

**Case study**

January 2016

Growing the health  
and *well-being* agenda:  
From first steps  
to full potential



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## Case study: Integrating well-being into business-as-usual at South Liverpool Homes

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### Who are we?

South Liverpool Homes (SLH) is a housing association and manages around 3,700 homes. Our mission is to make South Liverpool the place to be. So even though our primary activity is housing and property maintenance, our impact is felt in the community with projects focused on tackling anti-social behaviour, building skills and opportunities and finding innovative ways of involving people in the local community.

### The history

SLH had operated a well-being service since 2005 consisting of two part-time therapists employed to provide all colleagues with a six-weekly well-being service. Staff could book in for massages, reiki, hopi ear candles and other holistic remedies. However, the annual colleague engagement process highlighted that we needed to do more in the area to make well-being an integral part of working for us. In 2013 we kicked off a well-being review which directly supported our corporate plan.

As part of our 2022 strategy we have five overarching corporate aims – called our ‘Everys’ – and these aims guide everything we do:

- 1 Every Customer Happy
- 2 Every Place Perfect
- 3 Every Opportunity Taken
- 4 Every Penny Counts
- 5 Every Person Positive.

Our well-being focus sits under the ‘Every Person Positive’ banner. If our employees are healthy and happy, we know they will provide a great service to our customers and help achieve our mission of making South Liverpool the place to be. We provide our colleagues with the opportunities, advice and support to enable them to become more resilient, fitter, maintain good health and improve their overall well-being.

### Where did we start?

In May 2013 the project began by talking to colleagues about well-being and how SLH could support this. It was clear that colleagues were grateful for the existing well-being service but felt it was limited and not accessed by all. They wanted greater choice of offerings; we needed to understand what different people valued, and we considered what else we could offer that delivered at a time of choice and not necessarily within the workplace.

Within these conversations our colleagues highlighted a number of areas which were outside of the typical initiatives we associate with a well-being programme. In fact, some were concerned with wider employment practice, such as policies, terms and conditions, and the benefits package. With the scope of well-being extending into our overall people approach and how we operate as a business more generally, we realised this is how a focus on well-being will become part and parcel of what South Liverpool Homes is all about.

We took a phased approach to implementation to make sure that any ‘quick wins’ could be immediately implemented, while longer-term improvements which require more attention to detail and further exploration get the attention they need.

## Case study: continued

### Launching the new programme

We unveiled the new well-being offer to colleagues at a local leisure centre. We wanted to offer something more individualised as we know everyone who works for us has different needs and what is useful to people differs between life stages. We give all colleagues an annual well-being payment to be spent as they desire within well-being criteria. This responded specifically to colleague feedback around choice and personalisation while also leading to service savings for the business.

At this event we also provided a number of initiatives to support physical and mental well-being as well as nutritional advice and resilience workshops. Colleagues were offered the opportunity to meet with a life coach individually to discuss their concerns and to help them adopt a healthier attitude to life and work.

The feedback from the day was fantastic, with over 85% rating it as 'excellent'.

### Implementing the next part of the new well-being plan

Following the launch, a number of initiatives were introduced to keep the momentum going. As well as the weekly fresh fruit delivery, colleagues are now equipped with juicers, soup makers and ingredients to make healthy lunches which are shared amongst all colleagues. While this supports health and well-being, an unintended outcome is the sense of teamwork and camaraderie that the initiative has created: for example, who can make the best soup? What new recipes have people tried?

We also offer annual health checks, a bike-to-work scheme, corporate membership at a local gym, 'SLH U Choose' benefits scheme and annual flu jabs protecting colleagues through the winter.

### Who led the programme?

Our chief executive and head of HR and organisational development were key project members, talking directly to colleagues about how we could improve. Staff forum representatives acted as champions for the review, discussing directly with colleagues and then feeding back to the project group. In addition to the forums, mini surveys, drop-in sessions and team meetings were used to 'test' ideas and opinions about potential offers. It was key that the whole business 'owned' the focus on well-being and people could easily give their views on the programme content. We wanted colleagues to have a sense of ownership regarding the remit and outcomes.

The key to the success of our project was the engagement of colleagues and using the staff forum members as project champions. This helped to reduce any mystery around the project while also 'mythbusting' about what could happen or indeed what was happening.

### How has integrating well-being into our business benefitted our organisation?

The major objective of this project was to improve the health and well-being of our colleagues. We knew that investment in this area would, in turn, then benefit the business, helping retain our talented staff, increasing staff productivity, and ultimately providing a great service to the South Liverpool community.

The revised well-being offer was primarily implemented in September 2013, with ongoing initiatives to date. The impact of our activity is as follows:

- Sickness absence for the period September 2013 – March 2014 decreased 54% in comparison with the same period 12 months earlier (September 2012 – March 2013) resulting in a cost saving of £25,000 to SLH. And the positive impact is being maintained, with the 2014–15 sickness absence figures being 15% lower than the 2013–14 figures.

## Case study: continued

- In March 2015 we retained our first place in the *Sunday Times* 100 'Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For' list. We had increased our employee engagement score in all factors since the previous year, including well-being, which showed a 15% improvement in many areas of the business.
- In achieving IIP Gold status in November 2013, the assessor evidenced '*flexibility in terms of support, evidence of compassionate managers and wellbeing events linked to reduced sickness*'.
- Overall, customer satisfaction has increased to 90% since the revision of our well-being offer.
- SLH took the top spot in the 'Best Health and Well-being Initiative' category at the 2014 CIPD People Management Awards.

Our achievements have been against a backdrop of both increased financial and operational performance and increased customer satisfaction, showing that SLH is operating as efficiently and effectively as it ever has done – which endorses the business case for supporting health and well-being amongst our colleagues.

### What's next?

Our focus through 2015–16 is personal development and, in particular, career development for our aspiring colleagues. We know that as a relatively smaller organisation, we have limited promotion opportunities, but it's important that we support colleagues to maximise potential and performance in their current role while preparing them to meet their future goals and our future business needs. We currently offer mentoring opportunities, secondments to other parts of the business, and the opportunity to work on multi-disciplinary project teams.

We have also started to work towards achievement of the Workplace Wellbeing Charter and introducing a health promotion events calendar, ensuring activity is ongoing throughout the year.

Overall, well-being is intrinsic to what we do, both internally and externally. One of the key strategic themes of our 'Every Person Positive' is to 'create and sustain a happier and healthier workforce'. And a focus on well-being is integral to our people management approach – the first question that is asked at monthly one-to-ones is: 'How is your well-being?' Going beyond our own organisation, this focus is cascaded out to our neighbourhoods utilising the same principles we have adopted for our colleagues. For example, we promote the importance of healthy eating and exercise. It's simple, really: if our colleagues are healthy and happy, we know they will provide a great service to our customers and help achieve our mission of making South Liverpool the place to be.



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