

## Employer Showcase

### Case Study: Demonstrating Accountability and Recruiting Employee Champions

## Riverside

Riverside is one of the UK's leading social housing and regeneration organisations, owning or managing around 53,000 homes from Irvine to Kent. We have a track record of transforming lives and revitalising neighbourhoods dating back to 1928.

We help people find homes, through social rent or shared ownership, and also operate in more than 150 local authorities to provide innovative and flexible care and support solutions that provide exceptional value to commissioning authorities, clients and communities.

One of our key objectives is to embed a culture of high performance as an employer of choice, with a clear focus on engagement, equality and diversity and effective communication. We want our 2,710 staff to be themselves, understanding that this helps people to feel more comfortable in the workplace, so encouraging conversations around mental health fits with that.

### Reasons for Signing the Pledge

Riverside's ENABLE Staff Group regularly holds meetings to discuss disability-related issues, current and future initiatives and to update on its action plan. During a discussion at one of these meetings, members raised concerns that colleagues generally associated the group with supporting physical disabilities only. The group wanted to expand its remit to cover mental health and wellbeing issues among staff members. Chair Fran Stulberg agreed to lead on the Time to Change employer pledge.

The pledge then became one of the group's objectives within the 2016/17 ENABLE Staff Group action plan.

The Time to Change employer pledge report was submitted to Riverside CEO Carol Matthews and all Executive Directors on 21 February 2017 and was given the go-ahead. Carol and her Executive Directors officially signed the pledge on 1 May 2017, and it was then launched to all staff using various internal communications channels.

## Recruiting Employee Champions

Fran worked in partnership with Riverside's Marketing team on an internal communications campaign to highlight Riverside's stance on mental health in the workplace and to encourage



colleagues to get involved. She also attended regular update meetings with the project group who worked to raise awareness across the organisation. Several other departments within Riverside, including Involving Human Resources, Learning and Development, Equality and Diversity, the ENABLE Staff Group, Leadership Group and Executive Directors, were instrumental in supporting the action plan and in recruiting mental health champions.

Fran developed a 'job description' for the mental health champion role outlining the expectations on volunteers. This was sent out, with a view to recruiting 20 champions, funded for Mental Health First Aid training by Riverside's Learning & Development department. Responding candidates from all levels across the association were chosen by Fran and the E&D Manager. Because of the overwhelming response, Fran successfully sourced funding from the CEO and Leadership Group to allow an additional 50 mental health champions to receive the necessary training.

The example employer pledge action plan template from Time to Change was invaluable as it listed all the key principles we needed to meet to achieve a successful launch for ENABLE to follow.

## Successes and Challenges

Having CEO and senior leadership buy-in was invaluable in the quest to launch Riverside's Time to Change pledge and recruit the mental health champions. The ENABLE Staff Group has an executive champion, Ian Gregg, who supports our initiatives and this campaign by highlighting its importance at high level meetings, Board meeting, and leadership conferences.

The ENABLE Staff Group and our executive champion are leading on the recruitment and support of all mental health champions. Fran is now working with our E&D manager to produce a mental health champion toolkit for quick reference support for all champions.

We launched a strong internal communications campaign led by our Marketing department, giving us access to weekly e-bulletins, monthly team briefings and the CEO's weekly blog. Fran has set up a bespoke Mental Health Champions Group on Riverside's Yammer site, encouraging members to compare best practice, offer ideas for supporting our staff, and share

updates and news from our champions. She has also developed a mail group specifically for the mental health champions to be used in the same way as the Yammer site.

As part of the communications surrounding the campaign, we encourage staff to share their own mental health and wellbeing issues, the journey they have been on and where they have found themselves with the support they have received. We have published a variety of moving stories and also recoded one staff member's story as a video which was played at the ENABLE AGM.

Fran invited two speakers to ENABLE's AGM. The first speaker delivered a presentation on managing mental health in the workplace and the importance of having mental health champions in place for additional support. The second speaker, from Time to Change, delivered a presentation on the role of the mental health champion, and the support they can offer and tap into through MIND and the Time to Change website.

Working with Marketing, the ENABLE Staff Group developed a Mental Health Champion badge as an identifier to other colleagues who may be in need of support. The mental health champions were officially welcomed at the AGM and presented with their badges by our Executive Champion and Garrick Prayogg, a member of MIND and Time to Change.

