

Core standard two

Develop mental health awareness
among employees



In many workplaces mental health is still a taboo subject. Too often, people are scared to talk to their line manager or coach and problems can spiral. Developing mental health awareness is the best way to create an open and positive culture where people feel able to talk about their mental health.

Mental health wins in horseracing

Lizzie Harris, Regional Welfare Manager, Racing Welfare

“Horseracing is no different to any other industry where people can find it difficult to talk about their mental health – but that’s changing,” says Lizzie.

“We look after people who work behind the scenes on the racecourse, yards and breeding operations around the country. They are susceptible to the same mental health problems that you would see across the rest of society.”

Racing Welfare supports people in a variety of ways – through information, advice, guidance and counselling services, a frontline welfare officer team and financial assistance. They also offer a Racing Welfare Support Line – a 24-hour digital and telephone service where people can get in touch.

One of the biggest barriers to better mental health is encouraging people to open up in the first place. So, to challenge the status quo, Racing Welfare launched a major new campaign around Mental Health Awareness Week.

“We got every racecourse to show a special video featuring one of our beneficiaries talking about his mental health on the big screen. We filmed it in the yard with horses, so it was relatable to everybody,” says Lizzie.

“Our welfare officers attended every meeting and were interviewed in the paddock about what we do, and about mental health in general. We also asked people to wear green ribbons to raise awareness. Everybody wanted to wear one – we even ran out by the end of the week.”

Most importantly, people were inspired to get in touch with Racing Welfare. Their website was viewed 50 per cent more often than usual, and 16 per cent more people used the helpline compared to the previous month.

“It had a massive impact for us,” says Lizzie.

“It gave people the courage to stand up and say ‘Yes, I’ve been struggling’.”

“You just need somebody to get the ball rolling and then everybody starts to engage. It’s another step towards getting rid of the stigma around mental health.”

Six ways to raise mental health awareness in your organisation

1 Provide your people with reliable information

Mind's website is a great place to start. We have a wide range of general workplace resources, plus resources tailored for the sport and physical activity sector.

2 Embed mental health in your induction and training

Give people information on how best to manage their own mental health and how to support colleagues. Set out what support is available.

3 Invite an external speaker on mental health to your workplace

This could be part of broader diversity, disability or mental health awareness activities and happen on significant calendar dates like World Mental Health Day.

4 Make the most of internal communications

Raise awareness through blogs, factsheets, tips for line managers and coaches, useful web links and FAQs. You can use posters, noticeboards, staff newsletters, magazines and intranet and internet pages to get the message out. Update content regularly and make sure you represent diverse perspectives and experiences.

5 Recruit Mental Health Champions

Champions may have their own personal experience of mental ill health or may have supported someone else with mental health problems. The role is open to everyone. Bringing together people with different perspectives and experiences is really important to challenge the stigma around mental health.

6 Share your experience

If you have a story to share you can help improve people's understanding and change their attitudes. People follow their leaders' behaviour, so lead by example. Create opportunities for others to do the same.

How are employers taking action?

The National Exercise Referral Scheme for Wales teamed up with Newport Mind to deliver mental health awareness for sport and physical activity training. They delivered it to personal trainers and instructors across Wales to help them support themselves and their clients.

“This year we have offered specific training in dealing with sensitive calls, self-care and confidentiality. All these are aimed at keeping our staff safe and well in their roles. Many staff have also accessed individual support.”

Michael Bennett, Head of Welfare, Professional Footballers' Association

UK Athletics arranged a lunchtime seminar for all staff with guest speakers including athletes, performance staff and Mind.

The Professional Cricketers' Association arranged for a former player to attend every ground to share his experience of mental health problems and addiction with players and coaching staff.

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA) is developing a network of Mental Health Champions to offer support to people who might be struggling at work.

“Sometimes volunteers have experiences of family members with mental health problems – others are simply interested in people's welfare,” says Matt Mancini, the BHA's Welfare Development Manager.

“We have a mental health forum on Workplace [a version of Facebook for work]. People can come forward and share information or ask for help and support from our Champions.”

The mental health calendar

Raising awareness of mental health is something that you should build into your ongoing activities as an organisation as part of your mental health at work plan. You can also use significant dates in the [mental health calendar](#)¹² to plan bursts of additional awareness campaigns. These include Time to Talk Day in February and World Mental Health Day on 10 October.

Useful resources

Mental health awareness training

[Mental health awareness in sport and physical activity](#)¹³ is an introductory course aimed at providers, coaches, sports administrators, front of house staff and volunteers. It was developed with support from UK Coaching and from Sport England. The course is written and delivered by people with mental health problems.

Mental health at work elearning

Our [Mental health at work module](#) can be used to support conversations about mental health within your workplace, to inspire your own colleague-led workshops or activities focused on mental health, or to form part of your induction programme for all new employees. It can also act as a refresher for people who have undergone mental health training previously.¹⁴

Sport and Mental Health Network

The network is aimed at local and community organisations that are helping people with mental health problems access the benefits of sport and physical activity. The group meets twice a year to share good practice and learning from across projects, to network and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Email sport@mind.org.uk to join the network.

Mental Health at Work gateway

[Mental Health at Work](#)¹⁵ is a new online gateway to resources, training and information. We developed to help employers of all shapes and sizes find what they need.

For useful information on mental health problems visit: mind.org.uk/a-z

12 www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/tackle-stigma-workplace/make-impact-your-workplace/mental-health-calendar

13 www.mind.org.uk/sport

14 www.mind.org.uk/workplace/training-consultancy/e-learning

15 www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/

Knowing the score on mental health

Faye Nixon, Head of Marketing,
Derby County Football Club

“Last year our Chair spoke about how, as well as hitting work targets, he wanted us to get better at looking after people and their wellbeing,” says Faye. “We have an open and honest approach to everything – and that goes for speaking out if there’s a work issue, but also speaking out if you’re struggling. Now the ambition is to score ‘10/10’ on both work and wellbeing.”



To achieve this ambition, Derby County Football Club introduced a new Health and Wellbeing team. Faye says that the first meetings were “filled with ideas” which the team cut down to a shortlist.

After discussion, they decided the most effective approach was to explore different topics at work each month – from mental health to cancer awareness. The strategy kicked off with a fitness event that highlighted the link between exercise and wellbeing.

“On the day people rocked up to find a card on their desk telling them about our health and wellbeing vision, and a link to a special website featuring signposting to relevant services,” says Faye.

“We followed it up by sending out a link to an online survey, just to see where people felt they stood on health and wellbeing.”

Faye says that a big part of the initiative is about being non-prescriptive, and letting staff have their say about future ideas.

“Through our community trust we’ve got involved in Time to Talk – which encourages people to open up about their mental health,” adds Faye. “That’s led by one of our staff who has his own experience of mental health problems and is now a mentor on the programme to help others.”

