

Case study

Improving working lives in the NHS.

East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust



Developing a Health, Well-being and Culture Assessment to understand organisational culture and its impact on the workforce.

Every organisation creates a unique culture of its own. Your culture is your brand and it is defined by the vision, values, beliefs, environment, and traditions that the individuals of the organisation share. This culture determines the success of an organisation as it influences how it conducts business, adapts to change, manages workflow, as well as how your people think, feel and act.

With so many influencing factors, the task of managing culture is challenging and, to add to the difficulty, it's not defined, owned, or controlled by one person or group. Many organisations opt to conduct in-house culture assessments, however, they may not have the right level of expertise, the process, or resources available to effectively identify both their current and desired culture. As a result, the assessment might not truly identify the workforce's experience of the workplace, the cultures that prevail and the values

that guide behaviour, which is why organisations often turn to companies like Zeal Solutions for professional support.

Why the Trust carried out a culture assessment.

The East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EMAS) wanted to understand better the levels of morale and engagement among its workforce and the impact of this on organisational and individual health and wellbeing. Zeal Solutions was commissioned to conduct a Health, Well-being and Culture Audit. This audit was also used to complement the annual NHS staff opinion survey.

Following a national call to action for Ambulance Services to assess their organisational cultures, Zeal designed, developed and carried out an audit to assess the current culture and the workforces' attitudes

towards the workplace. They created a solution that would identify potential issues, before making recommendations for change to enhance employee health, well-being and engagement.

How Zeal managed the process.

Dr Antonio Zarola, Managing Director of Zeal Solutions comments:

"Understanding a workplace and its people is the all-important first step in our approach. Part of what makes Zeal unique is our attention to detail and how we get to the core of an organisation. This ensures that we understand each company that we work with before we carry out any assessments or recommend interventions. It is imperative that we understand the dynamics of each workplace and its people, and use that to inform our strategy."

"As such, when working with EMAS, we formed a steering group of stakeholders at various levels across the organisation to ensure we obtained a representative sample of feedback. This would also generate internal awareness and demonstrated that the views and opinions of the workforce were valued. We also conducted focus groups and interviews with over 100 employees to further ensure involvement in the development of the audit."

"The insight gained from the focus groups was used to create a workforce survey that was distributed to 3,000 employees, and responses were gathered through online and paper surveys, before being analysed."

The outcome of the assessment.

Using the data from the workplace survey, evidence-based actions were created to protect and promote a positive culture and sense of well-being.

To promote workforce engagement and inclusion, Zeal presented the findings across three leadership conferences and 22 focus groups, as well as producing an in-depth report and integrated action plan in line with the organisation's vision for the future.

A two-year plan for delivering change is underway. EMAS and Zeal have clear objectives to ensure genuine change takes place, that change is evidenced through robust measurement and that progress is shared with colleagues through the ongoing internal communications and engagement programme.

Previous internal surveys had generated low response rates, which meant the survey had to have a strong and accessible brand, be simple and easy to complete, and not time-consuming. A strategy was devised to maximised workforce awareness and engagement to encourage people to respond, which resulted in 48% of employees taking part.

The higher response rate enabled EMAS to gain a better understanding of its people and set meaningful objectives to improve cultural development. The findings of the audit are continually being used to help advise and inform strategies to drive change, offer support and boost engagement in the organisation.

Kerry Gulliver, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development at EMAS comments:

"We work in a fast-paced dynamic emergency environment, with increasing levels of demand, and our staff can often face challenging, emotional and traumatic incidents. This can have a dramatic impact upon on an individual and the team, so we wanted to carry out a detailed audit of the health, well-being and culture of our organisation. By being so specific, detailed and tailored, Zeal's audit helped us understand our people, their experiences in the workplace, and the impact of their experience. This has allowed us to truly examine the workplace culture to support our staff and our organisational development journey."

