

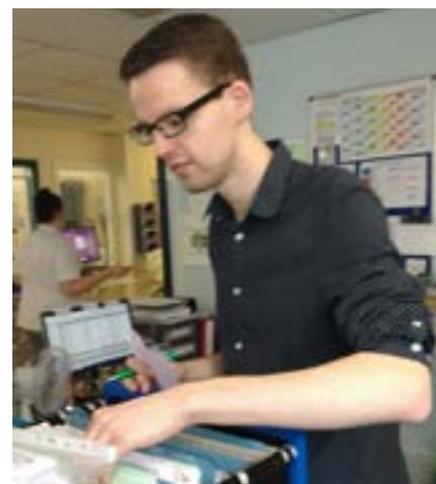
Case Study: East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

Kent Supported Employment

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The Five Year Forward View committed to the NHS leading the way as a progressive employer. NHS England and NHS Employers are now working together to support and encourage NHS organisations to develop local and national solutions to remove barriers and increase employment of people with a learning disability in the NHS, building on the work that is already happening across England.¹

This is a case study from the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust working in partnership with Kent Supported Employment to employ more people with a learning disability as part of their pledge, which has resulted in two jobs being designed specifically for people with a learning disability, which has led to two successful job outcomes.



Values – why is this important

NHS England and NHS Employers have launched a pledge to employ more people with a learning disability which local NHS organisations are being encouraged to sign up to. East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) was keen to support this pledge building on the work they have done with supported internships.

They understand that people with learning disabilities have many skills and talents to bring to the workplace and wanted to ensure that they were leading by example, exercising their Corporate Social Responsibility.

They also recognised that they needed to widen their talent pool and understood that this provided an opportunity to tap into a pool of undiscovered skills and abilities.

EKHUFT recognised that employing more people with learning disabilities would have many benefits to them as an organisation which included:

- Supporting their work in improving the patient experience of people with learning disabilities, building on previous research they had commissioned on their supported internship provision²
- Improving the diversity of their workforce and reaping the benefits that this brings
- Demonstrating that they are a caring organisation so that they could be seen as an employer of choice

What are the challenges?

The employment rates for people with a learning disability in the UK are very low (24% overall³ and 5.7% when known to services⁴) despite the country experiencing the highest levels of employment since records began.

In addition, they were addressing issues around levels of staff turnover, which they deemed unacceptable as this was leading to an increase in their recruitment costs.⁵ They were also not necessarily recruiting the right people to their job roles, which was also impacting on levels of staff turnover.

EKHUFT was keen to ensure that they were increasing the rates of employment for people with learning disabilities and recognised that they needed support to be able to make an effective and long-lasting contribution.

As a result, they formed a partnership with a local supported employment service, Kent Supported Employment (KSE)⁶ to ensure they would have a more robust, stable and less transient workforce in the future, recognising that KSE would be able to support them in developing their recruitment and retention practices to be more inclusive.

Solution

As a result of the partnership, KSE designed, developed and delivered a programme of support to ensure EKHUFT was using the best practice model of supported employment as part of their recruitment and retention strategies.

This was achieved by working closely with Human Resources (HR) and a variety of departments across the Trust.

The programme of support was varied and ensured that both HR and the various departments understood the supported employment model, and the wider business benefits of a more diverse workforce which included disabled people, as well as encompassing support for the Trust to become more disability confident.

Following this, they worked together to look at new recruitment strategies, using KSE as a job-matching service.

They also looked at new strategies for designing job roles using supported employment techniques and looked at their retention strategies with support from KSE to ensure that they were effectively managing disabled staff through the potential changes within the Trust.

An eight-month programme of support was commissioned from KSE and helped the Trust embed new recruitment and retention practices. Working interviews were introduced which is giving people with a learning disability the opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

EKHUFT has entered into a long-term relationship with KSE to support their new recruitment and retention strategies, who will now help them to identify appropriate applicants prior to interviews as well as ensuring that all parties are adequately prepared prior to any selection exercise.

KSE also continues to support the Trust to retain new and existing disabled staff.

To date, two new posts have been designed specifically for people with a learning disability, a Clerical Assistant on a Ward, and an Administrative Assistant in their Renal Outpatients ward. Both posts were recruited to using a working interview approach, which was supported by KSE. Other departments worked with include Phlebotomy, Pharmacy and Children's Neo-Natal.

Feedback from the Trust has been very encouraging and has helped them to reflect on how to best support employees with a learning disability. As one member of staff said, "this has made us think about and apply what adaptations may be needed to recruit and sustain staff with learning disabilities."

For further information about this case study, please contact
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¹<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/ld-emp-prog/>

²<https://www.ekhufnhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/about-us/people-with-learning-disabilities/bright-futures/>

³<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack>

⁴<https://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB30122>

⁵<http://www.nhsemployers.org/-/media/Employers/Publications/EAST-KENT-retention-case-study-FINAL.pdf>

⁶<https://www.kent.gov.uk/jobs/helping-disabled-people-into-work>