

## Employer Showcase

### Case Study: Equipping Line Managers to Have Conversations about Mental Health

## Central England Co-operative

Formed by the merger of Midlands and Anglia Co-operatives, Central England Co-operative is one of the largest independent retailers in the UK, with over 400 trading outlets, a family of around 8,600 colleagues and more than 330,000 regular trading members.

Central England Co-operative trades across 16 counties from the Midlands to the East Coast - through more than 250 foodstores, 100-plus funeral homes, filling stations, post offices, travel branches, florists, opticians, masonry outlets, a crematorium and a coffin factory.



Central England Co-operative's vision is to be the UK's best consumer co-operative by making a real difference to its members and communities. Mental health and wellbeing has been firmly put on the Society's agenda since Tracey Orr, Support Services Executive, made a pledge to break the culture of silence around mental health within the workplace.

As a co-operative society, we decided to sign the Time to Change Employer Pledge to illustrate our long-term commitment to put in place the foundations to;

- Raise awareness around the importance of mental health at work
- Champion the issue by providing the resources and tools for colleagues
- Help break the culture of silence around mental health

Martyn Cheate, Chief Executive, signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017 and a comprehensive action plan was put in place to ensure mental health and wellbeing was at the forefront of our thinking.

## Equipping Line Managers to Talk About Mental Health

Addressing mental health and wellbeing is a priority for the Society and over the last eighteen months, we have made headways in delivering our commitments to tackling mental health in the workplace.

### October 2016

- Tracey Orr, Support Services Executive, made a pledge to break the culture of silence around mental health on World Mental Health Day
- Set up a Mental Health Working Party of cross-functional colleagues to support delivering the employer pledge and to champion mental health in the workplace

### February 2017

- Preparations for signing the Time to Change Employer Pledge
- Supported Time to Talk Day

### March 2017

- Martyn Cheatle, Chief Executive, signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge backed by a comprehensive action plan

### April 2017

- Dedicated mental health and wellbeing area on the Society's Intranet for colleagues
- 50 mental health and wellbeing champions recruited from 145 applications

### May 2017

- Colleague Assistance Programme (24 hour seven day a week confidential helpline) launched
- Supported Mental Health Awareness Week, with 147 colleagues attending 13 events, including Mental Health First Aid courses, mindfulness workshops and Dementia Friendly Awareness sessions
- Over 130 colleagues became Mental Health First Aiders
- Shared 13 colleague and member films around their mental health and wellbeing journey

### August 2017

- Branded two food distribution lorries with the Time to Change logo

### September 2017

- Recognised colleague achievements around mental health and wellbeing at the Society's annual awards ceremony

### October 2017

- Conference for the Society's mental health and wellbeing champions in conjunction with Time to Change
- Supported World Mental Health Day which included trading business briefings, posters etc.



### What does 2018 look like?

- Recruitment of further champions
- Hold a second champion conference
- Further Mental Health First Aid training and the roll out of new training for Line Managers
- Continue to build on resources to support colleagues

- Support key events, such as Mental Health Awareness Week
- Share best practice with other organisations
- Firm up the Society's external strategy around mental health and wellbeing

## Successes & Challenges

### What went well

The engagement and enthusiasm from our colleagues has been fantastic and it is heart-warming to be making a real difference;

- Having an Executive Sponsor leading the mental health agenda has been really important
- The launch of the Society's Colleague Assistance Programme, which is a free 24hour seven day a week confidential helpline. This service has been accessed by a number of colleagues since it was launched
- Sending regular communications to keep colleagues up-to-date, but also to share best practice and champion specific topics linked to mental health and wellbeing

### What we'd do differently

- The recruitment of champions and having a screening process so that champions know what is expected of them and can fully take on the role. We have improved this for 2018 recruitment with a robust application form and a phone interview
- Ensuring that colleagues are taking an active role as a champion and are providing regular updates on their progress – we have put a plan in place to address this for 2018