

Health and Wellbeing Event Loughborough University

Summary

A staff health event was run to encourage staff to consider the importance of their own health, identify risk and respond to these accordingly. NHS, council and voluntary organisations provided screening and awareness stands and staff were free to attend throughout the day. Topics covered included Alcohol, Blood Pressure, Body Composition, Cancer, Cholesterol, Glucose, Smoking, Stress and Stroke. We used interactive tools to create personalised information to motivate change.

The first event was well attended with over 220 staff, and follow up screening covered a further 100. 49 staff members identified health problems and have received follow up service.

Aims

The event aimed to:

- Encourage staff to consider the importance of their own health to benefit their wellbeing
- Pick up risk areas for individuals via screening and offer direction to services to minimise this risk, to benefit individuals and absenteeism costs.
- Raise awareness of current, relevant cultural health issues
- Promote staff feeling supported and cared for in their working environment to aid wellbeing and workplace engagement and loyalty.
- Maximise uptake of good services available within the University Community and Charnwood region to re-enforce relations between these.

Overview

What was the context / background?

Loughborough University was making a push for healthy living initiatives across campus in the academic year 2010 – 2011, in response to numerous events. This included managing the change within the higher education sector, to minimise the impacts of restructuring on staffs wellbeing and motivation at work. A base project for this was the launch of the healthy living website to provide information, advice and direction to service across all aspects of health. However, it was acknowledged that staff needed to be made aware of the importance of caring for their own health, with visible, practical action, before the website would be turned to as a resource.

What were the drivers and levers for change?

Drivers for change included:

- Providing visible support for staff wellbeing during periods of restructuring. Importance of maximising staff potential, productivity and loyalty during this time, which is also helped by detecting illness early and preventing absenteeism.
- Response to recent public health calls for the cultural environments that people live and work in, to

promote choice in making healthy decisions via the provision of information & support. Health fair acts as platform for this offering wide range participation in an accessible environment, where topics can be chosen specific to individual needs.

- Promote health awareness and provide motivation to act on this to act as a physical presence of the new healthy living website directing staff towards this as a resource.
- Bring together health services from the University, council and voluntary sectors to help raise awareness and maximise use of these.

Levers for Change included:

- Delegates from the University attended the GovNet conference for Health and Wellbeing reform and were able to report extensive financial and productivity benefits of health and wellbeing work.
- Director of HR ran similar screening projects within previous organisation successfully and was very supportive of the results of this.
- Community keen to support initiatives to integrate University and Community health.

Who led the work internally and externally? Who was the strategic lead, who was the operational lead?

The work was led by Elle Seaver both strategically and operationally. Elle was a healthy living trainee who operated within, and was supported by HR during this project. Assistance came from the members of the HR team, occupational health, health promotion specialist from the community Meeta Madhani who assisted the finalisation of strategy, and facilities management who assisted with operations work.

How are you set up (working / steering groups)? How does the work fit within your organisational structure?

There is currently no specific working/ steering group set up to support this health and wellbeing initiative. However the project relied on continued support from numerous departments internally and externally. The Charnwood Health forum members were integral to success, and internally the continued communication between HR, Student Services and the healthy living trainee was ensured.

What resources did you need (financial and human)? What existing resources did you use / what was your budget?

The total cost of the event was £307 (Excluding printing costs). This covered the hiring of privacy screens, some testing equipment and hospitality buffet for those holding the stands. All health workers provided their time and resource for free (Except covering non-profit costs of cholesterol tests provided by council).

Co-ordination relied only on healthy living trainee. Support from facilities management, teaching support, HR directors and Student services was required internally. Externally the voluntary support and resource of the NHS Health Improvement team, voluntary sectors and Charnwood Borough Council, allowed the event to go ahead.

What did you do?

The event consisted of 9 stalls in a large communal venue central to campus, providing screening, interactive information and direction to service. Staff were free to attend at any time throughout the day and were supported by the director of HR in doing so. Specialist health topics were covered in the fields of (in order of popularity) 1) cholesterol and blood sugar screening, 2) blood pressure, 3) body composition measurements and physical activity advice, 4) stroke awareness, 5) stress testing and mental health awareness, 6) nutrition and NHS improvements, 7) alcohol awareness, 8) CO2 screening and smoking advice, 9) prostate cancer information. Processes involved in planning, operation and evaluation:

- Set out aims
- Research most relevant preventative health topics for University staff (already covered with website research)
- Gather information and contacts for each topic – approach to request attendance
- Plan most effective services to provide, venue, times, style of event, promotions etc according to the principles of health psychology for effective health prevention.
- Source venues and equipment internally, assess health and safety

- Create visitor packs and hospitality arrangements, source funding for this.
- Create information packs and encouragement to follow results up for staff.
- Establish evaluation process and create documents for this.
- Promote event via numerous channels according to the principles of health psychology
- Manage all visitors and attendees on the day
- Evaluate and report to senior staff.

What methods of communication did you use?

The health event was promoted to staff with simple, straight to the point notifications on online notice-boards, newsletters and signs in communal staff areas. Reminders and requests to promote attendance were sent to Heads of Departments, Sections and Administrators to encourage staff to feel supported in attending by their managers.

Health visitors providing screening and awareness material were contacted with an online network, regular update Emails and telephone conversations set up by event co-ordinator.

Internal support services met and were kept in touch by the co-ordinator to streamline.

How did you make the case for action?

The idea was generated during a meeting between healthy living trainee and event co-ordinator Elle Seaver, and senior management. This prevented the need for a case for action, but required organisation and effective management to be evidenced, along with rationales (as detailed drivers for change) to prove that this would be a successful event for senior members of staff to support.

Monitoring and Evaluation

What were your critical success factors?

Staff Positive Evaluations:

- **Once tested all staff were pleased that they had done so.** Those without problems described 'Peace of mind' and 'pride.' Those who identified problems were keen to act upon this and grateful for the testing service.
- Many staff seemed to have an **enhanced sense of wellbeing** with the event mostly being described as enjoyable and needed more often.
- Appreciation of novel topics (alcohol consumption, prostate cancer) and many calls for more of these events provides evidence of genuine enthusiasm to intake new health information.
- Some staff **networked** with the external organisations to benefit their own professional work.
- With 49 referrals to health services including 9 high blood pressures, 11 high cholesterol and 21 high stress levels; it is likely the **University will benefit** in terms of **preventing absence** and even **resignation** through ill health.

Health Visitor Positive Evaluations:

- Staff seemed genuinely interested and **responded well** to the information, advice and services offered.
- All visitors also found this **advantageous for their own organisation**, via networking opportunities, gathering information from the University community and raising awareness of their own services.
- **University-Community relations were very positively re-enforced, as all our visitors enjoyed the event and** this demonstrated a united front to tackle health issues.

How did you measure impact?

Evaluations of the event were gathered quantitatively by simple tally forms for recording numbers by health visitors. Further qualitative feedback was retrieved through completed evaluation questionnaires, and informal interviews recorded with staff and visitors throughout the day.

What were the outcomes /outputs?

200+ Staff attended (Further 102 members of staff attended cholesterol/ blood sugar/ body composition screening follow up sessions) 49 Resulted in referrals or sign up to follow up service (Cholesterol, blood pressure, stress, smoking). General evaluations of the event were very positive especially with a sense of wellbeing and community cohesion amongst all involves; a few problem areas were highlighted for review with any similar work to be held in the future.

Did you do any cost benefit analysis?

Cost-Benefit analysis was not easy to perform, as this would require longitudinal studies of sickness and absence amongst individuals tested, which may also breach confidentiality. The detection of 9 high blood pressures and 11 high cholesterol scores alone, with all being signed up for follow up service indicates prevention of long term health problems via detection at the asymptomatic stage. (DeWitt S. & Goodman MD. (1988). *Cholesterol Adult Treatment Panel Report. Archives of Internal Medicine. 148 , 36*). The feelings of good will and gratitude towards the University increase engagement and productivity, all of which are beneficial financially for the University output. (GovNet Conference: *Welfare Reforms Improving Productivity Through Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace Oct 2010*). With a cost of only £307 across all of the events, and just 4 weeks sickness absence with statutory sick pay (Disregarding occupational sick pay also paid out by the University during absence) amounting to over this, there is strong indication that this is a financially viable project.

Key Learning Points

What were the challenges or barriers?

- The main problems fell as during the first hour of the event an **unexpected number of staff** arrived. The cholesterol and blood pressure testing stands developed queues. As this was promoted as 'drop-in sessions' this caused some **frustration**. The problem was dealt with by:
 - Calling in extra staff from Sainsbury's Pharmacy to total 3 testing stations for cholesterol and blood sugar.
 - Introducing a listing system to allow staff an estimation of how long till they were seen and to be free to look at other stands whilst waiting, rather than queuing.
 - Appointment format for future testing was arranged to allow a more systematic approach for those that needed it
- Some staff complained checks were not comprehensive enough and they would find it more useful to pay a little towards a subsidised GP health screen. Awareness of this type of service via Active Lifestyles or the Campus Pharmacy should be raised and the **title** of the event should be **more explicit** to distinguish GP style screening, from a health awareness event.
- There was one complaint of the lack of privacy of the one on one sessions and that other staff members' discussions could be heard. The information provided on the entrance desk stated that there were confidential areas available upon request. These were large screened areas, clearly marked within a visible proximity of the health fair and were free for all visitors, or staff to use as they wished.
- At times interest was condensed to 2 – 3 stands, it would be ideal to **place these towards the back of the venue**, so that the less attended stands would have to be passed, and catch attention on the way through. Prior to the event assisting **all stands in developing interactive elements to their information provision** would also broaden interest in alternative topics.
- At future events we would balance any male focussed stands (ie. PROSTaid cancer) with a **female health specific topic**, this would reduce in equalities in the amount of information available according to gender.

What Helped You To Achieve Success?

- Thorough research within the staff community whilst re-designing the healthy living website, highlighted areas of need within health and wellbeing specific to our environment. This assisted in

tailoring the event to be attractive to staff.

- When planning the event using a basic framework from the English National Healthy Universities criteria for action, assisted in making this a worthwhile project for the Whole Universities approach for a Healthy Campus. This encouraged us to make the event, widely available, clearly supported by senior staff, working alongside the community, highly visible and innovative for our institution.
- Applying the principles of health psychology to planning stages for venue, publicity and style of information presented assisted significantly with making the event successful. This helped us to recognise the need for work promoting choice, control, interactivity, motivation to follow through with action and follow up work. *The Health Belief Model, Becker (1980)*
- The support of senior management in Student Services (support and advice in co-ordination), the Health and Safety office, and HR was essential for the success of this event. Support services such as facilities management, teaching support and the medical centre also assisted in operations. It allowed the University departments to be united in their approach and encourage knowledge and resource sharing.
- The community support was invaluable for this and the Universities continuous building of positive relationships was key. By being an active member of community forums and showing an interest in health the University was able to draw upon these contacts, and provide a reciprocal benefitting event.

How did the work contribute to the three key focus areas of healthy universities?

1. Create healthy and sustainable learning, working and living environments

- The events focuses on preventative health via early detection of problems (screening) allowed it to contribute to healthy and sustainable workforces, which offer a more stable working environment.
- Health education was key to this with highly visible, interactive information provision, on a central location to campus. This shows the University offering a learning experience relevant to all aspects of its members experience, not strictly academic related.
- The event looked at all areas of health and wellbeing and was not promoted as a financial or University beneficial event. The event covered lifestyle behaviours relevant to personal and social life such as the consumption of alcohol, smoking, nutrition. All topics were considered from a whole community perspective, which demonstrates the Universities extended care, outside of those aspects directly affecting the workplace, or internal services.

2. Integrate health and sustainability into core business

Health and Wellbeing projects work hand-in-hand with delivering Loughborough University's core values, which contribute to the continued success of the institution.

- Help to deliver the Universities Core Values in providing the a positive working environment and outstanding support for staff, as detailed in the staff survey
- Visible health awareness events deliver educational and sporting agendas in their wider, applied context and help to publicise staff making use of the excellent health research (25% world leading) and facility available.
- All health projects compliment world leading sustainability projects at the University (Aligned agendas eg. Cycle 2 work scheme) and support the wider community needs by recognising the impact poor health in the University community has on local services, and attempting to tackle the problems at the asymptomatic stage.

3. Contribute to the health and wellbeing and sustainability of local, regional, national and global communities

- Providing this platform for the promotion of local services (PROSTaid cancer, Mental health inclusion support service), and national campaigns (eg. NHS Smoking cessation, Flora cholesterol screening), to our own community of over 3000 staff members, contributes significantly to these services being maximised upon.

- This method of delivering health supports public health drivers. The coalition government have been very clear that the drive for people taking charge of changing their own behaviour instead of relying on state intervention will strengthen. Loughborough University can show responsibility to the government which supports them and play its part in supporting this drive with these pro-active steps towards encouraging members to assess and change their health behaviours towards positive ones.
- Loughborough University is highly involved in the international spectrum of health and wellbeing, primarily through their elite sport research, training and facilities. Extending this reputation into visible information and support for non-elitist members of the University and community is especially important for ensuring these benefits reach a wide audience. The research and facility available is extensively used in the website, and the health fair is a directly promotion for the website.
- Most staff members live locally and so form part of the statistics representing Charnwood. The health fair responded directly to issues flagged up as disproportionately high for the region in *Charnwood Health Profile 2010: Dept of Health (2010)*

Thematic Categories

Method		Topic		Population Group	
Campaign / Event	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol /Substance Misuse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Built Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Students	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food / Healthy Eating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wider Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Policy / Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mental Health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whole System Approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Activity / Active Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Health	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Sustainable Development	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

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