



BUILDING QUALITY CARE

Wesleyhaven

A “new form of professionalism” among staff at the Wesleyhaven residential facility, spurred on by the Partnership Resource Centre, has created an environment which has seen the owners, management and staff working together to help assure Wesleyhaven’s future.

- More productive staff
- Improved service
- More team work
- Greater staff pride
- Increased professionalism among staff
- Greater awareness of operating costs such as energy use
- Greater desire for more skills among staff
- A happier and more cohesive workplace

CREATING A POSITIVE INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT

Big improvements in the “people factor” at Wesleyhaven aged care residential facility in Lower Hutt, following the involvement of the Partnership Resource Centre (PRC), has helped create a more positive environment for new investment in the facility.

Wesley Community Action Director David Hanna says the changing needs of the elderly are putting pressure on the aged care sector to invest further in buildings and equipment.

“Any investment we make at Wesleyhaven will be a big one for a small organisation,” he says. “So it needs careful consideration.

“Having a facility where staff are committed to first-class service, committed to adapting to changing needs and where there are positive relationships between key groups, these are real



important building blocks for any investment decision.”

Hanna says “if I didn’t feel confident about the people factor, I would be more hesitant to recommend any investment to the board”.



LITTLE THINGS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Hanna's confidence in the "people factor" comes from Wesleyhaven's ability, with the help of the Partnership Resource Centre, to overcome a number of stubborn little issues, making a big difference to the way the facility operates.

Staff and management agree that a PRC-brokered focus on getting away from 'them and us' attitudes, increasing communication and a greater emphasis on professionalism have all contributed to the turn around.

"At the heart of the change was management being open with staff, helping them realise why change was needed and why we had to work together," says Wesleyhaven Manager Karen Rhind. "Together we have made huge progress."

An example of an issue, seemingly small to outsiders, was the introduction of a staff uniform. For the previous 15 years uniforms were optional and were a mish mash of colours. There was gradual slippage in dress standards and often name badges were not worn.

NEED FOR CHANGE

Driving the need for new ways of operating at Wesleyhaven are changes in the aged care sector, notably the impact of an aging population, increasingly complicated care needs and the high expectations of residents and family regarding levels of care.

Many workers in the sector are viewed as being relatively unskilled and underpaid. In response, the sector as a whole is looking for greater flexibility of service provision and higher quality care.

And while Wesleyhaven had a reputation for quality care, there were specific issues around the need for more investment in buildings and work silos in the three parts of Wesleyhaven: two rest homes and a hospital.

Rhind says Wesleyhaven needed to find a new model that dealt with these issues. "We realised we couldn't keep on doing what we had been doing in the past and we also realised that if we were to make any changes, we needed to bring staff along with us".

An early push of the partnership was to lift the professionalism of staff, including their appearance.

The staff dress code had been a long-standing source of discontent among both staff and management. The PRC provided the circuit breaker, laying the ground for agreement that appearance was an important part of being professional.

Jeania Tetava, Administrative Support, sees the uniform issue as a milestone on the path to changing the mindset of many staff. "The launch of the new uniform was such a success that many staff came on their day off with their families.

"That was a definite change. Staff are now taking pride in their appearance and the residents and families have shared their delight. Now they are recognisable as Wesleyhaven staff. Thanks to shared education workgroups and celebrations of successes, staff from across the whole site are mingling and sharing."

Before the PRC came on board in mid-2008, Wesleyhaven had begun to respond to the need to change with a heavy emphasis on increased training and skills. "We had been successful in improving skills, but this was not sufficient in itself to bring about the kind of organisation-level changes needed to meet future challenges."

Getting staff representatives and the Service and Food Workers Union involved in working with managers in a partnership, facilitated by the PRC, has helped create the relationships needed for a joint approach to the challenges facing Wesleyhaven.

Rhind says a "new form of professionalism" was required, but first Wesleyhaven had to overcome resistance to change and 'them and us' attitudes.

Betua Chung, Hospital Manager, says staff asked themselves 'where do we want to be in 10 years?' In the background was the fear that Wesleyhaven might not even exist in 10 years.

“We began to understand and acknowledge the environment Wesleyhaven was in – the competition from other providers, the changing needs of residents, the high expectations of families and the need to upgrade our buildings.”

Management and the Service and Food Workers Union, representing the majority of the 115 -120 staff at Wesleyhaven, agreed on a partnership approach, supported by the PRC.

Implementing a joint work programme, focusing on ‘creating a good impression’, improved communication, identifying savings, creating a learning culture and finding more effective ways of working, is the responsibility of a joint management-union and staff working group.



BIG PICTURE

Rhind says the working group wanted to build a ‘big picture’ of Wesleyhaven so all staff could understand the issues and see progress being made in resolving them, and where they fitted into the picture.

This includes informing staff about Wesleyhaven’s overall financial position, regularly reporting on key operational indicators such as occupancy, cost of equipment and energy use.

Results include:

- more talk of common goals
- more frequent and open meetings and conversations between management and staff
- greater staff involvement and

MEASURING SUCCESS

Rhind says Wesleyhaven has made “quite a significant” financial investment in the partnership including paying staff to attend partnership workshops and staff time at meetings.

When it comes to measuring the return on this investment, Rhind says “it may not be a bottom-line issue, but well qualified staff who enjoy their

- increased staff ownership of issues.

Jeania says the information now provided to staff “makes us aware that there are things we all can do.

“It helps us improve our understanding of how we staff can make a contribution. It also helps get staff buy-in and trust. Staff now take responsibility and feel confident to speak up.”

She says there are still diehards among staff who do not buy in, “but now the feeling is that they need to jump on board or they’ll get left behind”.

The general feeling is that while there is still plenty to do, the place has woken up and there is momentum towards staff being more aware of and better equipped for change.

role and apply their learning for the benefit of residents are key to the ongoing future of Wesleyhaven.

“Staff are more productive, they provide a higher level of service to residents and out of that we are beginning to see better occupancy.”

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 ”

BEFORE PARTNERSHIP	AFTER PARTNERSHIP
'Them and us' attitudes between staff and management	Growing realisation that staff and management both have a stake in Wesleyhaven's future
Business information not readily shared and made available by management	Managers are up front with workers to encourage understanding and trust
Staff not taking responsibility and ownership of issues	"New professionalism" in place including greater teamwork
Three workplace silos	Greater integration across the three facilities on the Wesleyhaven site
Low paid and under skilled workforce	Wages have been rising as staff gain more skills
Traditional set piece style of dealing with union-management disputes	Greater focus on solving problems when they arise. Meetings more constructive
'Not my job' attitude common	Greater flexibility in work practices and willingness to help each other out
Negative, confrontational workplace	Improved trust

**PARTNERSHIP
 RESOURCE
 CENTRE**

What is the PRC?

Workplace partnerships programmes increase productivity, innovation and efficiency by helping create constructive relationships between employers and workers.

The Partnership Resource Centre assists businesses and unions to identify long-term mutual interests and put in place programmes that ensure the businesses and their workers thrive.

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