

MINDFUL EMPLOYER

Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health

Background

South Devon Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is one of Devon's biggest employers with over 3,500 paid staff as well as hundreds of volunteers. It has a catchment area covering 300 square miles - from South Dartmoor to the length of coastline which stretches from the mouth of the River Exe (Dawlish), past the Teign and Dart estuaries (beyond Dartmouth). Torbay Hospital serves a resident population of approaching 300,000 people, plus about 100,000 visitors at any one time during the summer holiday season.

The Trust as a Mindful Employer Signatory

The Trust signed the Mindful Employer Charter in 2006 having attended a Mindful Employer event. As a signatory to the Charter it provided the Trust with an opportunity to give serious thought to how Mental Health issues should be incorporated into its work on Equality & Diversity. The Charter also recognises the organisations' need to work towards the key principles.

The Trust was keen to promote to potential applicants its Mindful Employer status and as such the Mindful Employer logo is displayed on the Trust's recruitment website together with a link to the Mindful Employer site. Being a member of the Charter raises the profile of mental health issues with recruiting managers. Managers are now advised if a potential candidate has indicated they require positive adjustments to the recruitment process in order to support their application. Managers are now able to speak with the candidate and ensure these adjustments are in place prior to the interview process.

As part of its work on looking at how mental health issues affect our workforce the Trust was one of forty organisations who worked with the Health & Safety Executive on a stress management project. The Trust implemented the project within two Divisions, working with ACAS and using their Facilitator Training to train key members of staff. These staff then led the work within the Divisions including looking at work-life balance, a Stress Management Conference for Day Surgery staff, training courses on personal stress management techniques and facilitated team based working. In response to the project the Trust also established a Stress Management Group.

One of the key principles of being a Mindful Employer is retaining staff that may have experienced discrimination in the past. As part of its commitment to retaining staff with key skills and experience the Trust approached Remploy. Remploy is an independent organisation with specialist experience in return to work, retention and role adjustment. In partnership with Remploy the Trust has successfully retained the key skills and experience of staff through role adjustment or redeployment within the organisation of staff who otherwise would have left on ill health grounds.

Being a Mindful Employer has provided the Trust with an opportunity to practically broaden its equality work whilst continuing to demonstrate its commitment to meeting its legal and statutory equality duties.