

Work Demands Research case study 2: Organisation B

Organisational context

Organisation B is an organisation in the health care sector, with employees based on multiple sites. Employees in organisation B work in a pressured environment, they work in shifts, and have high work demands and a low level of control over their workload.

The challenge of work demands

The committee identified several key areas of work demands for exploration in this research project. Overall work demands are very high for employees, with a high volume of work and high level of urgency. Work demands for employees in organisation B are unpredictable, and partially dependent on staffing levels, which can lead to a lack of downtime.

One of the key areas identified as within the committee's control to explore was the volume of changes and updates to staff, and the lack of time to keep up with these and digest and implement them appropriately.

Addressing work demands

What has been done before

The committee in organisation B discussed some of the solutions that were tried before or that were already in place to aid understanding about how to get a better idea of what was working well and what could work better.

The committee felt that the staffing levels had been better recently and that the wellbeing team was making a difference by offering courses and skills training to staff and having introduced welfare walks that staff can take on top of their daily breaks.

The intervention for this research

The committee wanted to make sure that they focused on something that would genuinely make a difference to people without asking too much of them.

The committee decided the key issue identified from the available evidence was that people did not have enough time to digest information, both wellbeing information as well as work updates.

As the intervention for this research the committee therefore focused on:

Offering supportive drop-in sessions to colleagues where key information would be presented, and questions could be answered.

The focus of the drop-in sessions would be to:

- Provide a safe space away from workstations to discuss any concerns, queries about process or policy and discuss recent key updates.
- Provide a space where wellbeing champions can connect to people and run short sessions on key topics such as taking a good break.

Barriers and facilitators to addressing work demands

Workload and unpredictability as well as the shift patterns of staff were seen as the potential key barrier to the success of any intervention. The high level of relatively new and inexperienced staff was also seen as something to be aware of when planning any intervention to reduce demands.

Team support and manager support were seen as two key facilitators to success, as well as a general openness to share best practice and learn from each other.

The benefits so far

'The intervention was a big success, with great attendance and positive feedback.'

Overall, the committee was very happy with the implementation and impact of the intervention. Feedback gathered at the end of the information sessions indicated staff found the sessions helpful and informative and felt they would use the information daily.

Survey results at time 2, when looking at employees aware of the intervention, showed an improvement across the three wellbeing outcomes (stress, wellbeing, burnout), there were mixed results in the experience of work demands, with an impact felt by employees of a recent focus on reducing call times. A significant positive change was reported in the experience of manager and peer support.

Next Steps

A further roll out of the drop-in sessions has been planned across the organisation. The committee also expressed a desire to keep meeting as a committee, set time aside to discuss and share thoughts, and hear how things work in other places and share best practice. Committee members commented on the great collaboration and momentum they had experienced.

A key learning from this project was to focus on involving the right people early on when rolling out new initiatives, the key people identified were team leaders as well as the education department to help implement and roll out the sessions.