

## Case study - The creation and development of the “Keeping Well in Work Hub”

‘Keeping well in Work Hub’, online resources designed to support staff to manage their health and well-being in and out of the work place. These were developed by Occupational Therapists working in Occupational Health to support employees and their managers.



Jenny Jones (left) and Di Webb

### **Problem/goal**

An initial 5-month project was completed in March 2022 by occupational therapists in Occupational Health. This had a particular focus on the recovery of staff post Covid 19 who were struggling to remain in work or return to work.

### **As part of this project staff provided valuable insights into their experiences.**

Staff reported that managers and colleagues did not have sufficient understanding of their health conditions and the impacts on daily life, including facilitating a successful return to work. Staff wished to know how to manage “setbacks and relapses” especially with fatigue/energy impairments. Very few staff had accessed self-help resources.

Subsequent funding employed two part time Occupational Therapists in Occupational Health, on a year’s secondment commencing April 23.

**Within the wider context**, if staff are healthier and fitter, they are better able to deliver healthcare to the population within our health board. Furthermore, a combination of factors has meant that people are working longer. 1 in 3 workers are now over 50 years old with 1 in 5 having at least one long term health condition (Centre for aging better, 2021). There is also wide recognition that support is required to enable individuals to remain in and return to work after a period of absence; Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015, A healthier Wales 2018, NICE Workplace health 2019.

### **The solution**

**One of the outcomes of this project was to develop accessible returning to work and staying in work resources for staff and managers.**

We wanted to enable staff to have the resources to support self, proactive management of their health and well-being and managers in knowing how best to support their staff.

Promoting participation, belonging and inclusion in the workplace. Also, a clear reference as to how to access additional support if needed.

**To help staff to:** find strategies to remain well in work, return to work successfully after a period of absence, manage the impact of any long-term health conditions and reduce the likelihood of absence.

**For managers:** to advocate for their staff needs in work including understanding the challenges and barriers for those with health conditions and how best to support them, including managing attendance at work.

It was important to develop an approach that provided a platform for easily accessible, universal and targeted education and resources for both staff and managers i.e using the health boards staff intranet. It is also an effective use of resources via a digital platform and accessible in and out of work.

Having a means of staff and managers to contribute to, share their lived experiences and provide feedback has been incorporated into the Hub resources by a comments box and short feedback questionnaire.

It was also important to us as Occupational Therapist to continue to recognise each person in context of their whole lives, in and outside of work and throughout their working journey.

The resources can be shared across services with confidence that they are evidence based and high quality, avoiding misinformation.

### Results and benefits

The **Keeping Well in Work Hub** on line resource went live as planned on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024, with wide publicity and support from the health boards Communications Team. During the first 3 months there were almost 1500 visits to the hub.

#### Examples of resources include:

- **Tips for everyone**
- **Managing health conditions;** for example, energy impairment / fatigue, Musculo-skeletal conditions, Cognitive difficulties.
- **Common challenges at work**
- **Struggling with tasks at home.**
- **Returning to work** after an absence / starting a new job when you may need adjustments.
- **Managers resources;** for example, supporting staff to return to work, Supporting staff with health conditions.
- **Positive feedback** on the ease of finding, content and quality of the resources has been received examples include ;

*“Excellent compendium! Useful, comprehensive and helps us be an inclusive employer”- Hospital Consultant*

*“A great resource with clear information that I will share with teams and individuals. I like that the page is interactive, with clear sub-pages...”- Organisational development practitioner*

*“Information was easy to find and would support in remaining in work and on returning to work” – Staff member*

### **Expected benefits**

- **Staff will be** empowered and better equipped in how to manage their health and wellbeing in and out of work and with any challenges their health may bring, including managing any setbacks or relapses. By keeping active and well this will reduce the likelihood of future health related challenges and potential work absences.
- **Managers will be confident in knowing;** where to direct staff members to access the Hub resources, what they can do to support their staff to return to work after a period of absence or if experiencing wellbeing challenges at work, thus aiming to reduce the likelihood of work absence.  
Promoting a person-centred compassionate management approach.
- Promotion of an inclusive, diverse workforce that represents our population with potential benefits on recruitment and staff retention.

### **Next steps**

The project built upon the insights from the original scoping exercise.

It has provided opportunities to network with a broader range of staff and teams thus promoting the role of Occupational Therapy in general as well as within Occupational Health.

The future looks very bright with permanent funding now secured from Occupational Health for Occupational Therapy.

Future work will continue to develop the Keeping Well in Work Hub.

There is potential to work more closely with managers and teams for example developing resources around neurodiversity and collaborative working on a Health and Wellbeing passport for staff.

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