

MEDIA RELEASE

22.5.2012
ES/22/12

3 pages

NHS pledge to continue drive helping ‘vulnerable’ into work

Trusts carry on “Working for Wellness” after formal work comes to an end

In Mental Health Awareness Week, NHS Trusts in the East Midlands have pledged to carry on working together after a formal partnership ended, to help people facing some of the toughest challenges in the jobs market.

The “Working for Wellness in the East Midlands Network”, a partnership between the 28 NHS organisations in the East Midlands, led by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, has helped to support more than 60 people into work over the last two years.

The network, which was set up by the East Midlands Strategic Health Authority (SHA) in 2009, secured funding of more than £800,000 from the Department of Health, the East Midlands SHA and Department of Work and Pensions during the two-year period.

The work it helped to fund included direct support for more than 20 employment projects, covering each of the five counties.

The network was tasked with four key aims:

- To promote and create employment in the NHS for people with mental health difficulties and/or learning disabilities, who are among the most disadvantaged groups when it comes to finding work
- To reduce the stigma faced in the jobs market by people with mental health difficulties and/or learning disabilities
- To influence managers and commissioners to support this work.
- To share what they learned from the work with other organisations to increase the value of the work

As well as securing funding from the DWP to support 30 temporary posts in the NHS, the network worked with private, public and third sector organisations on projects as diverse as the Citizens Advice Bureau, University Hospitals of Leicester, Kettering General Hospital, Leicester City Methodist Church and social enterprises.

The formal work programme for the Working for Wellness Network ended at the end of March but its members will continue working together informally, under the chairmanship of LPT chief executive John Short.

He said: “We know that having a job or some meaningful activity plays a major part in maintaining good mental health and wellbeing.

“Research shows that fewer than a quarter of people with mental health conditions and only one in 10 of those with moderate or severe learning disabilities are in work. Providing people with the chance to work, even for a limited period, can make a measurable difference to the confidence, skills and ultimately the future prospects of the applicants we have been able to support with relatively modest funding.

“Now, faced with the continued impact of the economic downturn, people already facing disadvantage and discrimination trying to find work are facing even greater obstacles.

“The network has supported work to reduce those obstacles. Some organisations have funded permanent positions and we want to see this kind of sustained support continue. We’ll continue working together to look for opportunities to fund and support projects, to show commissioners the value of investing in ‘recovery and employment’ and to share what we learn with others.”

The network’s formal closure was marked with a conference and celebration event in Leicester at the end of March. Two of the projects supported spoke about their work and delegates included many of the people helped.

Speakers included 2010 Mind champion of the year Rachel Perkins OBE, Maqsood Ahmad OBE Director for Inclusion, NHS Midlands and East and Director for NHS EDS Implementation., who leads work on the national NHS Equality Delivery System, and Lord Patel of Bradford, OBE.

Lord Patel has welcomed the network’s decision to carry on with its work. He said: “Having a job can be life changing not only for the individual, but also their families, it has a major impact on communities and society. Research shows that the investment made by commissioners in employment has a beneficial impact on resources elsewhere in the NHS by reducing demand for services and medications. It also means the individual becomes independent and has less need for state support.’

-ends-

Case study

One of the projects supported through the network is Aspiro, a Leicester-based social enterprise providing employment support for people with experience of mental ill health or learning disability who received funding for an internship programme.

Aspiro director Peter Smith explained: “So far eight interns have been through the programme, with four graduating and three now in work. Our current tranche of four interns graduate in May and one of them has a job lined up and work is under way to place the others before we recruit the final cohort of four under this funding.

“We hope to work with local businesses to fund the programme sustainably and continue the success kick-started by the Working for Wellness Network, to promote recovery and wellbeing.”

He added: “As an organisation we have now supported 30 people into paid jobs and 31 into volunteering roles. We’ve talked to our customers about the social impacts of this kind of support and self-confidence scores show an increase of 130% between their first appointment and getting a job and their experience of health scores show a 106% improvement.”

Note to editors

1. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides a range of health and wellbeing services mainly for people living in the city of Leicester and the neighbouring counties of Leicestershire and Rutland. The Trust serves a population of one million and has a budget in excess of £250 million and employs almost 6,000 staff. For more information visit www.leicspart.nhs.uk

Our mission: To advance health and wellbeing for you and your community

Our vision: To become an integrated Foundation Trust with a passion for quality and excellence

Issued by:

Sheila Ashton, communications specialist, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust

Tel: 0116 295 0042, Email: sheila.ashton@leicspart.nhs.uk