

EMPLOYER CASE STUDIES

Demonstrating accountability and recruiting Employee Champions

Who are you?



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

DCLG is a Ministerial department of around 1400 employees supported by 11 agencies and public bodies spread over 16 offices across the country (70% in London)

Our role is to help create great places to live and work, and give more power to local people to shape what happens in their areas.

Wellbeing is of significant importance to DCLG, not only for the welfare of its people but for the strength and resilience of its business and delivery capability.

In DCLG, wellbeing is a priority to support the Streamlined, Smarter and Stronger vision. We know that to be able to achieve our vision for a flexible, outward looking, open and committed workforce our people need to understand the importance of good health and wellbeing, be confident in talking about their health issues and have the knowledge that they will receive appropriate support, feel resilient in their work and enjoy being a DCLG employee.

We are establishing positive wellbeing and promoting good mental health in DCLG.

Our statement is:

“DCLG will establish a culture where everyone will understand the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing and will have the confidence to walk towards and support those people who need help with mental health issues”

Why did your organisation sign the employer pledge?

DCLG signed Time to Change pledge in 2014 to help the business focus on the actions needed to create a more tolerant, open and supportive working environment for staff experiencing a mental health problem and to help achieve our overall health and wellbeing vision to establish a healthy, resilient and happy work culture.

The decision to sign the pledge was made by the department's Health and Wellbeing Network and was fully supported by the, then, Permanent Secretary, Sir Bob Kerslake.

What did you do to encourage your employees to share their personal experiences of mental health problems?

DCLG began to focus on mental health and wellbeing in 2014 when it signed the Time to Change pledge. Since then the department has worked hard to establish a tolerant, open and supportive environment for people with mental health concerns to work in beginning with the establishment of the Mental Health Ambassador (MHA) – a Mental Health First Aid trained member of staff.

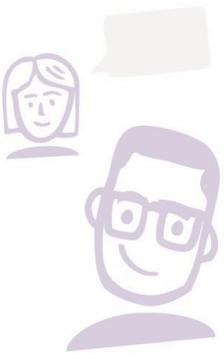
To begin with there were only two MHA. However their value was immediately felt in the business so the decision was taken to establish a bigger and wider network to give more access to the service and support.

The original two Ambassadors became MHFA Instructors in 2015 and established a programme of MHFA training within the business the same year. There are now over 150 MHFA trained staff of which 35 have gone on to become MHAs.

The MHAN provides a confidential listening and advice service to those who need it including Line Managers who want to know how to support their staff. The service, which is underpinned by the DCLG 4 P's approach and MHFA ALGEE model, effectively helps individuals identify a way forward - signposting support resources where appropriate.

Each MHA has their own biography published alongside their name on the DCLG intranet which allows colleagues to identify the most suitable MHA to support their particular needs. There is also a single contact telephone number for the service which connects to all the MHAs offering a rapid response service in times of crisis.

The role of the MHA is to:

- 
- Provide confidential help to a person developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis until appropriate treatment is received or until the crisis resolves
 - To escalate concerns if they have reason to believe that there is serious risk to the individual or other members of staff
 - Act as champions for mental health awareness, to help eliminate mental health discrimination and stigma within DCLG and work to raise the profile of the MHA role through regular activities and communications
 - To raise awareness of mental health conditions and to help break down the barriers and cultural myths about mental health illness
 - Respect the confidential nature of the role and follow appropriate measures for supporting staff
 - To offer information and guidance to line managers about mental health conditions

The MHAs are helping individuals and line managers spot the signs of stress and mental ill health and to offer first line support while professional help is being sought. Speaking to a MHA assists staff to get the help they need and ensure that the department puts in place any reasonable adjustments required to enable the individual remain in work or return to work much sooner following a period of mental health related sickness absence.

The Network has gone on to do so much more:

- 
- Established a Mental Health Support Group which gives a place and the space to staff living with mental illness to talk about their experience, share knowledge and resources, learn more about the impact of mental ill health, secure support and, where possible, heal and recover together.
 - Delivered five 'all staff' initiatives, including 'Break the Stigma', 'Time to Talk', 'World Mental Health Day' and 'Mental Health Awareness Week', aimed at building a better understanding of the importance of good mental wellbeing, de-stigmatising and de-mystifying mental illness through personal stories, raising general awareness of the impact of mental illness, and helping to develop a better understanding of what support is available.
 - Developed Mental Health Awareness and Building Resilience workshops which are delivered through a rolling programme within DCLG and by request to other government departments.
 - Effectively and positively spread good practice to other government departments and beyond – for example helping the government legal department with the launch of their own mental health first aiders initiative.

- Rapidly responded to the need for crisis support for DCLG staff working on the response to the Grenfell Tower by establishing trauma and resilience through crisis workshops and lunch time drop in sessions.
- Delivered mental health sessions at national events such as the Whitehall and Industry Group Diversity & Inclusion conference and CS Live 2017.

Developed a Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers (to be launched on World Mental Health Day).

What went well and what would you do differently?

Wellbeing is extremely important to us. We recognise that wellbeing, good health and happiness impacts on business resilience and our delivery capability so we have prioritised it through the Inclusion and Wellbeing pillar of DCLG's People Plan. We have further demonstrated our commitment through the ambitious and wide ranging actions set out in the new Health and Wellbeing Plan. We don't just *talk* about the importance of good mental health in DCLG, we provide everyone with a wide range of resources to help them attain it and maintain it.

The work of the MHA network is not only helping to achieve DCLG's vision for a flexible, outward looking, open and committed workforce, it is, through spreading our resources and good practice widely, helping the Civil Service to achieve its mental health priority to **encourage an open dialogue leading to action on mental health.**

Feedback from users of the MHA-led Services

The Mental Health Ambassador Listening and Support Service

The following words provided by a MHA helped a colleague to make sense of a recent suicide in the family that they felt they should have foreseen.

"We know from our training that that the real truth about suicide is it is more often a secret and solitary thing rather than, as some sadly still believe, a noisy and demanding 'cry for help'. If Mark hadn't been unwell he may well have reached out to you but he wasn't in a rational place and most probably felt that he didn't want to burden his family with his woes".

Below are more comments we have received from colleagues who have used the service:

- The time we spend together has really helped me to manage my illness in the workplace. Knowing I have a sympathetic ear has been a comfort to me.
- Talking to you made me feel a lot calmer

The Mental Health Support Group – Further comments received from colleagues

- I can genuinely say that the MH Support Group has really helped me on my path to recovery. In particular, having a safe space to share my work anxieties, and indeed hear that others have similar experiences, has been incredibly reassuring.

- I have both anxiety and depression. These conditions have blighted my confidence and made me feel worthless. Taking part in the Mental Health Support Group and raising awareness of what it is like to have mental ill health have begun to restore my sense of self-worth, and enabled me to support others in the same position. It's also helped me to get back into work, safe in the knowledge that if I'm having a bad day there's always someone I can turn to that understands.

Civil Service Live Mental Health Awareness sessions

- Thank you very much for sending on the slides from your session, it was the most interesting session I attended.
- Thanks you again for an excellent presentation at Civil Service Live
- I found the session both fascinating and useful.

Mental Health and Resilience training event

- I wanted to say a huge 'thank you' for running the mental health training sessions for the Constitution Group. I have had some excellent feedback from those that attended and it is great that we have been able to highlight this important issue to the senior leaders and managers in the group (Cabinet Office).

- I just also wanted to say how much I enjoyed the training course – I got a lot out of it and it left me feeling extremely encouraged and positive about the openness and honesty of everyone involved towards mental health issues. So thank you once again for putting on such an excellent course (Attendee on a MHFA course).

- Thank you so much for being part our Diversity & Inclusion Conference last week. The feedback has been fantastic and I know that the breakout sessions were a particular highlight for a lot of people. I really appreciate your involvement. (WIG).