Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust strengthens Occupational Health capacity through workforce development

The Working Well Centre at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust has successfully expanded its Occupational Health (OH) capacity by investing in the development of its existing workforce, creating a more resilient and sustainable service model.

In response to challenges recruiting qualified OH Advisors, the Trust implemented a targeted development programme to upskill Band 5 OH Nurses into Band 6 OH Advisors in case management. This approach has strengthened service delivery, reduced waiting times and improved staff experience within the team.

Addressing recruitment challenges through internal development

Like many NHS organisations, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust faced difficulties in recruiting experienced OH Advisors, impacting service capacity and increasing pressure on existing staff.

To address this, the Working Well Centre focused on growing its own talent. Four Band 5 OH Nurses were selected to take part in a structured development programme designed to build the skills required for case management.

The programme combined:

- in-house training,
- one-to-one mentoring, and
- regular clinical supervision.

Senior members of the OH team provided ongoing coaching and oversight, ensuring staff developed the confidence and competence required to take on more complex responsibilities.

Supporting staff through transition and skill development

As nurses transitioned into case management roles, the team encountered expected challenges, particularly around time management and adapting to new ways of working.

Recognising this, additional support was introduced to help staff build confidence and manage caseloads effectively. This included enhanced supervision and tailored guidance, enabling individuals to develop at a sustainable pace while maintaining service quality.

Building a more resilient and flexible service

The initiative has resulted in a larger, more versatile OH team, with staff now equipped to deliver the full range of services, from vaccinations through to case management.

This increased flexibility has improved the overall resilience of the service and reduced reliance on external recruitment. As a result:

- waiting times for appointments have decreased,
- service capacity has increased, and
- team stability has improved.

Improving staff experience and retention

Investing in staff development has had a positive impact on team morale and retention. By providing clear progression opportunities and structured support, the Trust has created a more engaged and motivated workforce.

This approach not only strengthens service delivery but also supports long-term workforce sustainability within OH.

Developing talent from within

A key success story from the programme is Louise, who joined the OH service from an inpatient hospital setting.

Through mentoring, supervision and hands-on experience, Louise developed the skills required for case management and has successfully progressed into a Band 6 Nurse Advisor role. She now confidently undertakes management referral work and contributes fully to the service.

A sustainable approach to workforce challenges

By focusing on internal development rather than external recruitment alone, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust has created a practical and scalable solution to workforce shortages in OH.

Through strong leadership, targeted investment in staff and a supportive learning environment, the Trust has strengthened its service, improved access for staff and built a more sustainable future for its OH provision.