

Case Study

Wockhardt/CP Pharmaceuticals

Healthy Working Wales Silver Corporate Health Standard



About us

Wockhardt/CP Pharmaceuticals has been based on the Wrexham Industrial Estate for over 60 years. We manufacture sterile pharmaceuticals on site e.g. insulin, heparin, morphine. We also have a large laboratory department for testing of products, a research and development department and a distribution section.

We employ over 400 staff in Wrexham based at 2 sites on the industrial estate and supply to the NHS, pharmacies, supermarkets as well as a large export market. We are proud to have been manufacturing the Covid-19 vaccine during the pandemic.

Highlights

- Our vision is based on the belief that people are the mainstay of the business and by investing in people we can be confident that the needs of our customers can be met.
- Classed as essential workers, we kept our sites open and operated in the safest possible manner by mobilising our business continuity plans and implementing a range of emergency measures.
- We implemented social distancing measures and a range of agile working including staggered start and finish times and staggered break times.
- We regularly rolled out information to all staff on and off site through a range of channels including via the intranet, emails, screensavers, with wage slips and visually on-site.
- Bi-weekly emails to staff working from home from the Occupational Health team to 'check-in' and provide opportunities to raise welfare concerns confidentially.
- Staying in touch with staff who were shielding and those unable to work was imperative to ensure they did not feel forgotten and were updated on changes implemented whilst off.
- As a morale booster, all staff, whether working from home, on site or shielding, received a care box of goodies including hand sanitiser, tissues and chocolates.
- We linked with a company providing a free service called 'Let's keep Talking' for anyone who was struggling with anxiety or isolation.
- Building on existing measures put in place through achieving our Healthy Working Wales award, we developed new approaches to supporting mental health in the workplace including a stress policy, workforce awareness training and support to recognise and manage mental ill health and build resilience.
- During the pandemic staff have felt more involved and communication at all levels has improved.

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Adapting quickly to the pandemic

At the beginning of the pandemic, as for every other company, we had to adapt fast. Due to the nature of our business we were classed as essential workers. Our initial requirement was to keep our sites open and operate in the safest possible manner. We completed this by mobilising our business continuity plans and implementing a range of emergency measures.

Initial preparation involved establishing the 'site critical' workforce i.e. production, labs and distribution. We also identified staff classed as high risk and/or extremely vulnerable. Staff who could work from home were sent home immediately, staff who couldn't work from home before shielding started were given different shift patterns and work.

These measures took place in conjunction with introducing a number of changes to our regular site operation; we implemented social distancing measures in all areas (markings, one way systems) and a range of agile working, including staggered start and finish times and staggered break times.

Staff communication and engagement

We recognised early on the need to adapt and enhance staff communication systems to support new agile ways of working. This included:

- Ensuring every employee had a point of contact.
- Communicating organisational changes and internal updates regularly as well as latest government and public health guidance via emails to all staff, the intranet, on screensavers and in all areas of our sites.
- Bi-weekly emails to staff working from home from the Occupational Health team to 'check-in' and provide opportunities to raise welfare concerns confidentially.
- Weekly calls or text messages to staff shielding and unable to work from home to ensure they did not feel forgotten and keep them up-to-date.

- Regular briefings from the Managing Director to thank them for their continued efforts and update on the company's progress in adapting to 'the new normal'.
- Links and information for MIND, NHS Every Mind Matters and RCS Wales support services sent with wage slips and available on the internal intranet.

We encountered and addressed a number of IT issues at the start of lockdown due to the pressures of setting up a large part of the workforce to work from home. We quickly adopted the use of Microsoft Teams so that staff could keep in close contact with their colleagues and line managers.

Morale boosters

For staff on site, as little 'morale boosters', we have provided free breakfast baps, teas, coffees, cold drinks, ice creams (depending on the weather!) and for night staff deliveries of pizzas. All staff, whether working from home, on site or shielding, received a care box of goodies including hand sanitiser, tissues and chocolates. All staff received a bonus as a thank you for their on-going support and to highlight they are a valued member of staff whatever their circumstances.

“Receiving the news we were going to manufacture a COVID-19 vaccine....increased positivity and staff channelled their efforts into ensuring delivery as safely and speedily as possible.”

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Mental health support

We fully support the health and wellbeing needs of our employees through policies, occupational health support and day to day interactions. Initially, home workers reported feelings of isolation and that they missed their co-workers and the social interaction that the site environment brings. Staff with school aged children found themselves in a new situation juggling educational needs with their job role.

There was a high level of anxiety due to several factors: fear of Covid-19, worry and concern for family members, worry about jobs (either their own or those of their family and friends). We linked with a company we had used for many years for referrals for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy which had set up a free service called 'Let's keep Talking' for anyone struggling with anxiety or feelings of isolation. Staff have been able to call or email confidentially and then a therapist phones them every day for as long as they need support. This opportunity was well received and, from feedback from the company and staff themselves, we know over 50 of our staff used the service.

Impacts

The Wockhardt vision is based on the belief that people are the mainstay of the business and by investing in people we can be confident that the needs of our customers can be met. We seek to offer an enriching environment for professional and personal growth for every employee, with an open, supportive and participative culture that permeates each level of the company.

Staff have in the past stated that communication hasn't always been good but during the pandemic they have felt more involved and communication at all levels has improved.

Lessons learnt

Initially we saw a rise in mental health issues related to Covid-19 but this dropped significantly after a few months. However there have been further waves mainly during 'lockdown' times due to feelings of being 'trapped'. Each time we put renewed effort into keeping good communication lines open and signposting staff to appropriate help if required. As staff have become used to a new way of working, an overall 'sea change' has taken place where lines of communication across the company have improved with more openness particularly between management and the workforce.

The news about the manufacture of a Covid-19 vaccine at Wockhardt led to an increase in positivity and staff have channelled their efforts into ensuring delivery as safely and speedily as possible. It was a real morale booster as staff feel they are playing a vital role in the response to Covid-19.

Achieving the Healthy Working Wales Silver Corporate Health Standard in 2018 gave Wockhardt the opportunity to review a range of workforce policies and practices, in particular in relation to mental health and the potential negative impacts of stress and other psychological risks, both personal and work related, on employees. This enabled us to build on existing measures and develop new approaches to supporting mental health including:

- A stress policy.
- A range of workforce awareness training and support to recognise and manage mental ill health and build resilience.
- Development of a range of flexible working opportunities.

These approaches have helped our workforce adapt to Covid-19 measures, enabling business continuity and a new phase of learning and organisational development. It has further cemented our commitment to staff wellbeing and supporting both the physical and mental wellbeing of our workforce.