

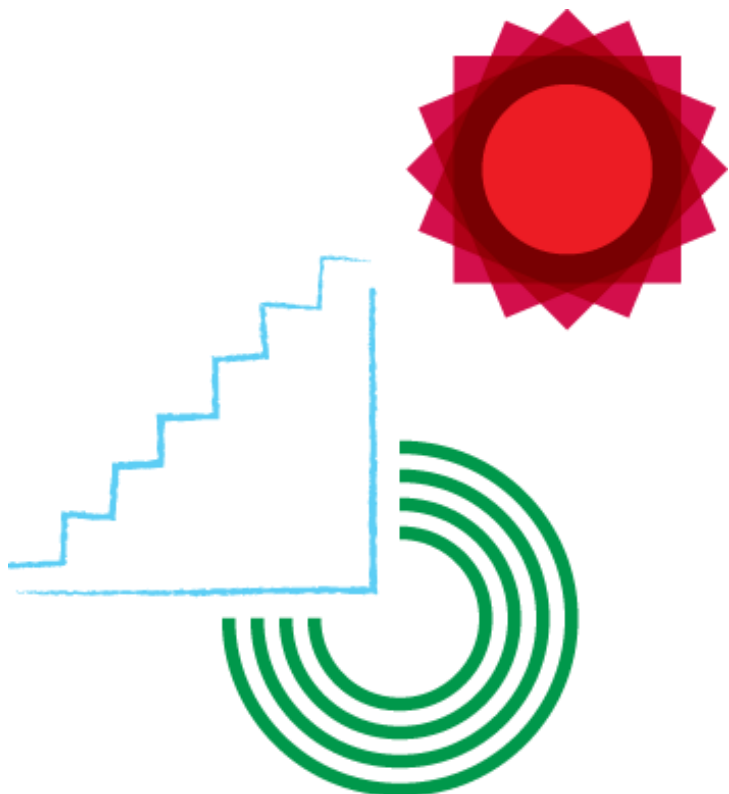


ENGAGE  
FOR  
SUCCESS

# The Department of Health

Case Study:

Collaboration – Transcending Institutional Barriers



# COLLABORATION

## Overview

The following is an example of how the Department of Health:

- Established an effective joint working arrangement that brought together colleagues from multiple teams, departments or other internal or external organizations
- Clearly identified and communicated the benefits of a collaborative approach to all involved
- Delivered improved, coordinated and efficient services to their employees.



## Background

The organisational benefits of health and wellbeing are well documented, and the need for support is even greater at times of significant organisational change. The practical realities of declining budgets coupled with a perception that funding wellbeing initiatives is costly and somehow 'wrong' while making headcount reductions required a completely new approach to staff wellbeing initiatives in the Department of Health (DH).

High aspirations for a massively enhanced wellbeing programme producing measurable benefits, with no dedicated resource to deliver it, was both a significant challenge and an exciting opportunity for us.

Our collaboration solution has enabled DH to launch a sustainable programme of support covering physical, emotional and workplace wellbeing with minimal financial investment and maximum perceived value. This has already reversed the decline in our staff survey measure of wellbeing (up 5% this year) and shown increased levels of participation in wellbeing initiatives.

Furthermore, the approach has enabled our health and wellbeing partners to collaborate between themselves, extending and expanding their offerings to a much wider audience. This has not only enhanced their wellbeing offerings to organisations in both the public and private sector, but also enabled them to sign up to health and work Responsibility Deal (RD) pledges.

## Summary of key steps

The aim was to 'practise what we preach' and deliver an exceptional programme of activities and services to promote, support, encourage and

inspire health and wellbeing in all of our staff, throughout the current significant transition programme and beyond.

Spearheaded by a volunteer DH Director, we developed three key work streams covering physical, emotional and workplace well-being, each led by a volunteer workplace champion. We invited key charities, suppliers, thought leaders and policy colleagues to work collaboratively as a board of 'Health and Well-being (HWB) Partners' to deliver a coordinated suite of initiatives to meet the needs of staff - and enable DH to sign up to all of the relevant RD pledges.

These included:

- free physical health checks through Medigold our OH supplier
- support for staff with mental health issues through our 'Health on your Mind' joint initiative with the Charity for Civil Servants
- fitting out a gym in a new wellbeing space in Richmond House funded by HASSRA our sports and social club
- delivering emotional resilience workshops through our internal HR function and Women's Network
- offering Stop Smoking Workshops in collaboration with Lambeth Council and Weight-off Workshops (WoW) with the support of Croydon Council
- providing access to online support through NHS Choices.

Scheduled additional initiatives for 2012 onwards include

- work with MIND on supporting colleagues and changing attitudes to mental health
- further support for colleagues living with domestic violence. We will also provide more physical health checks, seminars, and workshops, and focused, 'local' initiatives in response to staff feedback
- Dedicated health and wellbeing pages on the DH intranet alongside poster campaigns, focus groups, surveys, and suggestion boxes, together with the work of local champions have enabled us to spread the wellbeing message and highlight the benefits to staff of the collaboration approach.

This has in turn, increased membership of, and support for our wellbeing partners.

## **Outcome**

By collaborating on the total wellbeing requirement in DH, our partners have reduced overlap and focused and reshaped available resources to meet current demand, delivered by the organisation best placed to do so. Our partners benefit from this approach by sharing best practice; cross-referring clients to each other's services and supporting each other's wellbeing campaigns, in both DH and elsewhere. Dame Carol Black, the

UK National Director for Health and Work is promoting the DH approach across other OGDs and the private sector to encourage more organisations to make RD pledges.

## Feedback

*“The HWB Board .is an excellent vehicle for collaborative working across several groups within the Department of Health. I have personal experience of the Board's effectiveness through the Public Health Responsibility Deal where working with them has helped to spread our message.”*

Dame Carol Black

*“Joint working between DH and the Charity for Civil Servants is already paying dividends for staff. The collaboration to create ‘Health on your Mind’ with the optimum means of maintaining and improving mental health in the work place, is innovative and as far as we know, unique in its scope. Our contact with the Health and Wellbeing Board has been crucial in facilitating this.”*

Merrick Willis, Chief Executive  
Charity for Civil Servants

*“Our membership of DH HWB Board has brought us much closer to the ‘dna’ of the civil service –we have started to impact on health and wellbeing in other government departments. ....DH and our Charity have directly helped more than sixty staff with advice, guidance and support. Clearly evidence of working collaboratively with partners can go even further than we anticipated.”*

Judith Smith Director  
Help & Advisory Services Charity for Civil Servants