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**CSR case studies**

## Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

### ● The organisation

Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (OBMH) provide mental health services to people in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and the surrounding counties. Its mission and vision are to aid people in their recovery from mental ill health as well as promote the health and wellbeing of mental health patients.

OBMH became licensed as a Foundation Trust (FT) in April 2008 which gives it more freedom to manage its own activities and developments, as well as give staff, service users, carers and local residents a voice in decision-making.

In March 2009, OBMH was recognised at the British Medical Journal (BMJ) awards for its anti-stigma campaign and shortlisted for the BMJ Corporate Social Responsibility Award. It has also been shortlisted for an Association of Healthcare Communicators Award.

### ● The drivers

Unlike other forms of illness, such as physical disability, a form of discrimination and stigma continues to surround people with, or with a history of, mental ill health. OBMH sees equality of opportunity and treatment as an

### 'Stamping Out Stigma'

area which has been successfully tackled in many other areas but which has not been addressed adequately in the mental health sector.

*"People with mental health problems have the highest 'want to work' rate of any disability group – but have the lowest in-work rate. One third of people with mental health problems report having been dismissed or forced to resign from their job. 70% of people with mental health problems have been put off applying for jobs, fearing unfair treatment."* ("Attitudes to Mental Illness", 2009<sup>1</sup>)

### ● Taking action

In September 2008, the communications team launched 'Stamping Out Stigma', a campaign targeted at eliminating the discriminating behaviours towards mental health patients, their treatment in the workforce and access to opportunities. Originally four streams were identified as being priority areas for the campaign to target: damaging language; drug and substance use; heightened risk of suicide due to social exclusion; and employment.

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1

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH\\_100345](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_100345)

OBMH then conducted a round of engagement with service users, carers, young people and other stakeholders into “How much information do you see on a day-to-day basis, in the community, about mental health?”. The results of the engagement showed that exposure of mental health issues in the community was extremely low and encouraged the team to concentrate on how to raise the awareness of stigma surrounding mental health patients.



The campaign stories also included areas associated with mental health such as limited opportunity for employment if people declared their mental health status, and so on. These issues were discussed in local schools and the schools then came up with a screenplay on how it might feel to be on the receiving end of mental health stigma.

The remit of the campaign was about getting people to not exercise stigma around employing people with a history of mental health. The designs which were originally put

to the service users started out with quite mild messages; it was the service users themselves, whose input influenced the move to create designs with hard-hitting, candid visuals.

The first step was a poster campaign which was taken to schools, colleges, other health service providers, the voluntary sector, and local organisations affiliated with OBMH. After the first round OBMH team realised they needed more exposure in order to maximise the impact of the campaign.

Therefore, the next step was to utilise outdoor advertising for the campaign, including the sides of buses, and cinema washrooms. This enabled OBMH to get the message out to more of the community which is where they felt the awareness was lowest.

This extended to social networking sites, such as Facebook, online video such as YouTube, into schools to younger people, and local radio interviews.

### ● Why is it CSR?

OBMH's overall remit is to support and advocate the health and wellbeing of mental health sufferers. This campaign addressed issues around discrimination, inequality, and indirectly those around how stigma by employers can affect opportunities for those with a history of mental illness.

A major challenge for OBMH was to try and encourage the shift not only in attitude, but more importantly in behaviour towards employing people with a history of mental health.

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Additionally, the campaign was led by the services users, carers and other stakeholders ensuring good governance and the involvement of service users in formulating the story behind the campaign.

● **What next?**

OBMH intends to do another round of benchmarking to measure the impact of the campaign, asking questions such as, “Did we make an impact?”, “If so, where?”, “Who on?”, “If not, why not?”

This will inform its next steps towards another campaign, whether it be more focused on employment matters or a different aspect of stigma.

OBMH also intends to spread the message through entering more awards and heightening its profile in other media.

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