



time to change

let's end mental health discrimination

Employer Showcase

Case Study: Equipping Line Managers to Have Conversations About Mental Health

Thames Water

At Thames Water we provide water and sewerage services to over 15 million members of the public within Great Britain, ultimately meaning we play a vital role in the daily lives of all of these people.

Our work is shaped by our six values; our values are created by people from right across our business and are important to everyone who works for us. One of our six values is 'take care' – we look after ourselves, our customers and our business. We have a zero compromise approach to health, safety and wellbeing. Another one of our values is to 'reach higher, be better' – we are always learning and challenging ourselves and each other to be the very best we can be. We are not afraid to try new things and work towards a better future.

Our strong values for our people have led us to be at the forefront of health and wellbeing initiatives, more recently with a significant focus on mental health at work.

Removing the stigma around mental health has always been a key objective of our wellbeing agenda. Over recent years we had started to make some progress with resilience training and



manager support but recognised the term 'mental health' was still rarely used in any of our communications.

We saw Karen from Time to Change speak at one of our senior H&S leadership meetings and we were keen to move forward and commit to the Time to Change pledge. This really helped us

to identify the key initiatives we wanted to focus on in our commitment to removing the stigma around mental health at work. This included mental health training, open engagement forums and the introduction of mental health first aiders. This has since led us to developing an excellent mental health strategy for our business. The impact this has had already is



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significant and can be recognised through an increase in OH referrals and also participation on our Yammer based engagement forum.

Equipping Line Managers to Talk About Mental Health

We have developed an innovative and forward thinking mental health awareness course called 'Mind Fit'. This was based upon the MIND mental health first aid light course however we have tailored this to include elements of virtual reality. The delegates are all given a VR headset and view a series of VR films and active videos. It enables the delegate to be in the shoes of someone suffering from severe depression. It also enables the delegates to consider how they may have acted in similar situations and how they have ignored warning signs in the past.

Successes & Challenges

Our main obstacles involved the technology and ensuring the VR and videos depicted a true real life situation. Once we became more familiar with the technology and created an app to allow the smooth running of the VR technology the interest in the training continued to grow. We expected to have to promote our training however this has not been required, interest has been generated through word of mouth. Discussion on all of our engagement forums after each course seemed to grow and grow. There is now a waiting list for all courses until the end of the year. Many of those undertaking the Mind Fit course have since put themselves forward to do the MHFA course.

Discussion around mental health across the business is growing, weekly posts on our engagement forms, frequent emails and phone calls to OH from managers and MHFAs requesting support after having effective conversations.





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The training we have developed has given managers and colleagues the knowledge and real life experience to not ignore signs and engage in conversation.

We believe mental health awareness training is essential for all employees. Without the basic knowledge, other initiatives will not be successful. The training really kicked off our mental health strategy at TW. By creating something new, innovative and exciting, the training has generated lots of discussion and interest, gathering momentum. VR equipment and technology is expensive, however once purchased can be used time and time again for all different types of training. The real life, lived experience was the key factor in our training that has

enabled people and managers to have effective conversations. This is something we will continue to use to influence change. VR technology is new and innovative and needs a specialist team to create what is required. If setting out to do something similar it is important the brief is clear.