

CASE STUDY

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Safety Support Worker Programme helps eliminate agency use in enhanced care

- ✓ 100% conversion in agency hours to Bank
- ✓ Bank fill per month increased from 300 to over 4,000 hours
- ✓ 10 agency staff migrated over to Bank
- ✓ 0% agency use for enhanced care patient safety support workers

The Situation

In winter 2022-23, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust experienced an increase in demand for healthcare support workers (HCSWs) who specialise in mental health and dementia care. The Trust reached out to NHS Professionals – as its Managed Service Provider - to help eliminate the use of external staffing agencies and maintain safety of care in this challenging area. As a result, we quickly created an Enhanced Care Pool Ward staffed by graduates of our Patient Safety Support Worker (PSSW) Programme, which trains people to care for vulnerable patients.



The Solution

Once we had established the demand of five day shifts and five night shifts per 24-hour period, our team created a pool of flexible enhanced care PSSWs. They had been trained to provide specialised support for patients experiencing mental health difficulties, dementia and changing clinical, behavioural and social needs.

We collaborated closely with the Trust to launch a recruitment campaign for the Enhanced Care Pool Ward that targeted Bank and substantive members of staff. Working quickly, the pool ward was successfully launched in February 2023.

To continually grow the pool, we used our PSSW programme, which provides entry-level pathways into the NHS to support safe and effective patient care. The programme gives specific training in mental health care and looking after patients including: diversion and distraction therapies; sensory tasks; preventing falls; and encouraging patients to recall moments from their lives to stimulate memory function. With this training completed, the graduate PSSWs were able to access pool ward shifts.

By posting shifts two months in advance, Bank Members had more flexibility to plan their schedules and a greater chance of filling shifts before agency. Members had priority when booking these shifts through our agency 'bumping' model, where an agency booking would be 'bumped' from the shift in favour of the Bank Member.

“ Shifts to support mental health and dementia patients were historically put out at short notice and were mostly picked up by agencies. In addition, the skill and knowledge set of these workers did not always match the clinical requirements and dependency level of these patients.

After discussing our situation with NHS Professionals at one of our monthly meetings, it was suggested managing the enhanced care requirements centrally would give us oversight of our overall needs and lower spend, while increasing the quality of care we provide for patients.

As a result, only shifts where no substantive or Bank Members were available went out to agency.

Lastly, we agreed on a pay review with the Trust, matching day shift rates to night shift rates to make the shifts more attractive to staff and to ensure consistent cover.

The Outcome

The Enhanced Care Pool Ward, supplemented by our PSSW programme, has proved successful in reducing agency use for mental health support workers at the Trust.

As at August 2023, agency hours for enhanced care had been eliminated.

Enhanced care PSSW Bank hours increased from 300 hours per month in September 2022 to over 3,000 hours per month since May 2023. And between February and August 2023, Bank hours increased by 70%.

By working in collaboration with the Trust to highlight the benefits of the Bank and providing a competitive pay rate, we were able to migrate ten agency workers over to the NHS Professionals Bank.

Our PSSW Programme offered added value by also creating professional development opportunities to Bank Members and substantive staff, allowing them to gain valuable experience working in other areas of the Trust.

NHS Professionals assisted in driving this forward and the Enhanced Care Pool Ward was established, supporting the Trust to deliver the right staff, with the right skills, in the right place and at the right time; while demonstrating excellent fill rates and a reduction in agency.

The NHS Professionals team continue to support us in the delivery of our valued flexible workforce. They are always on hand and extremely knowledgeable and innovative. ”

Brenda McKenzie, Matron, Workforce Assurance and Compliance, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

