

FEBRUARY 2016

## Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board

### Engagement event finds out what staff need to be supported to work longer

#### The organisation

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU) provides a wide range of services to a population of approximately 500,000 people. ABMU employs around 16,000 members of staff, 70 per cent of whom are involved in direct patient care. They deliver tertiary, acute, intermediate, mental health, community and primary care services to people in Swansea, Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot, and beyond. In addition, they provide a large range of regional and sub-regional services, including cardiac surgery, forensic mental health and learning disability services.

Kay Myatt, head of learning and development and Guy Holt, senior workforce manager at the health board spoke about the engagement event entitled: demonstrating we care by coming together to improve time at work, which they ran with Velindre NHS Trust and the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

The aim of the event was to:

- raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities associated with working longer
- find out how staff feel about working longer
- look at what is currently being done in their organisations to support working longer
- understand what could be done differently and to take forward any actions accordingly.

#### Background

The HR director for ABMU sits on the Wales Working Longer Group, which was established as a reference group for NHS Wales to share information and good practice. It focuses on the needs of an ageing workforce and the challenges that this might pose for NHS Wales. It links with the work of the national Working Longer Group (WLG). They were asked to be a pilot site to find out what staff feel about working longer, and to better understand the policies and practices currently available and how these could support the workforce to stay in work.

## Planning the event

Key stakeholders and partners, including senior management and trade unions, got together to plan and discuss the expected outcomes of the session. The event was then organised around these. They looked at various venues and ran an accessibility check to make sure the preferred venue was accessible and centrally located for ease of travel. The layout of the room was organised in cabaret style to keep it informal and to facilitate discussion.

Responsibility for who to invite was down to individual organisations. Within ABMU, HR managers were asked to send invites to all of the business units in the organisation. Delegates had self-selected to attend the event, so were very engaged and willing to contribute during the day. They were also provided with printed packs in place of PowerPoint presentations, so they could make notes and take information away with them. The event ran smoothly with no logistical issues.

## The event

The day started with a quiz as an ice breaker, which included some key statistics on the ageing workforce. It was agreed this was an excellent way to begin the event as delegates were able to get to know each other and chat about the answers.

The event then consisted of five different activities covering the various aspects of working longer and how staff feel about these. A facilitator had been briefed ahead of the event and was provided with a facilitator pack which included a list of questions to assist them on the day. Facilitators captured feedback from the table, which then created word clouds to highlight how staff feel about working longer, the main challenges and what could be improved within organisations to help staff stay in work.

The final activity of the day was a table discussion about the differences between job roles across the three organisations. For this session, the tables were split by job roles. The tables discussed what they needed to support them to work longer and how this could be achieved. Some of the suggestions included:

- more collaboration across the NHS
- mentorship for all ages and for all levels
- flexible training and re-skilling options
- re-deployment options
- flexible working options
- higher education/further education.

The tables also discussed ideas for pilot projects to help staff in particular job roles stay in work longer. Any ideas taken forward would be supported by delegates at the event.

## The benefits of engaging

The event was successful in giving ABMU an opportunity to think about its ageing workforce and how staff could be supported to work longer, it also gave delegates a chance to interact with their employers about their thoughts on this topic.



## Challenges

One of the main barriers to holding the event was not all staff were able to attend because of the notice between the invitations being sent out and the actual event. Although the invites were sent out around six weeks prior to the event, this was not enough time as a lot of staff work on nine week release dates. ABMU will look at release dates for all staff groups to ensure that they give enough time for events in the future.

There was also some suspicion among staff about the event, early communication and engagement with the workforce about the working longer agenda will help to alleviate this.

## Next steps

ABMU is at the beginning of the journey with regards to their ageing workforce and this will be an ongoing piece of work for them. The event has been piloted within the three organisations and following evaluation may be rolled out across Wales. There were some project ideas that came out of the day which again, once evaluated, may be taken forward as pilots. They will also receive information from the [national research project](#), which has been undertaken by the WLG, known as the 'deep dives' which they were part of. This research gathered intelligence on current practice across the UK and will inform the future work programme of the WLG.

ABMU will also continue to update delegates on the next steps and share the report with them from the event.

## Tips for other trusts

- Undertake a communication and education piece ahead of the event so that staff are aware why the event is taking place.
- Plan activities to meet the expected outcomes rather than planning the activities and trying to make the outcome fit them.
- Engage early with key stakeholders such as senior management.
- Engage with managers who will be responsible for inviting their staff and releasing them to attend the event.
- Engage with trade unions throughout the process and invite them on the day.
- Ensure invitations are sent at least two months prior to enable staff to be released.
- Consider role specific events or smaller focus groups.
- Undertake an evaluation of your event.
- Keep your delegates informed of outcomes and next steps.



## Further information

To find out more about the event, please contact:

Kay Myatt, Head of Learning and Development at [Kay.Myatt@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Kay.Myatt@wales.nhs.uk)

Guy Holt, Senior Workforce Manager at [Guy.Holt@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Guy.Holt@wales.nhs.uk)

For further information on the WLG, please visit our [webpages](#). We have also developed an [age awareness toolkit](#) to help employers work in partnership with trade union colleagues to create organisational awareness of the opportunities and challenges associated with an ageing workforce. This includes suggested approaches for running your own engagement event.

## Contact us

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