

## **University Hospitals Birmingham achieves highly commended in our Recognition Awards for the transformation of its integrated Occupational Health model**

The Occupational Health and Wellbeing (OHWB) service at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) has undergone a significant transformation, establishing an integrated, data-driven service that improves support for more than 25,000 staff across hospital and community settings.

In just 12 months, the service has developed a streamlined and coordinated model that brings together OH, wellbeing support and health promotion, enabling staff to access the right support more quickly while strengthening the Trust's ability to respond proactively to workforce health needs.

### **Creating an integrated service for a large workforce**

UHB is one of the largest NHS Trusts in the country, operating across multiple hospital sites and community services. Supporting such a large and geographically dispersed workforce required a more coordinated approach to staff health and wellbeing.

To address this challenge, the OHWB team developed a fully integrated service model centred around a Single Point of Access. This approach enables staff who engage with one part of the service to be seamlessly referred to other relevant teams, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time.

Alongside this, the Trust introduced a new digital platform that allows for real-time data reporting and provides managers and staff with a self-service portal. This has improved case management, enhanced data insight and enabled more proactive responses to workforce health trends.

The result is a more efficient, accessible and scalable service that supports both individual wellbeing and organisational performance.

### **Strengthening partnerships across the Trust and region**

Collaboration is central to the service's success. The OHWB team works closely with departments across the Trust, including ergonomics, health and safety, organisational development, inclusion and leadership teams, ensuring health and wellbeing are embedded within wider organisational strategies.

The team also contributes to major organisational initiatives, including quality improvement programmes and the Trust's culture improvement agenda. A recent example is the Trust's successful recognition as a Disability Confident Leader, which involved close collaboration across multiple teams.

Beyond the organisation, the service plays an active role within the regional healthcare system. As part of the NHS West Midlands Integrated Care System, the team collaborates with OH services across neighbouring Trusts, sharing best practice and contributing to regional workforce health initiatives.

This partnership working has led to the service being asked to lead regional health and wellbeing projects and provide specialist expertise during major public health challenges, including the region's response to a measles outbreak.

### **Responding to operational and financial challenges**

The transformation took place during a period of significant pressure across the healthcare sector, including financial constraints and workforce shortages.

The OHWB team responded by reshaping the workforce model and reducing reliance on temporary staffing by around 90%. At the same time, the service successfully recruited and retained permanent staff while investing in the development of existing team members.

Upskilling staff to work within the new integrated model improved both service delivery and professional development opportunities. Flexible scheduling was also introduced to address space limitations across sites and ensure clinics could continue to operate efficiently.

These changes enabled the team to build a more sustainable service while maintaining high performance across key operational delivery.

### **Measurable improvements in performance and engagement**

The transformation has delivered measurable improvements across key performance indicators.

Waiting times for OH support have reduced significantly, improving the speed at which staff and managers can access advice and support. Staff turnover within the service has also fallen, reflecting a more stable and engaged workforce.

These improvements are reflected in wider organisational feedback. In the most recent NHS Staff Survey, health and wellbeing was the Trust's strongest performing theme, with UHB identified as one of the most improved organisations nationally in this area.

Staff awareness of wellbeing services has also increased, particularly among resident doctors, indicating that communication and engagement efforts are helping more colleagues access support.

### **Well-deserved recognition**

The positive impact of the service has been recognised both internally and externally. During a recent inspection by the Care Quality Commission, inspectors highlighted the value of the OHWB service in supporting staff wellbeing.

The team has also been shortlisted for the Great British Workplace Wellbeing Awards, including recognition in the category for Best Wellbeing Strategy in the Public Sector.

UBH's Chief People Officer, Cathi Shovlin adds:

*“The service’s commitment to our people, and passion for what their profession can do to enhance the experience of our staff – and in turn, our patients – is transformational in how we can support all colleagues at every (st)age of their career and at every health milestone they face so that we retain their wealth of experience and provide good equality of health outcomes for them through good work.”*

Through strong leadership, collaboration and innovation, the OHWB service at UHB has created a more integrated and responsive model of workforce health support.

By combining clinical expertise, preventative health initiatives and data-driven decision making, the service is helping to build a healthier, more resilient workforce while supporting the wider goals of the NHS.