Survey of Hospice Human Resource (HR) Leads

Executive summary
Through informal feedback from Hospice HR leads it is apparent there is varying access to peer support and networking. In May 2015 a UK-wide survey was undertaken to test the proposal of building more structured support at national level. 33% of hospice HR leads responded and of those 75% had access to a regional group. There was, however, overwhelming support for the building of more regional networks and the establishment of more national support and resource. The HR leads surveyed also called for a programme of annual events and master-classes which would address emerging and topical HR related issues.

In response, we propose to run an HR event early in 2016 which will focus on engaging hospice HR leads about what steps should be taken to progress the proposals noted above.

Background to the survey
The proposal to undertake a survey of HR leads was informed by a number of events and meetings over the past two years e.g.

- a workforce planning event run in partnership with Skills for Health in June 2013
- A meeting of hospice stakeholders in December 2013 to explore recommendations from the Commission into the Future of Hospice Care on workforce development and how hospices and Hospice UK might respond to the local and national challenges posed.

Partly in an attempt to meet such challenges, there has been a growing call by HR leads for Hospice UK to develop a national HR professional network. There is a scattering of HR networks across the UK and those who use them find them to be very supportive and resourceful. However, there is recognition that a more collective perspective would enable key workforce development issues and other important HR related interests and challenges to be addressed at a more strategic national level.

Aims of the survey
HR leads were invited to participate in a survey in order to gauge their level of interest in a national network. As well as ascertaining the level of interest, they were asked to comment on what would they see as the purpose of such a network; to rank the top four issues they would welcome wider collaboration on; and outline how would they like to engage in such a network.

Over the past few years Hospice UK has worked in conjunction with groups within its membership to develop a range of successful networks and special interest groups e.g. retail managers, Executive Clinical leaders (ECLiHP) and dementia interest group, hence there is a level of expertise and experience within the organisation which could support a similar development for HR professional colleagues.
Survey design and dissemination
Hospice UK collaborated with a small group of HR colleagues to undertake the survey design. Through ENO and direct mailing to members of two known regional networks, leads were invited to participate over a four-week period (April – May 2015).

Results

- 33% of hospices (N=72) took part in the survey, providing rich data to inform the key priorities which HR leads would like to be considered for national learning and also issues which would benefit from national collaboration see themes below. There was more than 94% support for a nationwide hospice HR Lead network.
- The CIPD HR membership status of person responsible for HR function showed a range from 40% being chartered members to 25% holding no professional membership.

  **CIPD membership**
  - Associate 14%
  - Graduate 7%
  - Chartered member 40%
  - Chartered fellow 14%
  - None 25%

- 49% of those responsible for HR function are at directorship level with 40% identified as holding a head of department role. 61% of those who responded stated there is HR representation as board level.
- Approximately 72% reported having a HR strategy or was working towards one. The time period varied from annual to 5 yearly reviews.

Advice and support

- When asked how HR leads keep themselves updated, 25% access CIPD events and resources and 33% do so via local law firms. Other resources include access to ACAS, HR consultants and other HR colleagues. 85% respondents recorded support & advice from external HR advice and support, usually through a local law firm, 60% of these come with an indemnity scheme.
- 75% of those who responded do meet regularly with colleagues from other hospices as a local network. Issues discussed primarily focus on operational matters followed by topics related to staff learning and development and hospice HR strategy (see table).
National networking proposal

- When asked if a national network would be helpful, 96% of respondents said yes and saw its key functions as offering informal peer support; engaging in ‘task and finish group work’ and providing access to relevant professional education and training.

- 5 themes ranked of greatest value to address at national level included:
  a. Workforce planning and development ranked top overall. In particular, current and future challenges were identified as: nurse recruitment and retention; recruitment of high calibre leaders; development of future leaders
  b. Education and training provision e.g. developing the ‘care certificate’
  c. Strategy and policies development, legislation updates and implementation e.g. Medical & Nursing Revalidation (Note legislation varies across the four nations).
  d. Pay scales, terms and conditions, employee benefits e.g. agenda for change, volunteer roles
  e. Benchmarking and sharing of good HR practice

- 94% of respondents would like the opportunity to meet with colleagues, via an annual conference and access to a range of HR related master-classes.

Conclusion and recommendations

This response rate although modest in number, does reflect themes of interest acquired anecdotally. HR leads clearly wish to engage with each other and have much in common in terms of work focus and would welcome a more national collegiate perspective on emerging key issues.

It is therefore proposed that Hospice UK will continue to work with a small group of HR leads who have supported the design of this survey, to run an event in early 2016. The event will include seeking members feedback on suggested next steps as outlined in this survey report.

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