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# STAFF ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

NORTHUMBRIA HEALTHCARE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

## Overview

Northumbria Healthcare adapted its staff engagement approach during COVID-19 developing a real time feedback mechanism. The trust did this via a weekly online survey *Corona Voice* to provide up-to-date data and insight. This informed decision-making and helped sustain motivation during the challenge of COVID. The survey included fixed questions on key issues and staff could also share free text comments. This enabled staff to share their feelings and raise issues.

## Key benefits/outcomes

There were a number of benefits from the approach adopted.

- It enabled the trust to have an overall barometer of staff opinion to inform decision-making.
- The issue-based questions provided data to support targeted interventions. For example, focus on engagement with remote and shielding staff.
- Free text commentary enabled the trust to better understand how staff were affected by COVID-19 and what it could do to best support them.
- The Corona Voice survey was highly successful in generating feedback, with over 10 000 contributions from staff. The trust was able to sustain staff motivation and improved perceptions of health and wellbeing support.
- In a fast-changing situation, regular feedback from staff supported informed decision-making.

## What the organisation did

Alongside a range of other measures such as improved health and wellbeing support and dialogue with senior leaders, the trust implemented a new method for seeking feedback – the Corona Voice survey. The survey ran weekly online from April to July and provided real time information on key COVID-related issues and provided an overall indicator of staff motivation. Free text commentary

was analysed each week to identify issues and themes. It revealed a mixture of concerns and pride in how staff had responded to the pandemic, and gave in-depth insight into how staff were feeling. The approach was funded by the Health Foundation as part of its Innovating for Improvement programme and built on Northumbria's existing partnership with colleagues at Open Lab, Northumbria University, testing the use of new technologies for staff engagement.

## Results and Benefits

The trust built on its existing staff engagement strategy which had focused on sustainable engagement and improved health and wellbeing. It found an innovative way to seek feedback from staff in the new context where traditional methods were not suitable. Collection of real-time data proved to be helpful for urgent decision making. The feedback model could be further developed to support staff involvement in quality improvement and sustain engagement overall.

In response to staff requests, a wide range of health and wellbeing initiatives were also set up including chill out recovery zones for frontline staff, a dedicated website with wellbeing advice, free food for all employees and mental health support. Data also indicates that staff motivation held up well during pandemic and staff appreciated the opportunity to give their views.

## Takeaway Tips

1. Organisations can adapt their staff engagement methods to overcome the obstacles created by COVID.
2. Finding new ways to get feedback from staff will help organisations sustain engagement and inform decision making in rapidly changing situation
3. Organisations will need to both analyse the data and demonstrate to staff that they have acted on results.
4. Staff engagement initiatives should be part of the overall organisational approach which includes improved health and wellbeing support.

## Further information

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