

Oasis wellness centre – briefing document

Background and Context

NHS Plus is a Department of Health funded project dedicated to improving the quality and quantity of occupational health services to NHS staff and the wider community, particularly smaller businesses, and operates through a network of over 110 NHS occupational health (OH) departments across England.

In October 2006, a capital allocation of £10m was announced to support innovative improvements to NHS occupational health services while also providing improved access to services (on a commercial basis) for smaller businesses and the broader community around NHS trusts. Acting as demonstration sites for the NHS, five NHS Trusts in largely urban areas were selected. Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust (PHT) was successful in its bid to secure funding to build a wellness centre, which has been a long held vision at Portsmouth.

The aims of the capital investment were to;

- Generate good practice models from which others can learn,
- Create an expansion of services to the local market, including smaller businesses
- Contribute towards the Health and Wellbeing agenda policy goals

To maximise impact, a second phase of £11m was agreed for 2008/09 to support up to six further demonstration sites, targeted particularly, but not exclusively, at the remainder of the country (for example the Midlands, South West and North) and at the needs of smaller businesses in rural and more deprived areas.

These innovative schemes created a countrywide network of 10 projects, which pave the way for other trusts to develop and expand their own occupational health services providing benefit to NHS staff and the wider business community.

NHS Plus has now distributed £21 million in funding to ten demonstration sites across England: Aintree, Barts and the London NHS Trust, Bradford, Cambridge University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Buckingham, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, Newcastle, Worcestershire, York and Portsmouth. PHT was awarded £1.4m, with another £500k being awarded under a separate bid.

The rationale behind the NHS Plus project

Modest but well targeted expenditure has helped transform health at work services for NHS staff and the broader community in Portsmouth and elsewhere as part of the Government's initiative *'Improving health and work: changing lives'*

Cost benefits can be realised in terms of

- Reduction in sickness absence
- Reduction in injury and stress related compensations and pensions
- Fewer ill health retirements
- Reduction in staff cover costs for those off work
- Reduction in staff turnover and recruitment costs

The Oasis Wellness Centre Project

NHS and Government strategy is increasingly not just about treating those that are ill, it is more about helping to keep people well. We currently provide OH services to PHT, local PCTs, GPs and dentists plus over 60 non-NHS clients including universities, charities, commercial enterprises and industries- almost all of which are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Research conducted on behalf of the HSE has shown that only 3% of SMEs have access to OH services. In addition, changing demographics will lead to a greater health needs as older workers remain in the workplace and many more people would be able to remain in or return to work given integrated support.

Following our successful bid, we received £1.4m funding from NHS Plus, with a further £500k being awarded under a separate bid from NHS Plus. The remainder of the funds came from PHT, including £1m from when the Trust was awarded 3 stars. The funding was spent to cover an existing open air swimming pool and build a new centre, incorporating a fully fitted gym, indoor swimming pool, 5 treatment/therapy rooms and conference facilities that include the very latest training and seminar technologies. This provides both the NHS and local businesses with a light and modern venue for conferences, meetings and training sessions and can comfortably hold up to 60 delegates. The building is completely stand alone and has all services provided to it.

The facility opened in March 2010 and delivers a range of wellbeing facilities including a well equipped gym and heated swimming pool. There are also 5 treatment/therapy rooms which focus on delivering services to improve health and well-being of both hospital staff and employees of local SMEs, with provision of occupational health services focused on health and healthier lifestyle provided within the centre. Plans are in place to extend the range of services to provide specialist rehabilitation services to aid return to work, these will be offered in conjunction with Portsmouth University Sports Science department. The range of services delivered include rehabilitation and complementary therapy and will focus on business issues affecting SME's in particular, including reducing absence costs, improving the physical and psychological wellbeing of employees and increasing staff morale and motivation.

The centre was part of the development of the Occupational Health services to incorporate health & wellbeing into their core function. The evidence from Choosing Health white paper and the Black review both demonstrated a need to improve health and wellbeing of staff to reduce sickness absence and overall staffing costs. The most recent Boorman review of NHS staff health

echoes previous white papers and links in staff health and wellbeing with good quality patient care. NICE call for all NHS Trusts to manage and give support to staff in improving their health and wellbeing.

The development of oasis offers staff a unique facility to improve health & wellbeing through use of a gym, swimming pool, fitness classes and treatment/therapy rooms. The multi-disciplinary approach using Physiotherapy services and the Sports Sciences Department at Portsmouth University, for staff with muscular-skeletal problems will provide a first class service. This in turn will have a real impact on sickness absence which will meet the recommendations from the Boorman report. Reducing sickness absence has a direct impact on patient care and staff morale within the Trust, not least because the costs associated with such absence, like staff replacement costs, are minimised. Services are also being developed for local SMEs whose services will in time mirror those of PHT staff.

Customer feedback

Although we have only been in the new facility for 7 months, the feedback from Trust staff has been extremely positive. As part of the initial opening we used a feedback group prior to fully opening the centre to all users. The original plan was to gather feedback for 6 weeks; this was cut down to 4 weeks as the feedback was so good. We have an online feedback form for all centre users giving users the opportunity to leave feedback and suggestions.

What does it allow us to do differently?

Allows staff access to gym and swimming pool at very heavily discounted rates. It also allows access to treatment and therapies and advantageous rates. The centre is onsite which facilitates ease of use and access. The centre runs a number of fitness classes which include:

- Pilates
- Aerobics
- Step
- Aquacise
- Legs, bums & tums
- Yoga

In addition to the regular classes we also run one to one sessions with a physical trainer, swimming lessons and Weight Watchers.

What evidence is there to suggest that this concept will work?

The positive feedback from Trust staff and external clients. The centre business plan projects that oasis will be self financing despite the current difficult climate. The evidence from the Boorman review and NICE both point to increasing the opportunities for staff to increase their physical activity in the workplace and manage their health and wellbeing.

How are NHS staff benefiting from the new Centre?

The staff are able to access fitness and therapy services at discounted prices. The range of support available starts with a simple induction right through to one to one sessions with a physical trainer. The anecdotal evidence collected

so far include; the diagnosis of exercise induced asthma, weight loss, improved fitness and learning to swim.

Overall it is expected that staff who use the centre will have less sickness absence, better productivity and less serious illness as a result. Their patient care skills will improve as they will be able to transfer the information they have learnt from improving their own health and wellbeing to patients.

How are SMEs benefiting from the Centre?

The Centre enhances all the other services that the OH service is currently providing to local businesses. Many of our activities for commercial customers take place at the client's premises, as that is most preferable and cost effective for them. However, we offer all customers a Wellness assessment, to include promoting health in the workplace and any necessary health surveillance; this enables us to make them aware of services within the Centre which would support them. Examples include sports massage, body stress release, Bowen technique and counselling. In addition, if an employee would benefit from a tailored rehab programme, this is also offered within the gym by qualified physical trainers. The collaborative work and research being undertaken by Portsmouth University is another tool to help employees return to fitness and work. A rapid access physiotherapy service is the next planned intervention- we are currently trialling it and the results look most promising. Boorman (Royal Mail) suggests that businesses will receive a £3 return on every £1 invested in health and wellbeing.

The conference suite also benefits local businesses. The high quality of the facilities makes it an attractive venue for meetings and seminars requiring, for example, high resolution projectors or video conferencing. As members of the Chamber of Commerce we are able to link in to the Chamber's activities and provide breakfast and evening seminars where appropriate which are both educational and informative.

By providing integrated and comprehensive services either at the client's own premises or at our site, together with innovative approaches to rehabilitation, we can contribute significantly to the economic growth and wealth of our region.

How are the funds generated benefiting NHS staff?

The income generated by the centre will be used to reinvest into improvements and to ensure it is self sufficient. This will ensure it does not detract from clinical budgets/patient care. Indeed improved health & wellbeing will have a positive effect on staff morale, improve patient care and therefore reduce workplace stress.

Conclusion

Oasis provides both Hospital staff and local SMEs with a fitness centre and access to a range of therapies which impact upon their health and wellbeing in a positive way. This contributes to an overall health picture for all users of the centre, which has a direct impact on their productivity and attendance in

the workplace. This Centre helps to support staff and demonstrates our commitment to our organizational values.

The centre will benefit the many small and medium sized companies that want to look after their staff. It will be a focal point for the already successful Occupational Health Service, who currently provide a variety of services to over 60 non-NHS businesses, ranging from support in reducing sickness absence to health surveillance to comply with statutory requirements.

We recognize both the staff and economic benefits of a healthy work place. Health in the work place is so important (financial benefits, staff morale and wellbeing, improved quality of patient care). These are tough economic times and our amazing and dedicated staff are working under ever more difficult circumstances. The service will help to reduce sickness absence, rehabilitate people back to work and keep employees in work where support is necessary.

Quotes:

Dr Steve Boorman, Chief Medical Adviser to the Royal Mail Group, and Workforce Health and Wellbeing Lead Reviewer for the NHS, officially launched the new centre in July 2010. He said, "In order to provide high quality care, the NHS needs healthy staff. This new centre will help tackle staff health issues which in turn will help improve patient care and deliver financial savings." Dr Boorman added that the facility was the best in the country. Oasis is part of an NHS Plus initiative to demonstrate new and innovative ideas to improve the provision of health and wellbeing services to local business communities.

Portsmouth Hospitals Trust's Chief Executive Ursula Ward attended the launch. She said, "Good health at work is good for everyone and, in today's environment, providing greater access to health and wellbeing services for businesses in the community as well as NHS staff is even more important."