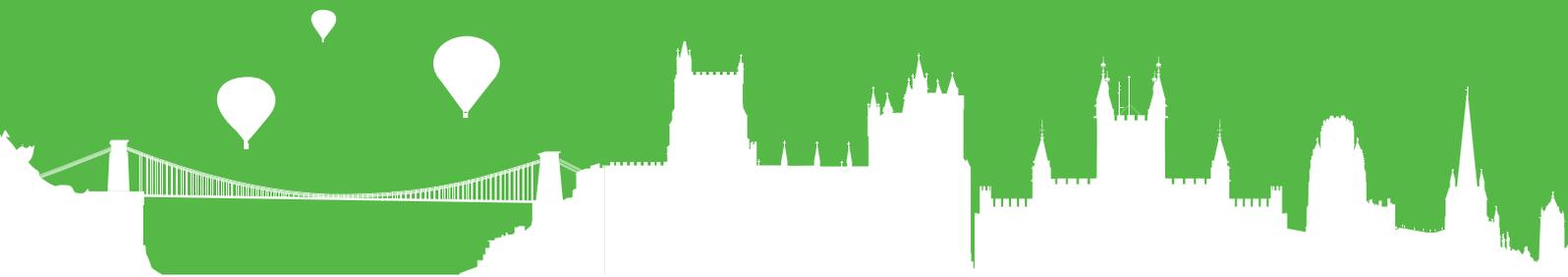


Bristol Thriving at Work Group

Mental health at work



Improving mental
health for all

Why are you reading this report?

This is a report of a group of Bristol based employers that draws together our experience of dealing with workplace mental health issues. Our objective is to share experience and improve the working lives of people in the City.

If you want to find out more about mental health issues at work, or want to do something in your own organisation to improve how this important issue is supported, we encourage you to read on and either learn from the examples and suggestions in this report, or to contribute your ideas and experience to the future work of this Group.

Tom Hore, Director, Bristol Mind
Patrick Robinson, Partner, Burges Salmon LLP
Co-Chairs, Bristol Thriving at Work Group

October 2019



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Foreword

The publication of this Mental Health at Work report is very timely.

This month marks two years since the Thriving at Work review, which was an independent review of mental health at work commissioned by Government and led by Lord Dennis Stevenson and I. As we mark this milestone, it's a good opportunity to remind ourselves of the vision that was set out:

In ten years' time employees will have "good work", which contributes positively to their mental health, our society and our economy. To support this, all organisations, whatever their size, will be equipped with the awareness and tools to address and prevent mental ill health caused or worsened by work. They will be equipped to support individuals with a mental health condition to thrive and the proportion of people with a long-term mental health condition, who leave employment each year, will be dramatically reduced.

When setting out this vision we realised the scale of the task ahead. But with the annual cost of poor mental health to employers being between £33billion and £44billion, and more crucially 300,000 people with a long-term mental health problem losing their jobs each year, we knew it was an issue that could no longer be ignored.

Over the past two years we have seen an increasing number of organisations start to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of their staff whether this is signing up to the Time to Change Pledge, providing training for line managers, introducing wellbeing champions or signing up to Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index. All of these steps are helping employers meet the mental health standards that were set out in the Thriving at Work Review.

Despite this progress, the reality for many employees is that they still don't feel able to talk about their mental health at work. The recent Business in the Community 2019 Mental Health at Work report showed only 49% of employees felt comfortable talking to their line manager about their mental health. The report also showed that 39% of employees surveyed said that work had contributed to their mental health issue over the last 12 months. There is still much work to be done.

I am extremely pleased to see the positive steps being taken in Bristol and believe many other cities could learn from the approach being adopted by the Bristol Thriving at Work Group. Not only does this report shine a spotlight on the excellent work being delivered by organisations in Bristol, but it shows an ongoing commitment to continue taking a city wide approach to making employee mental health a priority. This collective commitment from organisations across the private, public and voluntary sector is what I believe will be key to the groups success.

The national Thriving at Work Leadership Council has been working closely with the Bristol Thriving at Work Group to help shape both national approaches to tackling this issue and understanding how we implement best practice at a local level. Most recently, the council launched the Mental Health at Work commitment with Thrive Bristol being a founding signatory on behalf of the whole city – the first city to do this. It was fantastic to have the support of Cllr. Asher Craig and we hope many other cities follow suit.

The Leadership Council are commitment to working closely with colleagues in Bristol over the coming year and we encourage all employers in Bristol to get behind the priorities set out in this report, as well as signing up to the Mental Health at Work Commitment.

Now is the time to move the talking into action and with the foundations already set, employers in Bristol have a unique opportunity to really lead the way across the UK.



Paul Farmer

Paul Farmer CBE

Mind Chief Executive, 'Thriving at Work' author and member of Leadership Council

Bristol Thriving at Work Group mental health at work report

This report captures the thoughts and experiences on managing mental health issues at work of a group of some 22 Bristol based public, private and third sector businesses and organisations (listed on page eight).

This Thriving at Work group is part of a wider Thrive Bristol, city based initiative to improve the health and especially mental wellbeing of everyone who lives in and around the City. We are approaching the end of the first year of the 10 year Thrive programme, intended to deliver meaningful and lasting improvements in the City's wellbeing and that of its future generations.

Our Thriving at Work group looked at the findings of the October 2017 Stevenson Farmer national review of mental health and employers as a catalyst for our work. [The Stevenson Farmer review](#), commissioned by and addressed to the Prime Minister looked specifically at mental health in the work place and recognised that causes of mental health problems and responses to them, in order to be effective, must be looked at through how they manifest in the working environment.

The report is based around a number of priorities for Bristol's employers to support improved mental health and wellbeing in our workplaces
The overarching city wide priorities are for employers to:

- Implement the [Thriving at Work](#) mental health standards.
- Collaborate to support citywide efforts to improve mental health and wellbeing across all of our workplaces.
- Measure the impact of their efforts and share learning, developing a cycle of continuous improvement.

This work aims to improve support for all employees, and will include a focus on supporting people who have experienced mental health problems in work, and supporting those affected by poor mental health back into work.

The following priorities relate to the Thriving at Work mental health six core standards:

1. Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan.
2. Develop mental health awareness among employees.
3. Encourage open conversations about mental health, and the support available when employees are struggling.
4. Provide employees with good working conditions and ensure they have a healthy work life balance and opportunities for development.
5. Promote effective people management through line managers and supervisors.
6. Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

Given the huge role work plays in people's lives, and the number of work place triggers that can cause employee stress, prioritising mental health within the workplace setting is vital.

Stevenson Farmer challenged business to do more than see the current attritional levels of mental health problems at work and the human and financial cost of them simply as the inevitable costs of doing business.

The members of the Bristol Thriving at Work Group have come together to share knowledge and experience to ensure that we, as a City, achieve that vision of our workplaces being a positive force in supporting our population's mental health.

Summary

This report starts with background on the extent of the problem faced locally and nationally in

managing mental health at work and the challenges faced in trying to do something about it.

Throughout the paper there are case studies, where Group members share their experience on important aspects of managing mental health at work. These give helpful insights into how taking action can work in practice.

The overall aim of this paper is to encourage more employers to take action by highlighting what has worked (and in some cases what hasn't worked) by other local businesses and organisations. Useful contacts for further information are supplied as well as suggestions for action plans that businesses can adopt.

This is primarily a report for employers and how they can better look after their employees. If you are looking for guidance from an employee perspective the further contacts section includes links to more worker focused advice.

Important facts and figures

The graphic below, produced by the UK Centre for Mental Health conveys two hugely important messages.

The first is that at any point in time, about 1 in 5 workers nationally are experiencing some sort of mental health difficulty.

The causes of these problems can arise at work but can also be contributed to by external pressures in people's personal lives. Health and financial worries

and relationship problems may arise outside of work but their effects will carry over into work.

The same graphic below also illustrates, via reference to a mental health spectrum, that mental health is an issue for everyone.

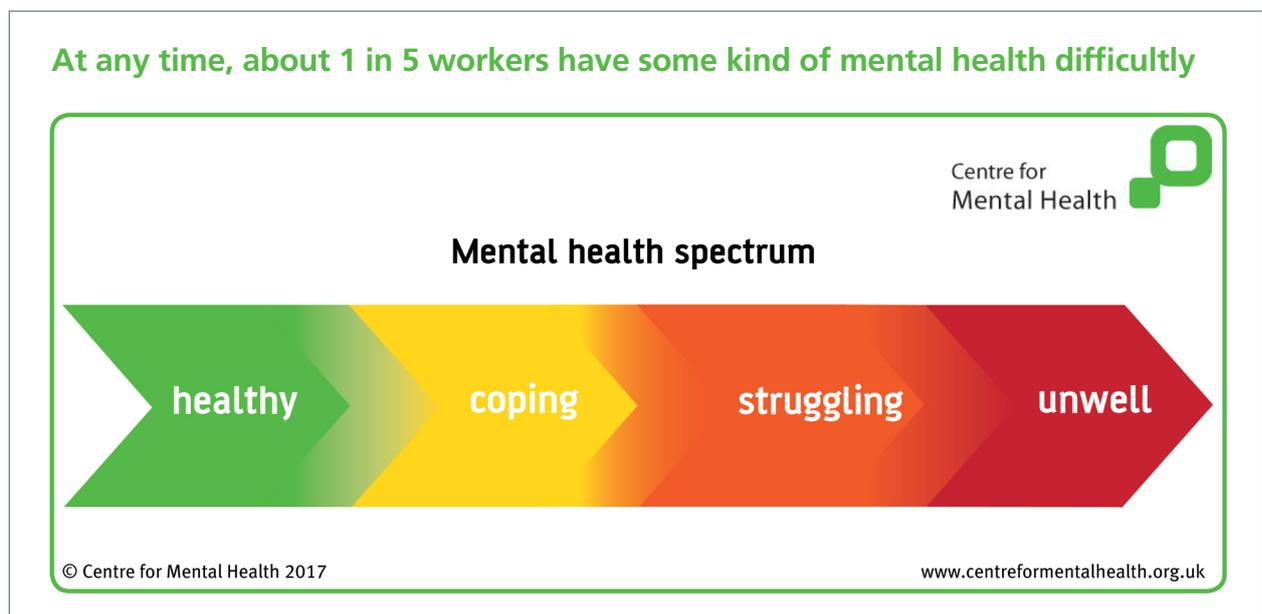
Two statistics widely publicised recently help cast a light on how serious are the consequences of our present levels of mental health awareness and response. These are that the biggest cause of death in men under 50 is suicide and that each year in the UK, more women than men attempt suicide. These are frankly shocking statistics, and behind them lies a very much larger area of mental distress short of suicide or attempted suicide.

It is estimated that over £280 million is lost each year by businesses and employers in Bristol due to absenteeism, reduced productivity and staff turnover due to mental health issues. Total direct healthcare and indirect business costs to Bristol from mental health are estimated to exceed £1.3 billion per annum.

Being in and remaining in work, in good working conditions, helps reduce mental health problems occurring and helps people manage those problems if they do occur.

Why the One City approach?

People reference themselves hugely by the environment in which they live and work. Problems that are recognised in a local environment are more easily recognised as relevant to people in that locality.



Solutions to those problems that can be found within that local environment are more likely to be seen as relevant to others in that locality. Resources are significant within a City area and with better co-ordination will go further and achieve more visible, enduring results.

Lessons learned from Citywide co-operation can be used further afield as models for better practice in improving workplace mental health. They also have an added benefit of demonstrating the premium that we as a City place on quality of life which in turn leads to greater interest and investment in the City and through that greater resource to support further improvement.

The Thriving at Work programme has seen a group of major local employers in engineering, construction, financial and legal, energy, central and local government, healthcare and the voluntary sector, come together to discuss issues faced and best practice in mental wellbeing at work.

The objective has been to set a benchmark for current best practice in Bristol and identify practical steps by which medium and longer terms improvements in mental health can be achieved.

The findings of the group are set out below and aligned with the Stevenson/Farmer Thriving at Work six core standards which businesses and employers can follow to promote better mental health in the workplace.

Members of the Thriving at Work Group

- Bristol Anti Stigma Alliance (BASA)
- Bristol City Council
- Bristol Mind
- Burges Salmon
- Business West
- CIPD West of England branch
- Clugston Construction
- Deloitte
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Destination Bristol
- Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
- Hargreaves Lansdowne
- NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group
- OVO Energy
- Richmond Fellowship
- Rolls Royce
- Soil Association
- South Western Ambulance Service
- Triodos Bank
- TUC South West
- Unite the Union South West
- Windmill Hill City Farm

What if you are a worker not an employer?

This is primarily a report by a group of businesses and organisations that employ staff about how, as employers, they can better manage the mental health of their workers. If you are a reading this looking for guidance from an employee perspective, there is useful material, but you will also find the useful contacts section includes links that will provide more worker focused advice.

If you are a trade union member you can contact your union representative for confidential advice and support in relation to mental health at work.

What did the group achieve by coming together?

Group members reflected on the process and impact of coming together to try and improve mental health and wellbeing in their workplaces, as well as across the city. Here are some of their thoughts:

- We were all from different sectors and came together to agree how – as a collective – we could work to significantly improve mental health and wellbeing in our own workplaces, and across the city. A key part of this was considering how bigger organisations can support smaller ones.
- This was the first time that we had come together to do something like this. It was extremely powerful to hear so many viewpoints, and to gain such a depth of experience from different types and sizes of employers, as well employees. This empowered us to talk about mental health with greater confidence, and to start taking action at scale and at pace.
- Through this approach we were able to form a joined-up view on our shared challenges, and on the action needed for improvements to be made. It helped us to build trust between us, and a firm foundation to build upon, as we enter our next phase to improve mental health across the city. Real momentum has built to make change happen and make mental health everyone's business.
- It was an opportunity to network with peers, and to share learning and best practice. It provided a safe space to share ideas, test thinking and talk to people who were trying to do similar things across Bristol, and consider how we might collaborate for greater impact.
- It highlighted the resources that are already available, which we can signpost employers and employees to, and created a good way of keeping up with current best practice and innovative developments.
- We realised the scale of the issue outside of our own organisation, with some partners noting that they found that they were further along the journey than they had thought. We hope that this process will support smaller organisations – in particular – to improve mental health in their own organisations.

Challenges

The priorities we identify have also emerged from looking at the difficulties that lie in the path of achieving better levels of mental wellbeing.

Here are a number of the challenges the Group acknowledged:

- Where to start? – many organisations are at the stage where they can see there is a problem and want to do something about it, but are unclear where to start.
- Effective action undoubtedly requires thought and application to each business and sector – there is definitely no one size fits all.
- Awareness levels differ greatly. How do we reach and incentivise people who are not currently engaged.
- There is what has been called a “marzipan” issue – how do you support middle management who are on the front line, but also have to meet financial and other targets.
- “Hard to reach” groups abound. How can we support SMEs, people working in the gig economy, tackle language barriers and any sectors where people are not seen as a key resource?
- Future proofing. How to ensure our workforce is ready for future changes:
 - changes in work and the workplace – big data and AI (artificial intelligence) in all its applications, commerce, communications, transport.
 - our future workforce – getting young people “work ready”
 - our ageing workforce and the effects of reducing levels of state support.
- Benchmarking. How do you measure the impact of activities – what targets/objectives can/should people use and how can they be encouraged to share those results?

Next steps

The next steps for Thriving at Work Bristol will be action-focused, moving from a single task group working together, into multi action groups to test and learn from interventions which aim to improve mental health and wellbeing in workplaces.

Supporting good mental health in the workplace involves many factors, but these usually include efforts around leadership, policy and culture and behaviour. As such, ‘Phase 2’ of Thriving at Work Bristol will have three project groups which focus on these components. Each project group will be led by a Bristol-based organisation, working in partnership with other organisations to test interventions and share learning over the year ahead. The original Thriving at Work Task group will become a Thriving at Work Stakeholder Group.

This work will continue to be supported by coordinators of the Thrive Bristol programme at Bristol City Council, who will share regular updates on this work and provide links with regional and national Thriving at Work initiatives.

There will be a launch of Phase 2 in Bristol in November 2019 to update partners on Thriving at Work Bristol’s progress and invite other organisations to get involved. More information about Thriving at Work Bristol can be found at:

www.bristol.gov.uk/mayor/thrive-bristol

The six mental health core standards

1 Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan

Progress within an organisation or business is best achieved by harnessing the enthusiasm of those who feel strongly about the subject. There are growing numbers of such people generally and likely to be a sufficient number of motivated and capable people in most businesses to form a core group to help drive change.

Leadership on the issue from within the business is vital. Examples from across the Group's membership showed consistently that real progress was only achieved when demonstrable and consistent support at a high level was forthcoming and communicated to the entire business.

Most likely that will be visible buy-in and support from senior management to the initiatives that are developed within the business.

The financial benefits of a mentally healthy workplace are significant, at a macro City level but also very much at the individual business level. A few figures from Bristol's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – Employment and Health section (available on Bristol City Council's website) may assist securing

boardroom and management engagement. Those figures should also be seen in the light of the practical daily impacts of losing key team members temporarily or permanently due to mental health issues.

It should be recognised as well that only relatively small, cost effective or often cost neutral steps are needed in many cases by employers to gain a far better understanding of how to better manage employee mental wellbeing.

It has to be recognised that in tackling mental health issues we are approaching what are often very strongly and long held views rooted in past practices and beliefs on mental health. There is very often stigma that is perceived to attach to any volunteering or concession by employees that they are experiencing problems and need help.

However two of the most effective tools to reducing stigma and effecting change are visible support by management and encouraging a supportive atmosphere where people feel they can talk and seek informal help, neither of which involve any significant outlay for a business.

CASE STUDY

Importance of management "buy-in"

– Ian Carr, Rolls Royce

For us, the single most positive improvement has been that our mental health programme is endorsed by the very senior leadership in our organisation (Warren East, Rolls Royce CEO). This sends a powerful message throughout the company, right across our global footprint.

It has proved harder to engage and spread the message of our strategy to grass roots level in a way that convinces everyone we are changing. We are looking to correct this by providing our line managers with the knowledge and tools (signposting) to feel comfortable discussing the topic of mental health with their respective teams.

CASE STUDY

How we started on our journey

– Sarah Mellor, Office and Personnel Manager, Windmill Hill City Farm

Windmill Hill City Farm's Workplace Wellbeing and Mental Health Programme

The Farm started its wellbeing journey five years ago. I was shocked when one of our employees who had been struggling with their mental health, during a return to work meeting, answered my question how were they, "Oh a better day. Every morning I ask myself a question: Is today the day I end my life?".

Feeling out of my depth I looked for support and started a framework to support this employee that has seen them overcome many challenges and move on to pursue a career in healthcare in which they are thriving.

Four and a half years ago, we came across the Workplace Wellbeing Charter run by Bristol City Council, that proved a fantastic template and framework to build a solid and robust wellbeing and mental health programme. We achieved excellence across all the standards and have used that as a benchmark for looking after our staff and volunteers.

Introducing line manager training has worked well. Our Children and Family Services team of over 40 childcare professionals relied on one manager to field all day-to-day management; annual leave, absence, reviews etc, as well as all her work, which was proving unsustainable.

By giving our room leaders greater skills, tools and knowledge, focusing on the Farm ethos, performance management and being a good manager they were better equipped to manage their teams and support individual employees. As their knowledge grew, so did their confidence. Our last staff survey (October 2018) reported how staff felt more supported by their line manager and the management team.

We have built a framework based on the Workplace Wellbeing Charter and introduced wellbeing and mental health strategies (based around the Farmer report), awareness campaigns and activities across the organisation. Our mental health and wellbeing programme is constantly evolving and developing.

Promote good work to support mental health

Employers understand readily that a good working environment does not tolerate harassment, bullying or discrimination of any kind. Those are very visible factors that, should they occur, will be highly likely to have immediate and potentially serious adverse mental health consequences.

Less obvious behaviours, however, may also cause problems, however unintentional or unforeseen by the people involved. Good working conditions allow people the means by which they can recognise where personal interactions in the workplace that they find stressful or upsetting are

seen as serious, matters where they can get help in resolving those issues.

Examples of practice across the Thriving at Work group show there is no “one size fits all” in the approach to identifying issues faced within a business and the means to remedy them. What does emerge though is that small changes in working practices and the ability to seek help when a problem presents itself and does not go away can have disproportionately greater benefits in mental

wellbeing and employee performance than the time and cost involved in supporting those changes.

What unifies actions within the Group is a commitment at all levels, from top to bottom, to call out and deal with problems that are generating mental stress (having a trouble-shooting capacity in the business can help here) and to look for ways in which effective running of the business can be aligned with positive mental health practice.

CASE STUDY

Developing a Mental Fitness group – Karen Cooke, Hargreaves Lansdown

We created a Mental Fitness group which has around 65 members and is enthusiastically sponsored by one of the directors.

This leadership and tone from the top has been very helpful in gaining buy-in to the issue and our action plan, reducing the stigma of mental health in the business. We focus on three strands:

- 1. Education** – Building awareness of mental health issues and removing any stigma
- 2. Prevention** – Understanding where and how HL can help promote wellbeing and reduce the potential for mental health issues to arise
- 3. Support** – When issues do arise, looking at how HL can support colleagues in overcoming them.

As a group we have focused on signposting our colleagues to the resources we have such as our Employee Assistance Programme. We are empowered to take action and even with a small budget we can make things happen. One example is a chat based app which allows colleagues to engage with qualified counsellors and focuses on early intervention.

We have run two successful ‘Healthy Mind’ weeks, consisting of dedicated activities around mental health, with expert speakers and interactive events including yoga, mindfulness and a choir.

Looking ahead we have still to upskill all managers and build competence and confidence across the business. We also have to work on a clear emergency type procedure, to help people respond if there is a crisis.

2 Develop mental health awareness amongst employees

The group are confident that raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing in the workplace means people being able to do their jobs better, even more so when the work is inherently stressful and demanding. Looked at from a business investment

perspective, we do not believe there are any situations where the people are not important; there are simply organisations and businesses that more proactively recognise how important their people are to success, and do better because of that.

CASE STUDY

Tom Hore, Bristol Mind

With two different employees we have managed long periods of mental health related sickness absence (one for over a year), bringing them back into their jobs with agreed changes that has let them continue to be highly productive members of staff.

This has sent a good message to staff about the organisation's actual actions rather than just intent, and it has allowed us to keep two very effective members of staff.

When we staged a wellbeing workshop, staff came up with a large number of ideas for improving wellbeing at work – thereby assisting resilience; but having not assigned anyone with the task of implementing the ideas, we didn't follow through adequately on them.

CASE STUDY

Bristol City Council

Bristol City Council has made the health and wellbeing of employees one of its top priorities. The council signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge in February and working in collaboration across Safety, Health and Wellbeing, Public Health, Trade Unions and Staff led groups, BCC are implementing a health and wellbeing plan that places strategic importance on increasing organisational mental health awareness of all employees and giving managers the skill and confidence they need to support employees which mental ill-health.

To date, Bristol City Council has trained over 500 employees in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). The training has both raised awareness and helped to reduce stigma associated with mental ill health. The training is available to everyone in the council. We have held follow up sessions for MHFA Champions to help with Continuing Professional Development. Our Mental Health First Aid Champions can be identified by a new logo designed to display on their email signatures.

We also ran training sessions for elected councillors and several councillors attended the staff training sessions and gained huge insight from frontline staff. The training included signposting to supporting agencies and also to the council's own support through our Employee Assistance Programme.

We have run a number of awareness events in support of Mental Health Week, Mental Health Awareness day and Time to Talk day. We asked members from all employee groups to join to demonstrate the involvement and need for all staff to talk about mental health in parity with physical health.

Investing in managers is really important. BCC runs specific mental health courses for managers to enable them to learn about mental ill-health and practice sensitive and confidential conversations with individuals who may need their support. The manager training helps managers develop the knowledge to provide good leadership support both proactively and reactively and guides managers on how to make reasonable adjustments to support the individual either back to work or support them through their concerns.

The council has an accredited counsellor and Mental Health First Aid instructor and has also developed a new Disability and Wellbeing Advisor post, which will support managers and employees to ensure disabled employees and employees with long term conditions have access to advice and support to thrive at work.

3 Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling

The stigma and discrimination associated with mental health continues to be a big issue. Creating an open culture where employees feel able to talk about their mental health with colleagues and their line manager is so important. Particularly where workers mental health is impacted by work

related stress. Feeling able to talk about these issues without fear of judgement and being able to access resources and support that can help them, at an early stage, can help prevent them becoming so unwell that they are unable to continue to work and need time off work.

CASE STUDY

“Where to start?” Grappling with that question and finding an approach that works with different generations in the workplace

– Adam Powell, Deloitte

We have benefitted from visible buy-in and regular communications from our senior leadership team on the importance of mental health and how we as a business can help our people.

Visible communications internally through different media have shown how people have been supported while dealing with short or long term mental health issues at work.

Training has been offered to all partners and directors and then cascaded down to the team around respect and inclusion, diversity, and agile working. More specific mental health training has been given to mental health champions in each office/group.

However, we recognise that changing culture doesn't happen overnight; and a lot of people are uncomfortable talking about their mental health or engaging with people at work about their mental health. We recognise as well that lots of people are “fixers” (see a problem, fix a problem) and talking about mental health requires a different mindset.

CASE STUDY

How a 'Wellbeing Fair' can offer a whole person approach

– Jamie Cameron, Burges Salmon

At Burges Salmon, we are developing a holistic approach to wellbeing. Our aim is to help our people to make the right choices for them, whilst working in a supportive environment. One of the key priorities in our wellbeing strategy is to embed a culture of trust and openness where everyone can thrive.

We have now held a number of annual wellbeing fairs to engage our people with wellbeing and following this holistic approach, those wellbeing fairs cover many aspects of physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

In September 2018, the wellbeing fair theme was 'Living Your Best Life'. Throughout the day we welcomed exhibitors who provided insights into a range of wellbeing topics, including Bristol Mind, on mental health support, The Healthy Hedonist, on supporting busy lifestyles with realistic nutritional advice, The Medical provided 10 minute taster massages and postural guidance and our Occupational Health doctors offered cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure testing as well as giving general health advice.

Wider informative talks ran alongside our wellbeing fair including Hargreaves Landsdown on advice to help maintain financial wellbeing, specialist trainer Laughology gave a guide to understanding the menopause, and a Partner in our Litigation team shared her experience of how she lives her best life and maintains a good work/life balance.

Our catering team provided a free healthy breakfast to start the day as well as lunchtime demonstrations and free tasters, with recipe cards to take away.

We received excellent feedback from our people, who particularly enjoyed the interactive nature of many of the activities.

4 Provide employees with good working conditions and ensure they have a healthy work life balance and opportunities for development

The best examples of good mental health support at work involve direct engagement within the organisation to make that support an immediate and everyday part of the working environment. Short course training of managers and employees at all levels to listen without judging and signposting people

to where they can get help has proved simple and effective. The phrase “mental health first aiders” has been used here, but does not need to be used in a way that deters people from undertaking such training for fear that they will have to cope with situations for which they are not qualified or experienced.

CASE STUDY

Mental health first aid in practice

– Karen Cooke, Hargreaves Lansdown

Being a mental health first aider has been a challenging and varied experience for me in the past twelve months since we started the mental health conversation across HL. The most important thing I learnt is that I cannot fix people, which for me was tough as my tendency is to try to! The key instead is to be able to navigate and guide people to relevant and timely help.

It has felt a big responsibility having people across the mental health continuum, including those in crisis, come and talk to me. It can feel overwhelming at times if you become the single person that people are reliant on. I have also had to take time to look after myself as well, especially managing cases alongside my day job.

CASE STUDY

Tailoring support to meet the needs of your workforce

– Puneet Bhardwaj, Clugston Construction

Clugston is an engineering, logistics and construction group with a national portfolio ranging from energy generation to retail and leisure.

Our staff often have to work away from home, in temporary accommodation on construction sites where conditions, although physically safe, are mentally demanding.

One of our initiatives has been to support the Mates In Mind programme, that looks particularly at the needs of the construction, extractive and similar industries and responding to the demands of what is still a heavily male dominated workforce.

One example of tailored assistance offered is a text service, where staff can contact trained counsellors completely confidentially with no advance notice, which has proved to be a valuable tool in providing a first step for people reaching out when in need of help.

CASE STUDY

Mrs Sasha Johnston, Lead Paramedic, South Western Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust (SWASfT)

The University of Plymouth MClinRes student, funded by Health Education England (HEE) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)

Evidence based practice is the cornerstone of improving outcomes for patients, but there is a lack of research combined with an increasing interest in the mental health and wellbeing of the NHS staff delivering care and the impact that the working environment may have on them. SWASfT is committed to improving the health and well-being of its staff, committed to reducing the stigma associated with mental ill health and to working with staff to provide support to colleagues in need.

With this in mind, HEE and the NIHR funding was secured to explore staff perceptions and experiences of mental health support in SWASfT, that has demonstrated a commitment by research leaders to prioritise the important subject of staff mental health and wellbeing.

SWASfT have made a number of positive organisational changes such as setting up a 'Staying Well Service', a peer support network and MHFA training is being rolled out to managers and peer supporters this year.

Despite the success of our Staying Well Service where staff are signposted to a range of physical and mental health support services, stigma about help-seeking for mental health illness still exists and the most vulnerable staff may not ask for help when they need it.

Sasha Johnston is working to develop a feasibility study proposal based on the British Intelligence Services 'Mandatory Impact Monitoring' intervention. By mandating 'time to talk' in the workplace, it is hoped that a culture change will follow where talking about mental health is normalised. All staff can be given time to ask whether they are OK and offered the opportunity for signposting to staying well services if required.

CASE STUDY

Signing the Time to Change Employer Pledge
– Ellie Bell, OVO Energy

In March 2019 OVO Energy signed the Time to Change Pledge which showcases the company's commitment to changing the way we talk about mental health in the workplace.

Since signing the pledge we have formed a Time to Change Champions Working group, with over 60 volunteers across the business helping move our initiatives forward. After lots of suggestions and calibration, we decided to initially focus on three initiatives that came out of the principles from our pledge, including:

- mental health line manager training

- upskilling different teams with the content from the Level 2 Award in Mental Health
- a panel event to create a space where people feel happy to share their experiences with others and break down any barriers.

We decided to progress with the line manager training based on feedback from the employee engagement survey. Line managers and their teams mentioned that they would appreciate further support, to help line managers feel equipped and able to have conversations with their teams regarding mental health.

The upskilling of teams on the Level 2 certificate on mental health illnesses has been piloted to five different sub-teams across the business. These sessions, run by employees, is a powerful tool for them to use their knowledge they have learned but also create a trusted, open environment where people feel they can talk openly about their mental wellbeing.

The panel event is being held on World Mental Health Day. We will have speakers from a diverse range of knowledge and experience including a trained specialist on Mindfulness and one of our own employees sharing their personal story. This will be streamed live across all our offices and employees have the chance to ask questions to the panel anonymously and also in person.

Engagement across this area of the business is brilliant and we will be looking at what other initiatives we can roll out across the company to ensure we are delivering on every aspect of the pledge and creating an inclusive workplace, where people feel supported and are excited to come to work.

Advertising assistance that is available in-house or externally which people can approach confidentially, if necessary, are also relatively easy to achieve. Examples from the quarrying and construction sector show that text services for raising concerns are getting good levels of pick-up from male workers who say that they would not have felt comfortable making any more direct, face-to-face, approach for help.

The trouble-shooting role mentioned previously can be a useful tool in recognising a work situation that is generating problems for employees' stress levels and targeting and overcoming this effect at the same time as ensuring any necessary work objectives are met.

The "no one size fits all" reality also means that specific examples of how organisations are

supporting mental wellbeing, such as encouraging participation in sports and activities in lunch breaks, should not be seen by other organisations or their staff as the "right" thing to do. Individuals and how they form together into an organisation may have different interests and beliefs that means their interpretation of mental wellbeing initiatives could be quite different.

Two particular resources have featured in the Group's work, as being good places for businesses to look for guidance and knowhow:

- **The Mind guide to implementing Stevenson Farmer.** This is a national initiative with a similar goal to our Thriving at Work Group i.e. putting into practice the vision of the Stevenson Farmer review. It is an extremely helpful guide that can be found [here](#)¹ and we have not sought in

¹ www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/stevenson-farmer-independent-review-into-workplace-mental-health-published/

this paper to duplicate that practical guidance. We see Bristol's Thriving at Work Group as complementing and strengthening that national guide by giving examples and contacts within local businesses and organisations where a wider local audience can see practical application and adopt from that what works for them.

- **The Mental Health at Work Gateway.** This recently (September 2018) released on-line resource, developed by Mind and funded by the Royal Foundation, launched in Bristol by the Duke of Cambridge, draws together a wide range of independently assessed on-line resources through a portal that allows you to specify your interests and needs and then be directed to the resources that best meet your individual needs. It can be accessed [here](#)². We recommend readers use this site and register for its mailing list.

Different organisations will have varying structures within them or affiliated with them that can play an important role in fostering good working relations, such as trade unions or other worker associations.

Above all, fostering a supportive environment, where workers are encouraged both to speak about problems they are having and also to look out for and listen to those around them who may be in

need of support, lies at the heart of any mental health programme. This is not just to respond to present challenges, but also to respond to future trends, such as changing technology and flexible and agile working.

The Group see supporting workers in this way as having special relevance to Thrive Bristol which is a 10 year programme and even more so to supporting the development of our children and young people. Developing these skills as they move into the world of work helps ensure they are equipped to cope with the continually increasing pace of change in the modern world, and to keep our City at the forefront of innovation whilst being a City of happy and prosperous workplaces.

Action planning

Drawing together what is needed to promote a positive approach to mental health is best done by developing an action plan for the business, specific to the individual identity of that business and the needs of its workforce.

Some information about how you might develop an action plan can be found towards the end of this report.

² www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work-gateway/

5 Promote effective people management through line managers and supervisors

Mental health training for managers can help them to recognise when staff may be struggling with mental health issues; to understand how to respond appropriately and to know when and how to signpost to resources or refer for further assistance where required.

CASE STUDY

Tackling stigma

– Karen Cole, Unite the Union South West and Ines Lage, TUC South West

Unite the Union South West has provided Stress Awareness Training for all staff and we have access to an employee assistance line and free counselling. We also train our Union Representatives on mental health awareness and mental health first aid. Last year, the TUC trained 15 mental health first aiders, that included senior management and head of HR, and publicised lists of who in teams are trained first aiders.

Every two months, all MHFAs (mental health first aiders) meet to discuss issues and organise events/additional training for all staff. They also feed back to senior management and trade union reps on progress.

It has opened up conversations on the complexity of the issues, brought into focus areas of concern, and helped provide direct wellbeing support rather than reliance on our Employment Assistance Scheme, and thus individuals' own recognition of their wellbeing.

Although it is very positive to have a team of MHFAs, general stigma on this complex issue still exists. The MHFA focuses only on emergency assistance and signposting to mental health services and charities. The biggest reason for non-disclosure of poor mental ill health at work, we have found (organisationally and in other workplaces), still remains the expected/unknown reaction from employers. Therefore the need for independent employment-related support and advice alongside mental health support has been crucial to breaking down some of these barriers.

6 Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing

Understanding the links between wider personal pressures and mental health problems is important. Domestic and personal issues faced by employees will also have a bearing on how they cope at work. Bereavement, relationship breakdown, worries over children and financial security are examples of common enough factors which can combine in an individual case to provide major and potentially overwhelming forces that inevitably cross over and are felt in the workplace.

Physical conditions, especially if chronic, will increase susceptibility to mental health issues. Employers can anticipate one giving rise to the other and recognise that the open and inclusive approach that we have as employers to physical disability may need some added care in terms of

support for the mental strain that physical conditions can bring in their wake.

Employers may not be able to solve personal issues for their staff but that is no different to that fact that most jobs face external pressures such as client and market demands and competition pressures over which they have little or no control.

What employers can recognise, however, is that whilst they have no effective control over the external commercial and personal pressures their staff are exposed to, they do have the ability to promote good working practices and support within their workplace to help their employees towards the best position to cope with those unavoidable pressures when they are at their most challenging.

CASE STUDY

Working Group Members – things that have worked to raise awareness of mental health (and in some cases haven't)

Sarah Kirk, Triodos Bank

The most impactful initiative we have taken has been to raise awareness of mental health with all co-workers. We have held sessions with different groups of co-workers, starting with senior managers and then middle management and a session with all co-workers. This has changed the dynamic and provided more confidence in talking about and sharing experiences.

Rose Friel, Soil Association

We held a wellbeing week competition where staff shared their top "wellbeing tips" for keeping a healthy body, mind and spirit, with a prize to the most innovative suggestions.

All the ideas were collected and displayed on a table in our social work space, allowing staff to read about the ideas and share them openly or anonymously, which was important. Our home based workers could also join in the competition through an online platform.

Helen Underhay, Richmond Fellowship

A Wellbeing Charter, addressing wellness in the workplace was introduced which works across layers of management. Workshops and revised induction processes is introducing this in the workplace. Employee Assistance Programmes can be very valuable.

The worst practice we have seen is where organisations have supportive policies but employees cannot reach the support because of an obstructive or uninformed management structure.

Andrea Crumbleholme, Business West

Business West have recently hosted Mend for Good which is an initiative by Changes Bristol. We have a team of sewing experts who, for a donation, will mend any clothes we bring in to work. The money raised goes to Changes Bristol to continue their support of mental health in the Bristol area. We announced this at a staff day and explained the good work Changes Bristol undertake in the area.

We are currently offering all employees, through the Skills Network, the opportunity to undertake a Level 2 Certificate in awareness of mental health problems. We have 23 employees about to embark on this.

John Hirst, Destination Bristol

For our business what has been helpful has been the additional publicity generated by organisations including Bristol City Council and the Thrive Bristol programme to raise the profile of mental health at work. This has helped us assist some of our team who have had issues, giving them reassurance that they will be treated with respect and in confidence.

We do still find that people can be shocked and surprised when discussion starts on this issue, which is a barrier, but hopefully one that will get easier over time.

Other important considerations for the City

There is strong evidence that there are still significant difficulties for people who experience mental health problems, in both getting into employment and in staying in work. While this creates substantial and multi-faceted problems for the people affected, it is also a loss of many valuable workers to both employers and the economy as a whole.

The Stevenson Farmer report suggests that up to 300,000 people leave jobs each year due to mental health issues. The TUC analysis of the Labour Force Survey found that disabled people with long-term depression and particularly those with mental illness or phobias are under-represented in employment.

Only 45.5 per cent of disabled people with health problems lasting or expected to last more than one year, who had depression and anxiety as their main health problem, were in employment (471,725 people). Just 26.2 per cent of disabled people experiencing long term mental illness or phobias as their primary, or most significant, health issue, were in employment.

Employers are encouraged to embrace the social model of disability and identify actions that they can take to make: adjustments to working practices; changes to the working environment and; changes to cultures and attitudes concerning mental health that would make workplaces more accessible, and prevent people with mental health issues being excluded from the workforce.

There are additional problems for people returning to work after a period of mental health related absence. Evidence suggests that mental health related absences are, on average, longer than those related to physical health. There are a number of current programmes in local use that are attempting to address some of these issues including Access to Work, 'Fit for Work' and a new development; 'Get Well – Get On' which commenced in early Spring 2019. The knowledge of these programmes and their use to individuals and organisations is not widespread and needs to be more widely adopted by employers.

Action planning

If this document has inspired you to take action to improve mental health in your workplace, then below are some suggestions and some useful tools and resources that may help. More detail on these and other steps can be found in Minds “How to Implement the Thriving at Work mental health standards in your workplace” which can be found on their website. There are also other useful resources at the end of this report.

Developing a mental health at work plan can include:

- How you will promote the wellbeing of all staff
- How you will tackle work related causes of mental health problems
- How you will support staff experiencing poor mental health
- Signposting sources of information and support inside and outside your organisation
- Offering clear objectives shaped around your business and its values
- Acknowledging that mental health can also be a disability issue

Who can be involved:

- Human resources might lead on providing advice to managers and employees
- Senior leadership input is vital to embedding any new approaches
- Consider consulting staff or staff representatives on what steps that are going to be taken
- Try to get agreed actions recorded in some sort of policy statement that is openly published and reviewed reasonably regularly
- Trade unions and their representatives are a source of advice and support

Issues to consider tackling:

- Raising awareness of mental health
- Involving staff to create a culture of openness
- Promoting healthy work life balances
- Allow opportunities for learning and development for staff
- Encourage development of positive working relationships, team building and social connections
- The adequacy of your one to one meetings with staff
- Your physical work environment and whether it is helping or hindering

Empowering people to help by considering:

- Providing training to line managers
- Training of mental health first aiders in key locations within your business structure
- Recruiting mental health champions from within your business

Useful information and resources

Thrive Bristol

www.bristol.gov.uk/mayor/thrive-bristol

Time to Change Bristol Hub

www.bimhn.org.uk/ttcbristol

Mind: Time to Change Pledge

www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/time-to-change/

Mind: Implementing Thriving at Work

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories/thriving-at-work-review-what-next-for-employers/

Mind and Heads Together: The Mental Health at Work Gateway

www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work-gateway/

TUC: Work and Wellbeing

www.tuc.org.uk/resource/work-and-wellbeing

TUC: Mental Health and the Workplace

www.tuc.org.uk/resource/mental-health-and-workplace

Mates in Mind

www.matesinmind.org/

Mental Health Foundation

www.mentalhealth.org.uk



