and limited facilities for activity in the workplace. On top of this, regular attendance at the workshops can prove difficult for employees working shifts and flexi-hours.

Based on this feedback, it was important to ensure that the programme offered something different to participants and discussions for dealing with workplace limitations.

## The programme

The committee and the dietitian took onboard the survey results, feedback and work-based barriers and limitations. They were then able to devise an interactive and flexible skills-based group workshop which included:

- a practical approach to healthy eating
- healthy eating recipes, websites and cookbooks
- tools to manage behaviour change (eg goal-setting, self-monitoring)
- debunking weight loss myths and misinformation
- access to mental wellbeing self-help resources
- optional physical activity taster sessions
- healthy lifestyle and weight management handouts.

The programme was then promoted through leaflet distribution in the main foyers and departments of the trust, through multi-channel announcements and information in staff e-newsletters.

## Successes

Staff from 18 hospital departments participated in the pilot with the following results:

- 94.4 per cent of participants lost weight.
- The mean weight loss of all participants exceeded the goal of 3 per cent, which is recognised as clinically significant and providing health benefits.
- 72.2 per cent of participants completed the intervention (goal 60 per cent or more).
- 38.5 per cent completing the pilot achieved 5 per cent or more weight loss.

## Feedback

*"Thoroughly enjoyed the programme."*

*"A friendly inclusive and non-judgmental atmosphere. I wish it could have continued!"*

*"Discussions were all very helpful, reading food labels...lots more walking."*

*"Activity taster sessions were excellent, great to learn exercises to do at the desk and while standing in queues. Now do exercises while waiting for the kettle to boil!"*

*"Workshop discussions and handouts very helpful. Taking more notice of what I eat."*

*"Increased walking at lunchtimes, motivated to be more active in short bursts."*

*"Now checking food labels for salt, sugar and fat. Having less fatty/fried foods and more fruit, vegetables and water."*

*"Good for meeting other staff and hearing their experiences."*

## Next steps

This healthy lifestyle and weight management pilot was limited to a small cohort but had a big impact, with the take-up and outcomes demonstrating the need and interest for such a programme.

The trust is currently in discussions with ProHealthChoices4U and others to find creative ways of continuing to run this programme on a more regular basis so that a larger group of staff can benefit.

Since the pilot, the trust now has an on-site fast-track psychological service for staff run by a local mental health trust. This provides further opportunities to maximize a more comprehensive health and wellbeing package for trust staff.

## Top tips

- ✓ Ensure a health and wellbeing programme is integrated into what staff do already to allow them to easily carry on even if support stops.
- ✓ Carry out a thorough evaluation of the programme to analyse what works and to build on and improve the programme for future workshops.
- ✓ Utilise the facilities you have available.
- ✓ Promote the programme to all staff to ensure wide engagement and a greater uptake in staff health and wellbeing.

## Further information

Contact Denise Hollinger, Associate Director and lead for Health and Wellbeing, email [denise.hollinger@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:denise.hollinger@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

For more information about ProHealthChoices4u workshops, please contact dietitian, Sandy Evans: [sandra.evans16@nhs.net](mailto:sandra.evans16@nhs.net) or [sandy.evans@kastech.co.uk](mailto:sandy.evans@kastech.co.uk)

NHS Employers  
2 Brewery Wharf  
Kendell Street  
Leeds LS10 1JR  
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[enquiries@nhsemployers.org](mailto:enquiries@nhsemployers.org)

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