



let's end mental health discrimination

Employee Champions: things to consider

Speaking out about lived experience of a mental health problem

You do not need to have lived experience of a mental health problem in order to become an Employee Champion. However, if you do have lived experience and decide that you would like to become an Employee Champion, it is completely up to you whether you choose to share your story as part of becoming active in tackling stigma.

The impact of hearing a peer speak about their lived experience of mental health is a powerful way to tackle mental health stigma. Time to Change research shows that attitudes, knowledge and behaviour towards people with mental health problems are more likely to improve when individuals have the opportunity to learn from someone who has personal experience of mental illness. Meeting someone who is open about their experiences and having the chance to ask questions, can make people think twice about commonly held stereotypes.

Nonetheless it is important to think carefully about the implications of sharing your story, taking into consideration the below:

- How you feel about sharing your mental health experiences in the workplace.
- If your colleagues, friends and family are not currently aware of your lived experience, it is likely they will find out once you speak out.
- Any implications sharing your story could have at work or in your personal life.
- How much of your story you are willing to share, so that you can create boundaries, and only share information that you wish to.
- That not everyone will be supportive and you may experience negative feedback.
- Are there professional implications to sharing your story such as changes in responsibilities.

It is also important to consider that even if you do not share your story, undertaking other activities may trigger thoughts about your experience and some people may not understand or see things in the same way. Think about how you will manage situations where you receive negative feedback or messages from colleagues



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Time to Change will produce advisory documents to help advise and prepare Employee Champions with lived experience and who choose to speak out about it to raise mental health awareness. We will also be here to answer your questions and discuss any concerns you may have throughout the campaign.

Looking after your mental health

We hope that supporting Time to Change will be enjoyable and rewarding for you, but as with any activity it can sometimes be pressurised. You also might find that reading, writing, speaking or listening to subjects 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 programme, and make sure you have appropriate support in place.

We are not able to provide individual advice, support or treatment through your contact with the Time to Change Employers team. However if you do need support or are in crisis there is help available.

- **Mind Infoline 0300 123 3393** – Providing advice on different types of mental health problems, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments and advocacy.
- **Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service 0300 5000 927** – This offers practical help on issues such as the Mental Health Act, community care, welfare benefits, debt, criminal justice and carers rights. They also offer general help on living with mental illness, medication, care and treatment.
- **Mind legal advice line 0300 466 6463** - Providing legal information and general advice on mental health related law covering: mental health, mental capacity, community care and human rights and discrimination/equality related to mental health issues.
- **Samaritans 08457 90 90 90** - Lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Completely confidential, if there is something troubling you they will help you talk things through.
- **Elefriends** - A supportive online community where you can be yourself. We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes, but now there's a safe place to listen, share and be heard. Moderated by Mind, Mondays to Fridays, 10am to 5pm. It is monitored once a day on weekends and public holidays.

If you need urgent help please go to the [Mind website](#) and click the yellow button at the top which says 'I need urgent help'.



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Media work

Becoming an Employee Champion is not a media opportunity, however you may be offered the chance to take part in media activity if you wish to. This might involve sharing your story in the form of a case study, or commenting on how you have found the Employee Champion role and talking about what you did. Please note there would be absolutely no pressure to undertake this.

Please be aware that if you are involved in media activity, some people may not understand and see things in the same way and you may be subject to negative feedback and or messages from individuals and the public. Also it is important to consider that once you have undertaken press work it often cannot be retracted, for example if you give a case study, when people google your name this may be the first thing they see.

Time to Change staff will be on hand to brief you and ensure that you're happy with the processes but you must consider that at times you would be sharing your story with the general public, your family and friends, and your colleagues. We can also support you to share your experiences anonymously too.

Time commitment

We recognise that being an Employee Champion is a voluntary role which is taken in addition to your day job. The level of support you receive from your organisation will vary. It is important that you discuss your availability with the Time to Change lead within your organisation (this will be the individual who led on the signing of your organisation's Time to Change pledge). It is important that you only undertake activities that you are comfortable with and have the capacity to take on.

Having the backing of your organisation will really support your activities as an Employee Champion, for this reason it is important that Employee Champions communicate regularly with those individuals who have led on the signing of the Time to Change pledge.