Maximising the potential of NHS workforce

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The NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) Programme are funding a study – Staff satisfaction and organisational performance: evidence from the NHS Staff Survey - to investigate whether job satisfaction and employee attitudes are associated with improved organisational performance in the NHS.

It is believed good employers can attract and retain better workers, and satisfied workers are likely to work harder than dissatisfied workers, yet little research has been undertaken on this in the UK.

The research will have significant implications for the NHS; in 2009 the NHS made commitments to its workforce through the staff pledges of the NHS Constitution.The organisation also has legal obligations in the area of equality and diversity and to improving organisational performance. In addition to the 'moral' and 'legal' case, this study will critically examine the impact of job satisfaction to an effective NHS workforce.

The researchers, led by **Professor Martin Powell (/staff/profiles/social-policy/powell-martin.aspx)**, from the University of Birmingham, will be predominantly analysing data from the NHS national staff survey, the largest annual workforce survey in the world. The project will be focusing on four main areas: length of time with the organisation, staff group (clinical / non-clinical), demographic and background factors (age, sex, ethnicity, disability) and finally by trust type and geographical region.

Professor Powell said: “This project brings together researchers who have previously examined human resources management and engagement (funded by DH) and Talent Management (funded by NIHR SDO). It focuses on ‘High Performance Work Systems’ (HPWS), and how these impact the work of NHS trusts. Much of the previous work on HPWS has been on the manufacturing sector in the USA, and we know less about HPWS in the UK in general and the NHS in particular. We aim to discover from the NHS Staff Survey which particular aspects of staff satisfaction and experience are linked to organisational performance, and to suggest policy ‘levers’ that may improve organisational performance”.

The results of this study aim to benefit patients by discovering better ways to maximise the potential of the NHS workforce

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