
Focus on Mental Health at work



In recent years and months awareness of mental health has taken great positive steps forward. However we know that mental health continues to have stigma attached to it especially in the workplace.

Across Kent thousands of people are employed by health and social care organisations. What more can we do to support their personal mental health and ensure that they are equipped to deal mentally with the stress that their roles involve?

Time to Change in Kent

Time to Change is a national campaign which is raising awareness of mental health and trying to reduce the stigma of mental health at work. They have called on businesses to sign the Time to Change pledge which is a public declaration that they will proactively support their employees to maintain good mental health. Healthwatch Kent have signed the pledge as have many Kent organisations such as Kent County Council. However many more have not yet signed including all the Hospital Trusts.

We invited the Director of Time to Change along with all the organisations who have pledged and many who had not to discuss how we could work better together and make a difference to the thousands of people that we employ between us.



What were the issues?

16 organisations came together and discussed how to embed mental health awareness and understanding within their own organisations.

The following issues came up:

<p>Senior management buy in: Getting senior executives to get behind the campaign was not easy for everyone and proved to be a big hurdle to overcome.</p>	<p>Time and commitment: It often proved difficult for staff to find the time to lift the plan off the page and embed it in their organisation against competing priorities. Staff needed time and support to make it work.</p>	<p>Reaching all staff : Many staff within big organisations were not aware their company had pledged.</p>
<p>Solution : Suggested that senior staff & HR were invited to sponsor the programme.</p>	<p>Solution : Spread the load across several staff and use awareness days and weeks to give a focal point.</p>	<p>Solution : Include information about mental health in all communications and in all staff well-being days.</p>

What difference have we made?

- Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust have agreed that they will sign the Time to Change pledge
- Addaction have also stated that they are going to sign the Pledge
- Other organisations are considering the value of pledging
- Together with Porchlight we have written to all the Live Well organisations to encourage them to pledge
- We are working with the STP Chief Exec office to encourage all 8 Clinical Commissioning Groups to pledge (some already have)
- Everyone agreed the value of working together and want to meet again in June
- All sixteen organisations left with improved understanding and enthusiasm to better support their staffs mental health