

Maintaining healthy boundaries as an Employee Champion

Establishing and maintaining boundaries is vital to your role

Boundaries exist to protect everyone. Establishing boundaries can help to clarify your role as an Employee Champion and the relationship you'll have with colleagues when in that role. Being clear about what you can and cannot offer as an Employee Champion will help you enjoy the role and manage other people's expectations.

We have put together this document detailing some things you may want to think about when looking to set up clear boundaries, which could help keep you and your colleagues safe. These are some suggestions of things for you to consider but is not an exhaustive list or a guide to be followed. Our suggestions are not intended to take the place of your organisation's policies and guidelines, and you should always seek out and be guided by the information your organisation provides.

Boundaries that may be important to you in your role as an Employee Champion are:

Time: Knowing how much time you can offer to the role and the support you can provide to your colleagues.

Abilities: Being clear about what professional skills, knowledge and abilities you have or do not have to help others.

Confidentiality: Being clear on what you can and cannot keep confidential and the circumstances when things that have been shared with you may need to be shared elsewhere. Look for this information in your organisation's data protection and confidentiality policies.

Be clear on what your role is and is not

- An Employee Champion is an employee who takes action in the workplace to raise awareness of mental health problems and challenge mental health stigma.
- Remember, **the Employee Champion role is not a 'pastoral' role**. It's important others don't see you as a counsellor and that you don't feel that you have to go beyond your abilities and role to provide ongoing emotional support to someone because of your role as an Employee Champion.
- As an Employee Champion you can offer peer support, an alternative point of contact on an equal basis, grounded in your shared experiences.
- To re-familiarise yourself: please see the [Employee Champion Role Description](#).

Tips for Maintaining Boundaries

Maintaining clear boundaries starts with understanding your role and keeping it clearly defined.

It may be helpful for you to look at the Employee Champions role description in the [Employee Champions Role Description](#) section of our website and identify the kind of activities you are already undertaking or want to undertake. This way, you can define what being an Employee Champion will mean to you.

By being clear about what activities you'll undertake, you can create and maintain your boundaries, and avoid feeling overburdened or pressured to act outside of what you're comfortable doing.

Keep in mind the remit of your Employee Champion role.

By all means use any skills you may have gained from training such as MHFA (Mental Health First Aid) but remember you are acting in the capacity of an Employee Champion, not as a counsellor or mental health nurse. It is important to separate your professional role and your role as a Champion. You may be a trained counsellor or mental health professional, however as an Employee Champion, your role is to listen and signpost, and not to make a professional judgement.

Signpost individuals to further information and support.

It may be helpful to ask the person: "What would you like to happen in this situation?" This will help to empower them and encourage them to take the course of action that seems right to them. Be clear about what you can do, as well as what you can't.

Explain your role and its limits to colleagues so you can manage people's expectations.

Be clear about the activities you will be doing as part of your role. For example, you could say "My role as an Employee Champion is to share information that promotes awareness of how to keep yourself mentally well."

Communicate the reasons for the boundary.

If someone is asking for direct advice or help beyond your role, you could say: "Sorry, I am not the best person to advise you on that and do not have the knowledge, skills or experience to help you with this. I am not a mental health professional and stepping outside of my abilities as an Employee Champion might be unhelpful to you. But I can suggest other sources of help and support you may wish to access." The explanation shows that you understand and believe in the reasons for the boundary.

Don't make promises you may not be able to stick to.

For example don't tell someone everything they tell you is completely confidential if there is a chance what they may say means you need to alert someone else in your organisation.

Identifying when boundaries are not working

Be mindful of your own wellbeing and take the time to notice any changes that could indicate that you need to take on a little less. Reflecting on your role regularly can help you to identify whether you are taking on too much.

- **Be kind to yourself if you get it wrong.** Identify what happened and how you can do it differently the next time.
- **Talk to someone.** Just as you may want to encourage conversations about mental health with your colleagues and for them to chat about how they are feeling, make sure you also take time to have these conversations yourself.
- **Remember you are not alone,** and you can ask for help if you need it. Contact us or other Employee Champions if you have a situation you are unsure how to deal with.
- **If you feel others are not respecting or are unclear on your boundaries, speak to them.** Own your statement by starting with 'I' and going on to describe what you think or feel. For example, you could say: "I don't feel comfortable continuing this conversation until we're both clear about what my role is in supporting you." By using 'I' in this way, you take ownership of the statement, which is both powerful and demonstrates that you personally care about the outcome.

Ensuring your mental wellbeing

Being a point of contact to have conversations about mental health with colleagues can be very rewarding, but it can also be time consuming and emotionally overwhelming.

You might also find that discussing subjects or traumatic events close to your own experiences, or that of others close to you, may be triggering - especially if you're feeling unwell.

We encourage you to think carefully about how you'll look after your own wellbeing whilst participating in the Time to Change programme, and make sure you have appropriate support in place. You might find it helpful to look at our website for information on how to stay well.

time to change

let's end mental health discrimination

Employee

Champions

Feeling stressed?

You may experience stress at some point during your time as an Employee Champion. There is no such thing as 'good' stress, but some people find it more tolerable than others. When stress becomes enough of a problem to affect your ability to carry out your work or other day-to-day tasks, or to enjoy things you have previously liked, it can become a disability like any other mental health condition.

[Click here](#) for information that can help you stay happy, healthy and well in your role.