

# Career Transition and Change programme for NHS Direct

## Career Transition

### The scope of the engagement

It was announced that NHS Direct would be downsizing, despite all efforts and many iterations, that NHS Direct would close and hand over to a new service, NHS 111.

It was a period of immense change, career instability and uncertainty. There were big cultural, morale and motivation challenges as well as the obvious logistical ones.

Over 3000 people, mainly health advisors and clinicians were affected. As a body of professionals they were very committed to their role within the Health Service and proud of the success and growth of the service that was to also be their downfall. It was a body blow that was keenly felt across the entire organisation.

Colleagues didn't know whether they would be staying on, be made redundant, or be 'tuped' across to the new organisation, with all the ensuing concerns about a forced change- and they had to continue to provide a professional public service; a life line to people worried about their health and/ or in serious need of urgent medical assistance. The project team had to start from scratch. No-one in the team had any experience of handling a situation like this ever before and they were in full public view of the national press.

### Vision and Goals

**Listen to Simon Gosney**, Former Head of L&D, NHS Direct: "The support we provided had to be very current, practical and action-focused. We needed a high-quality programme, that would help us to reduce potential redundancy costs, and demonstrate a very strong commitment to our colleagues at a time of significant change. We calculate that the ROI exceeded £100,000."

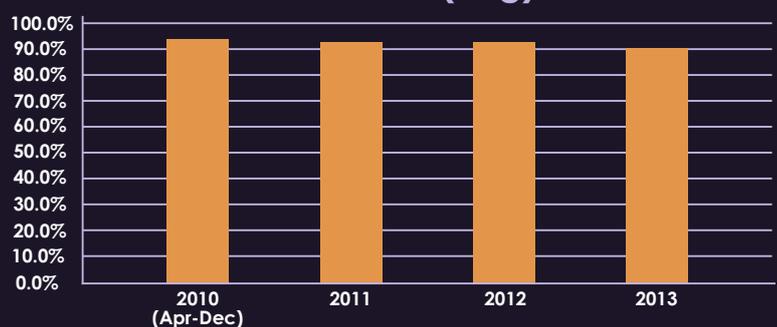
The programme had the following aims:

- To continue to maintain the highest standards of health assessment to the public with no shortfalls despite and throughout the planned changes
- To protect the public purse by minimising redundancy costs
- To maintain staff engagement and morale across the country during a period when the business was facing closure.
- To retain and transfer highly valued skills within the NHS

### Setting the Scene

NHS Direct was the largest and most successful healthcare provider of health advice through telephone and digital channels, anywhere in the world. Launched in 1998 it soon became popular with its customers (the public of England) and constantly achieved over 90% customer satisfaction levels.

### Patient Satisfaction Score (Avg)



These scores remained high despite 3 years of great uncertainty for staff who were used to the stability and predictability of working for a popular and successful NHS organisation.

Sickness rates amongst colleagues which had increased with uncertainty from around 4% to over 6%, showed a reduction as the colleague support programme was introduced. Of those over a third were due to stress, anxiety and depression. These also dropped from a high of 37% to a low of 21% as the colleague support programme started to gain momentum.

### Percentage of sickness absence due to anxiety / stress / depression

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	24	28	32	31	33	33	35	37	35	31	31	27
2013	25	25	28	26	24	25	27	28	27	23	29	21
2014	10											

### Expertise provided

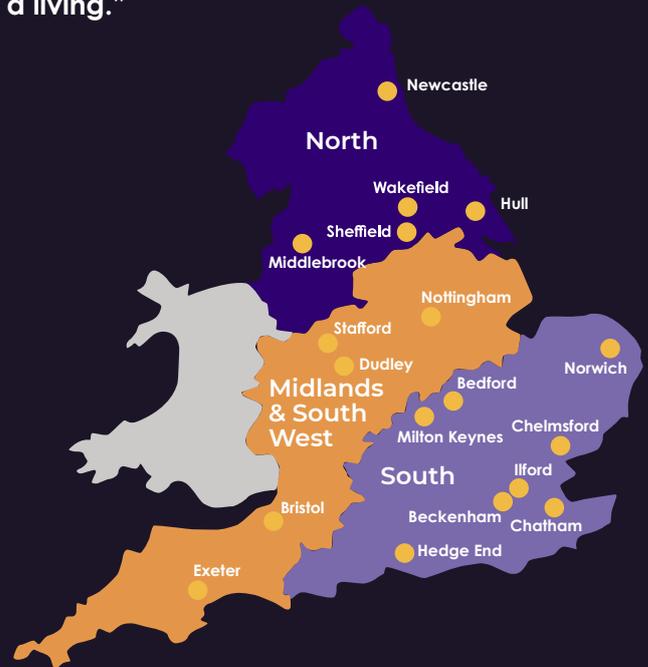
Linda Jackson from 10Eighty takes up the story: "NHS Direct adopted a partnership approach with 10Eighty so as to be able to train their own resources and blend the culture of the organisation with an external career management consultancy. This was a winning formula with the added benefit of saving almost £75,000 in consultancy and redundancy fees."

**Listen to Matt Perkins**, Colleague Support Advisor, on how he supported his colleagues' career needs and how this helped him to develop his own career path.

### Support Centres

Initial offering started with Support centres around the country (as shown on the right) with 26 Support Advisors: We initially provided a professionally-trained point of contact for colleagues in all parts of the country, at all times of the week, who could help guide and signpost support.

As Jo Welch commented: "I have come to see this crisis as a gift that can move me into a better future. I have gone from mess to order, from lost to found. Would I have reached this level of clarity without Colleague Support? I don't think so. I can now take action and move towards making real a new way of making a living."



**Workshops** - colleagues could attend full-day workshops on specialist topics such as Working for Yourself and Retirement run by 10Eighty. Plus CV and interview skills workshops by support advisors. These were run nearly every month.

**Career Portal** – All colleagues were given access to a career portal that hosted a wide range of information on CV writing, interview techniques, exploring career options, a job search function and much more including a range of useful 'bite-sized' videos and podcasts.



**Career Confidence Book Club** - We offered a range of career related books that were loaned to colleagues for up to 2 weeks. By completing a simple form on the Support Zone, and we even sent a paid return envelope! Staff could also join book club discussions.

Colleagues could also access a Career Confidence book designed in partnership with 10Eighty to accompany the workshops.

**Webinars** - We developed an in-house capacity to design and deliver a range of 1-hour interactive webinars on areas such as exploring career options, CV writing, interview techniques, networking and LinkedIn.

## Further Support

### Psychometric Assessment

Part of the focus here was also building personal resilience as it helps you discover more about your typical reactions to stress not just what kind of work you will enjoy the most.

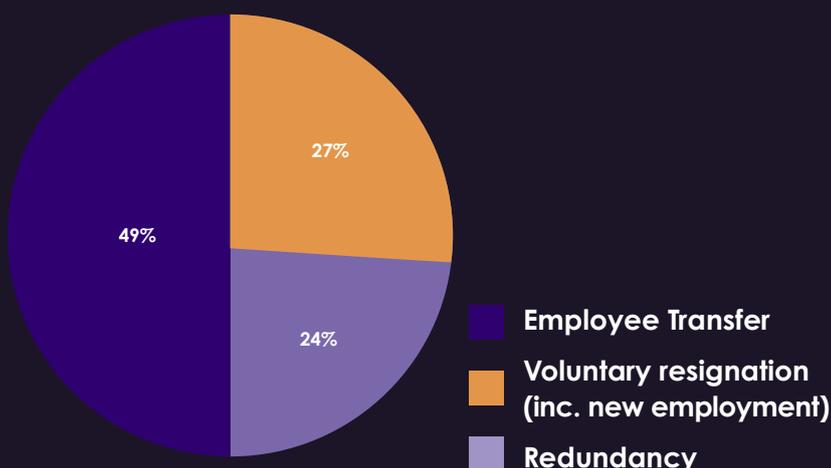
Sharon Turner, senior nurse commented: "Psychometric assessment was exhilarating. My whole career path now makes sense. Teaching and counselling would suit my personality, helping others solve problems, supporting, improving and enhancing peoples lives."

### Colleague Support evaluation

The following evaluation data was collected on 3535 (substantive and temporary) colleagues that were employed at NHS Direct.

#### Colleagues dominant outcomes:

- 1212 colleagues made redundant
- 595 voluntarily resigned
- 660 transferred to another provider



## Key Learnings

All this activity took place during a time of great uncertainty and constantly changing employment outcomes for the individuals delivering the colleague support programme to the wider organisation. It resulted in:

- a dramatic reduction in the level of staff absence and in particular the levels of absence due to stress and anxiety
- maintained levels of customer satisfaction at over 90%. Which call centre wouldn't kill for such high levels of customer satisfaction let alone one achieved by a business that was closing?
- saving the public purse over £100,000 through the development of in-house capability, as opposed to outsourcing the provision

"In 10Eighty we found a career management specialist who shared our approach and were determined to understand our workforce in order to tailor a programme that worked for each of our colleagues, whether they were clinicians, senior executives or administrators. The result has been a hugely successful career management programme, which has successfully reached the most frightened, reluctant and cynical of our colleagues, largely through the peer pressure of close colleagues insisting that they would live to regret not joining in.

As we move to the dissolution of this NHS trust I genuinely feel that we have offered a programme which has successfully prepared many hundreds of my NHS Direct colleagues for the next phase of their lives."

Roger Rawlinson, Acting Chief Executive, NHS Direct