

# Employers Showcase – Case Studies

## Raise awareness about mental health



Canal & River Trust was established as a charity in 2012. Here to protect over 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales. We're custodians of a rich, living history but we look forwards to a brighter, better future too.

Canals and rivers are a world away from every day. They're free, open spaces we can all enjoy - and it's our job at the Trust to keep them that way. On the water, on foot, on a bike, with friends or on your own, everyone should have a good place to go to relax and unwind away from the daily pressures which we all face.

We employ approximately 1700 people across many sites in both England and Wales, and we engage with a large number of regular volunteers and contractors.

### The Trust pride ourselves on the strong values which are embedded throughout the organisation. They are:

**Caring** – we care about our employee wellbeing and have implemented many support mechanisms, one example is the work we are doing around mental health awareness.

**Open** – we encourage our staff to be open in all they do. With regards to the work around mental health, we encourage open conversations and for teams to ensure wellbeing discussion are always on the agenda in team talks.

**Local** – we engage with the local communities and ensure where possible the network is an inviting and safe place to visit.

**Involvement** – we engage with all our employees and listen to their ideas and thoughts to make the working environment a positive setting.

**Excellence** – we pride ourselves on being excellent in all that we do to support our employees, volunteers, contractors and customers who engage with the Trust.

The Trust chose to sign the employer pledge as we felt this was an additional way in which we could demonstrate to our employees, volunteers, contractors, customers and future employees that we are an organisation who is positive about mental health and wellbeing.

The Trust is a place of inclusion, acceptance and understanding for one another and by encouraging open discussions around wellbeing people are aware that there is no place for stigma around mental health.

The Trust do have a wellbeing strategy and prior to signing the employer pledge we had done a significant amount of work with Leeds Mind and networked with organisations who are on a similar journey to the Trust and spoke highly of the resources and support available through Time to Change.

To raise awareness, the Trust held a Tea and Talk event on 10th October 2016.

We invited offices to get involved in the Tea & Talk event by holding cake baking competitions, we sent out posters, bunting, cake toppers, quizzes to all offices and encouraged people to engage in discussions around mental health. On the day, our CEO was at our Newark office and he judged the bake-off competition with an article appearing in our internal magazine.

Over half of our workforce are men who work out on the canal banks and very rarely visit an office. We wanted to ensure that the message reached all employees. To do this, we held another Tea & Talk day for all our bankside teams. To make this possible we secured donations of 3400 tea bags from Tetley and Yorkshire Tea and 1100 biscuits from Morrison's and Farmhouse Biscuits. We packed up 75 boxes with tea, biscuits, balloons, pens, posters, Employee Assistance cards and asked the Supervisors to dedicate one of the team meetings to a Tea & Talk day where they could talk about mental health. We have had some great feedback.

The feedback identified that people did initially find it difficult and some of our colleagues found it uncomfortable. However, discussions did take place and continue to do so in team talks which we feel is extremely positive. We are currently planning how we can engage with the bankside teams for the next Tea & Talk event.

The role of the employee champions is to raise awareness, support the campaign and seek out feedback from the events so that we can constantly improve things.

**If we could offer any advice to another organisation it would be to really think about who you are trying to engage with and what barriers may be in the way of you reaching out to all employees early on in your planning stages for any event.**

Initially we focused our attention around the main offices across our waterways. It soon became evident that we were not being fully inclusive, as the activities which were predominantly office based were difficult and in some cases impossible for our bankside colleagues to attend.

This led to the organisation of a second Tea & Talk day for the bankside teams. We have learnt from this and will ensure that the Tea & Talk events for both office and bankside colleagues will take place at the same time.

## Further Reading

### [Tea & Talk](#)