Leading with Compassion
A ‘How to’ guide for all NHS organisations

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Our details:
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What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide outlines the case for change, the key principles and the process we based our actions on when embedding a compassion recognition scheme across the West Midlands. Our hope is it will be helpful to you in designing and implementing your own recognition scheme in your own organisation. This guide also provides context around compassionate leadership and why it matters.

Who is this guide for?

- OD and Leadership leads wishing to introduce a recognition scheme into their own trust.
- Staff, patients and carers to understand why compassion matters and the wider impact of our actions
- People wishing to positively influence culture within teams, directorates, organisations and the wider system

“If we want our patients to experience kindness and compassionate care in their treatment, then the staff who deliver that care must experience the same kindness and compassion in the way that they are managed and led’

- Mandip Kaur, Kings Fund
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What did we do?

‘Leading with Compassion’ was launched in September 2015 to research, recognise and embed compassionate leadership. Initially developed for organisations in Shropshire and Staffordshire, it was later expanded in response to demand from organisations in the wider West Midlands health economy.

Born out of a regional leadership practice sharing event, a Community of Practice was established with the remit to spread compassionate leadership innovations and help co-create a resource for sharing best practice. We then launched our ‘Leading with Compassion’ recognition scheme. This is a really simple scheme whereby anyone (patient, carer or staff member) can nominate anyone who they feel has acted with compassion. Each and every person nominated receives a bespoke card detailing the nomination and a Trust specific badge. Nominations are made by completing a card and posting it in a box designed for the scheme, or using the website to complete an on-line form (www.nhscompassion.org).

The compassion recognition scheme is described in our two videos (see links below). The first describes the compelling case for change:

Click here to view https://vimeo.com/hyperfinemedia/review/147453858/a8d9629c44

On 14th February 2017 we held our Compassion Celebration Event where we shared our journey to date, together with our initial analysis of the 1500 nominations as of February 2017 received from 11 NHS organisations. (as of February 2017).

This analysis focussed on the collated responses to the two simple questions on the nomination form

1. “How did the person lead with compassion?” (The action)
2. “What was the impact on you/and or others?” (The impact)

Our second compassion recognition video describes our findings and key themes. Click here https://vimeo.com/hyperfinemedia/review/203803743/8d3259ccb9
This analysis has enabled us to develop a working definition of compassion based on the nominations of staff and patients from the health and social care community in the West Midlands which we believe is the first to characterise compassion in this way.

Our website www.nhscompassion.org is not only a resource for the wider healthcare community to share best practice, research and inspirational stories but is also the central point for online nominations from the 11 participating organisations which continue to stream in daily.

We are motivated not only by a desire to recognise and reward individual acts of compassion, but also to nurture a more compassionate culture across our teams, our organisations, our region and beyond.

The results exceeded our expectations, with 11 participating organisations generating over 2900 nominations by November 2017 – each one representing an act of compassion by a member of staff, witnessed and recognised by service users, carers or colleagues.

What is compassion?

Compassion has been defined “as a sensitivity to suffering/distress in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it” - (Cole-King and Gilbert 2011 p 30).

It is important to note that compassion is not only the awareness of others’ distress; it is also doing something about it.

Although we all have an innate sense of what compassion is, it’s harder to put it explicitly into words. Many academic studies have tried to define ‘compassion’ and while there is no widely accepted consensus, there are several common themes that emerge. By introducing the ‘Leading with Compassion’ recognition scheme across our system, we produced a typology which reflected how compassion is demonstrated in health and social care in Staffordshire/Shropshire.
Why does it matter?

Compassion is seen as an integral part of good healthcare (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2015, DH 2015, 2014, Nursing and Midwifery Council 2015) – indeed it is one of the 6Cs in the National Nursing and Midwifery strategy – (Compassion in Practice NHS England 2012).

When NHS staff work in organisations that mirror their core value of compassion, their motivation, wellbeing and creativity are sustained and nurtured and they demonstrate compassion in their interactions with patients (Amos and Weathington 2008). Care that is compassionate rather than uncaring or disempowering has a positive effect on patient satisfaction and health outcomes (West, 2017). The challenge, then, is to nurture a strong culture of compassion in health care systems.

Whilst there is considerable existing literature on the importance of compassion clinically, there is a growing recognition of the importance of compassionate leadership and of the need to embed a culture of compassion throughout the organisation (Ref: National Improvement and Leadership Development Board 2016). This does not start and end with clinicians but involves all staff at all levels and across all roles. What leaders focus on, talk about, pay attention to, reward and seek to influence, tells those in the organisation what their leadership values are and therefore what they, as organisation members should value (West, 2017). In other words, the development of culture.

The themes which arose from our analysis of nominations were;

Action themes (What did they do?)
1. Supporting through distress
2. Role Modelling
3. Recognition of staff
4. Kindness
5. Listening and Assurance
6. Discretionary Effort
7. Maintaining morale through change

Impact themes (How did it make you feel?)
1. Feeling Secure
2. Feeling Valued
3. Feeling proud
4. Feeling empowered
5. Direct Improvement in Patient Care
6. Creating or maintaining a positive culture
7. Improved emotional resilience
Let’s consider what happens in the **absence of compassion**. When we feel threatened, under pressure, stressed or anxious our fight / flight /freeze response kicks in. All of our attention is focussed on keeping us safe and protecting ourselves.

Whilst we are focussed on threat, our creativity, problem solving, memory, reasoning and concentration are adversely affected. Feeling under threat regularly is emotionally and physically draining.

Experiencing compassion activates the **calming system** which helps to reduce the threat response.

Being treated with compassion helps us to feel **safe and valued**, which improves our cognitive function and wellbeing, and in turn we become more **engaged** and our performance improves.

**Benefits**

This isn’t just of benefit to individuals, statistics from the workplace show an increase in engagement has benefits for the organisation as a whole. Where health service staff report that they are well led and they are satisfied with their leadership, patients report being treated with respect, care and compassion (Dawson et al 2011).

It’s important we all embed compassion in our day-to-day approach to work, leading effectively with compassion helps to counter stress and negative emotional responses amongst our teams. This in turn enables people to experience positive feelings such as hope and empowerment, and helps build resilience.

This promotes better connected relationships and stronger, more engaged teams.

All of this ultimately has a direct impact on patient care and outcomes.
We need to move away from directive, coercive styles of leadership. They may bring about short-term change, but can breed negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, distress and resistance.

Despite some views that compassion is ‘soft’ or ‘woolly’, there is robust evidence of its impact supported by statistics from the workplace:

- Employees who strongly agree that their manager focuses on strengths are more than twice as likely to be engaged as those whose manager focuses on weaknesses (Harter and Adkins, 2015)
- High performing teams experience five times as much appreciation as criticism (Zenger and Folkman, 2013)
- 70% of the variation in levels of staff engagement is driven by the employees’ direct line manager. (Beck and Harper, 2015)

Where leaders role-model a commitment to high-quality and compassionate care through their interactions and relationships, this has a profound effect on:

- clinical effectiveness
- patient safety
- patient experience
- the efficiency with which resources are used
- the health, wellbeing and engagement of staff
- the extent of innovation within the health care system (Dawson 2014; Shipton et al 2008).

Reflecting on this wealth of evidence and practice data, our idea of a scheme that promotes compassionate leadership behaviours was conceived.

Organisational case study – large acute teaching hospital

“We recently launched our Leading with Compassion philosophy. We aim to challenge our leaders to think and lead differently, and apply courageous compassion in their leadership and engagement. What this demonstrates is that compassion is at the very heart of our organisation and in the way it is led. We are excited that this scheme links perfectly to complement our strategy and widen out what compassion is and means in our organisation. This will demonstrate that leading with compassion is not just seen as an act for formal leaders, but instead an opportunity for us all to quietly give thanks and acknowledge when we have witnessed or experienced acts of compassion”
What is the set up process?

1. Agreement and sign up from your executive board to implement the scheme

2. Identify a lead project manager and admin lead to oversee the process. There should be a lead person within the organisation who takes responsibility for project oversight of this scheme. This may be a project manager who can set up the scheme, advise re: comms and marketing, but also monitor the progress of the monthly nominations coming in. In addition to this, there should be an administrative lead who has oversight of the practical aspects of managing this scheme. They should be responsible for processing the nominations and responding to queries as well as creating a run chart.

3. IT - set up an intranet page or database so that staff can nominate online. Link with a key contact within the IT team to deal with any issues which may arise.

4. Contact a provider to design, create and print your bespoke compassion logo on a card and badge. This may be identical to your existing organisational logo, it may take aspects of it, or you may choose for it to be completely unique. Participating organisations have taken different approaches. We have worked with Silk who can provide a competitive quote for designing your logo, presentation card and nomination form and printing/creating these products. (See appendix 3)

5. Consult with your communications and marketing team to discuss how best to launch the scheme (remove superfluous 5)

6. Launch the scheme (see information on engagement, communications and marketing)
What is the Scheme process?

1. Complete the nomination online or on a paper form & send to core team

2. Core team will upload this nomination

3. Bespoke card and badge issued and posted out within agreed SLA

4. By adding the web link in the back of each card we encourage nominees to nominate a colleague to help spread the culture of recognition

5. Recognise the compassionate act
Engagement, communications
and marketing

When launching the scheme we recommend that you send out the ‘compact’ of how you expect the scheme to be managed and what behaviours you hope to encourage. Please see appendix 1 for the compact used across the West Midlands as a model. You may want to adapt this template to suit your own organisational needs and strategy.

Our learning from working with 11 organisations has been that this scheme must align and fit with your wider organisational strategy. The timing of rolling out a scheme in terms of other organisational priorities should be carefully considered. The most successful organisations undertook both a ‘top down’ and a ‘bottom up’ engagement strategy at the same time. When introducing this scheme to the executive board, we found it useful to play the first video in order to articulate both the key organisational and individual benefits.

Other recommended steps organisations have taken to embed and spread this scheme have included;

1. An overview on the intranet page
2. Presenting the 4 minute video to the board, and asking that they kick start the scheme by nominating 2 people each
3. A section in the CEO blog which is emailed out to all staff weekly
4. Distribution of the hard copies of the A5 nomination forms in small plastic leaflet holders to clinical areas, and reception areas.
5. Adding two slides with the video overview to staff induction presentation
6. Having a slot on any upcoming event e.g. Nurses Day,
7. Adding an image with a hyperlink to your website embedded to your email signature
8. Celebrations of when you meet milestones in the number of nominations e.g. 100, 500 or 1000
9. Spotlight of specific case studies – you may choose to interview the individuals or even create a video clip
10. Social media – use twitter, facebook and other pages your organisation is connected to, to spread the word and celebrate success
Communications example

XXX Trust launches leading with compassion recognition scheme – nominate a colleague!
This is a simple scheme whereby there is a central point (electronic and paper version) where staff, patients and carers are able to recognise someone who they believe has demonstrated leading with compassion. Every nominated person will receive a Trust designed personalised badge and card. Please see the NHS compassion website [www.nhscompassion.org](http://www.nhscompassion.org) incorporating a video which gives an overview of the scheme and some of the evidence behind why it is important.
If you would like to nominate someone right now please click on this link – xxx

CEO blog example

This week we are launching an exciting new leading with compassion recognition scheme here at (Insert your organisation). This scheme is designed to recognise acts of compassion big or small across our Trust. Staff, patients and carers can all join in by nominating either online or on a paper nomination form. Every single person nominated will receive a personalised badge and card to thank them. If you want to find out any more information please browse *enter your intranet page*. So what are you waiting for? Nominate someone today!
Quality Assurance

It is essential that all data protection policies adhered to with regard to any personal data collected. All details of service users must be kept confidential unless written permission is given by the service user that their data can be shared following your information governance guidelines/policy.

Check for inappropriate nominations and check for any patient safety issues that may be detailed in the nomination. There should be a clear process to follow if a nomination raises any patient safety issues for example a helpline or key contact, following your safeguarding guidelines/policy.

Make sure there is an escalation process – a named contact person to deal with any escalated issues and to oversee this scheme.

Maintenance

It is important that this scheme has project oversight and administrative support. It is useful to keep track of how many nominations are received each month, as these will vary depending on the engagement activities you have undertaken. An example of a run chart is below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Jul 17</th>
<th>Aug 17</th>
<th>Sep 17</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also useful to review the nominations and organise them into the different types of compassionate acts that are nominated. The nominations form an invaluable source of information which will help shape future OD and Leadership strategies across your organisation and help to feedback how staff and patients feel.
Compassion Recognition Scheme Compact

Who is it for?

- At the heart of the award is the opportunity to reward and recognise compassionate acts, to someone in a non-hierarchical way.
- The Leading with compassion recognition scheme is available for any individual patient, carer, parent or staff member it rewards a person they feel has impacted positively on someone’s experience within a NHS Trust.
- The award is given and accessed by anyone, at any level in the organisation, and is received by anyone, at any level in the organisation.

How is it awarded?

- The intention is that compassionate behaviour is rewarded and made visible as an important Trust behaviour, linked to Trust Values.
- Increasingly more and more people visibly share the fact, that they have been recognised for compassionate acts, increasing positive feelings about work life and their role in it.
- Staff well-being and motivation to continue good practice is increasingly made more visible within the organisation.
- The scheme avoids the “grand gesture”, it is recognition without fanfare.
- The receipt of the card and badge should be silent and subtle so the individual can reflect personally and privately.
- The scheme does not exclude people. Whatever objectively we feel about an employee, if a patient or peer wishes to recognise a person for their compassionate practice they can subjectively do so.
- The scheme recognises individuals. This is not a scheme to recognise teams the nomination form will be clear in this regard.
What practically does the award look like, what would a person receive?

- Each organisation will influence the design and own their own card and badge, tailoring the look and language of their personalised recognition scheme award badge.
- Each nominee will receive a card in the post with a bespoke lapel badge attached to the card.

Why are we developing such a scheme?

- The scheme is designed grow a culture in which compassion is recognised, to enable it to develop organically within the organisation.
- Case studies can naturally be gathered from the themes of reward nominations.
- In this way Trusts will have a growing library and evidence base of stories on which to draw, based on their own workforce feedback.

Will the scheme clash with our current work?

- Where possible (but not exclusively) the scheme is best when it complements and links to a pre-existing initiative so the scheme beds in seamlessly within a trust.
- The scheme will build and develop on current best practice and is best when the culture of the organisation is receptive to strengthening compassion within its culture.

What are the operational standards the recognition scheme should hold to?

- A standard of 10 working days from the nomination being sent, to card receipt is ideal. Keeping feedback timely is critical.
- The scheme requires that each outpatient and inpatient area will display hard copy nomination forms for patients and carers to complete.
- The scheme expects that each organisation will keep a prominent link on their intranet site for the duration of the pilot, to enable staff to click to a link on the nomination portal with ease.
Overview Admin Process

1. You will have your own intranet page or database where there should be a facility for staff to submit nominations directly online, in addition there will be card/paper nomination forms, these will need to be collated and entered manually onto the system you are using.

2. You will then have a spreadsheet with all of your nominations in one place, if you wish you can theme these as per the themes on page 6. It is also useful to monitor the number of nominations coming in per month and to create a run chart as per page 13, this will also flag up peaks and troughs of nominations which may occur due to local marketing and comms initiatives.

3. In order to process each nomination you will need to create the card:

   Action issuing the card and badge:

   Using a card template copy and paste the details for each nomination in the appropriate fields –

   Dear xxxx

   Your Compassionate Leadership has been recognised by: xxxxx plus the details from spreadsheet (please insert answer to question 1 ‘How did the person lead with compassion? The action) from the spreadsheet

   They feel that by leading compassionately in this way that you make a real difference: – copy details from spreadsheet (please insert answer to question 2 ‘What was the impact to you/and or others? The impact)

   • Check the font etc is consistent and the detail from spreadsheet are indented and grammatically correct
   • Complete address labels– these will be needed for mailing the cards (internal and external)
   • Print the card in colour and print address label for the envelope
   • Once all completed on the ‘to do’ tab in your spreadsheet, cut and paste on to the actioned tab – save the spreadsheet
   • Review employee name to see if had previous nomination – if so only send card – if not send badge with card. Each nominee can receive multiple cards but only one badge.
   • Wrap badge in bubble wrap and put sticker on back of envelope with your online link
   • Post out to recipients
Appendix 3

Card and Badge supplier details
The providers of our cards and badges are the Silk Group (contact details below) who are able to provide a competitive quote and will design badges and cards to your requirements.

jbarber@silk-group.com
Tel 01204 433088
Fax 01204 431114
www.silk-group.com

Video and Animation Company

Hyperfine Media
Please contact Content Producer - Garth Haley
info@hyperfinemedia.co.uk
Tel 0161 820 2369
www.hyperfinemedia.co.uk
Appendix 4

References


National Improvement and Leadership Development Board (2016) Developing People-Improving Care A national framework for action on improvement and leadership development in NHS-funded organisations. Available at: https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/developing-people-improving-care/ (accessed on 22nd November 2017)


Royal College of Psychiatrists (2015) Compassion in care: ten things you can do to make a difference (Faculty Report). Royal College of Psychiatrists, London.


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