



case study



Welcome home

Hillcroft Nursing Homes is a care home group based in northern Lancashire with 6 nursing homes in the immediate region. Quality homes, excellent occupancy levels and a positive reputation amongst resident's relatives and employees see the group as one of the leading residential and nursing homes in the area.

John Ayrton, Director of Hillcroft and his management team have built and developed an organisation which employs over 350 people from the local area. Finding and retaining the right employees is an on-going issue, particularly in the care sector where loyalty is often low and employees can be tempted away purely on monetary reasons.

The care industry has never faced a more challenging time, with crisis after crisis looming through legislation, rents, affordability and minimum wage to name but a few.

How could Hillcroft create a great place to be for both employees and residents alike? What practices could be put in place to increase employee retention, recruit the right calibre of carers and nurses to consistently deliver a level of care worthy of residents.

The immediate challenges were clear. Although Hillcroft were in many respects doing things the right way, there were lots of assumptions being made on current perceptions of the homes. Gut-instinct is a valuable thing and is often right. However, gaining an informed insight so you don't have to convince others of your 'gut instinct' gives confidence for a paradigm shift in a business – a new way of thinking. An objective view of the current culture within Hillcroft changed the perspective of the entire team.

change

Strong well led organisations can thrive, but the desire must be there and Hillcroft were ready to look at ways to take them forward and improve their business for both their employees and residents. CareHomeLife have a well-established relationship with Hillcroft providing them with housekeeping and medical supplies. In collaboration with Preston-based business growth consultancy nxo Ltd, CareHomeLife were the perfect partner to explore the current culture of the Hillcroft group of homes, having an in-depth understanding of the sector and the daily challenges being faced of owning and running a care home.

The initial leadership discussions facilitated by nxo Chairman Philip Dyer, were centred around how a positive culture change would be the first step in providing a brand experience that communicated excellence, not only to the residents and families but colleagues throughout the business. It became apparent there was an opportunity to improve communications across the six sites. In order to achieve this it required honest and open conversations; not only with the leadership team,



“CareHomeLife is a true partner with Hillcroft always adding exceptional value. Introducing us to **nxo** has been life changing for us!”

Louise Mattinson,
Hillcroft



but the entire staff within the nursing homes group. This was an opportunity to work as a team to initiate a company mission and values set. Input from all areas was pivotal in the development of an increased positive culture within the organisation.

The challenges of staff retention, culture within the homes and on-going development were all discussed with sound processes put in place to effectively implement the changes.

Maximising the potential of all of the employees was seen to be a key element in moving forward. This led to providing goals to work towards, giving employees a sense of achievement and also a sense of belonging and being a valued member of the organisation. The entire team could then be confident of working alongside one another in the drive toward the agreed end goals.

As communication was seen to be the structure that needed most work, by implementing processes that saw new regular matron's meetings, routine employee discussions and an agreed mission and values set for the company, Hillcroft were confident they were on the right track to a more positive culture and in turn a new way of working with the residents.

Following the implementation of these new processes the change was visible to see, employees were more welcoming to new ideas, were confident to put forward ideas of their own and clearly held pride in their achievements. Recognition was regular and the daily routine led to a sense of renewed job satisfaction.

Together with the change in internal processes and culture came an opportunity to re-brand and re-position the company with the key aim of changing the current perception of Hillcroft.

Intensive research was conducted to gain insight in to how an ideal care home should operate from the perspective of employees, the residents and their families and also staff in other care homes.

Three clear themes presented themselves in the findings: Pride, Personal, Professional. A valuable guide to help bring the refreshed Hillcroft brand to life visually. A crucial finding from the research was for Hillcroft to become home to its residents, not just a home, but truly 'home'; this led us to the development of their strong proposition of 'Welcome Home'.

The new-look brand was launched to every single member of the Hillcroft team over a short space of time; an achievement in itself and testament to the commitment of the Leadership Team.

impact for growth

The impact on Hillcroft has been clear with a new positive outlook felt throughout the entire group with a clear mission and achievable goals being worked towards.

Staff retention, a key objective, has been positive and a new approach to the recruitment process, majoring on personal values as well as skills and development plans are now standard practice. Communication throughout the entire organisation has improved with the introduction of a 'Home Heroes' programme meaning colleagues have a strong voice and input into the day to day running of Hillcroft Homes.

The organisation has seen a clearer understanding of where they need to be, coupled with the processes put in place, resulting in a new lease of positivity and excitement at every level as they drive toward a new future.