



Short Case Study

Managers as buddies

Oxfordshire Health NHS Foundation Trust Community Hospitals

When the second wave of intense pressure from Covid-19 pandemic loomed, Oxfordshire Community Hospitals used what they had learned in the first wave to shape their response, including in the way the leadership teams operated, and the idea of Managers as Buddies was born.

In the first wave, the focus of leaders within the Trust was on the broader strategic and emergency measures, and compliance with national requirements. They had to step away from operational support to focus on the management of the virus. In preparing for wave 2, it was decided that leaders would be more visible across the Trusts *“being present and listening, to witness first-hand the pressures and the realities on the wards, and to give the staff team support”*.

Participation was voluntary, but all were keen to get involved. A senior leader was matched with each hospital site, the idea being that they ‘buddied up’. This meant that each Community Hospital site had direct access to a senior manager, available for escalation conversations and to develop a deep understanding of the needs of

staff on the ground in a rapidly changing context.

Each individual and site arranged the buddying to suit the context – some spent whole days working at weekends from the site, donning scrubs and getting stuck in on the ward, or doing their ‘day job’ from that site. Others arranged to pop in at particular touch points.

Benefits for patients

- Additional capacity on the wards to ensure the best possible treatment and outcomes

Benefits for staff

- Leaders felt energised and refreshed as they re-utilised their practical nursing experience – felt part of the team in a different way.
- Teams of staff felt supported and listened to, and had the ear of decision-makers more

Benefits for the Trust

- Leadership truly connected with the reality on the wards

What next?

The scheme was felt by the leaders to have been a great success. There is an intention to review, with staff, how it felt and how it worked. Any desire to continue must be balanced with the need to ‘recover our leaders as well as our staff’ and ensure that staff feel listened to and supported, rather than ‘checked up on’. The most likely development is that this will be used as a winter scheme, to mitigate winter pressures and maintain the engagement and team gains.

“ It was about staff knowing that we were still available, that we appreciated them. And just trying to help out. But it also enabled us to find out more about what mattered to staff.

SENIOR MANAGER

Contact



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