

# Best Mental Health in the Workplace Strategy:

LARGE COMPANY

Winner

Thames Water, Time to Talk

This award recognises a workplace with over 750 employees that has implemented an exceptional mental health strategy, demonstrating an inclusive, preventive and supportive approach to wellbeing

Prior to its Time to Talk initiative, mental wellbeing was not considered a high priority in the Thames Water wider health & safety programme. The Thriving at Work review highlighted the impact of poor mental health support in the workplace and set a challenge for improvement. The new strategy highlights the importance of cause and prevention, looking at the onset of mental health problems in and out of the workplace, and showing the benefits of positive wellbeing and how to maintain it.

Time to Talk uses the SPOT principles: Spotting the signs, Providing opportunities to talk, Offering a listening ear, Talking to professional support services early. The company is working to embed the principles across all staff. An engagement group has been set up to encourage discussion about mental health at work.

Key objectives were to foster a greater understanding of mental health amongst all employees, to place those with qualifications in mental health in all areas of the workplace, to equip managers with a resource pack to embed and enable the SPOT principles, and to closely monitor cases of mental health in the workplace. The strategy developed two training courses, including virtual reality (VR) scenes that allow the viewer to share the

**How we'll know if we've been successful.**

- Our employees will actively engage in discussions about mental health.
- Our employees will engage with our health promotional activities to improve their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Our managers will display positive behaviours that boost mental health and promote a healthy work environment.
- Our managers will have the skills and the confidence to actively manage mental health problems in the workplace by referring to support services and accommodating local adjustments.
- We will reduce our sickness absence rate for mental health problems.
- We will see a rise in Occupational Health referrals for presentism mental health cases.

**Employee Assistance Programme.**

To support our strategy our employees can access our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This independent service provides confidential advice and support. It can help people prepare and cope with life's events and challenges. They are great to speak to when people feel like they don't know where to turn or who to go to for the right information. They can advise you on things like:

- Consumer rights and legal information.
- Benefits, housing problems, tax credits, disability, neighbour disputes.
- Debt management and budgeting.
- Creditors, financial health check.
- Emotional support.
- Poor work/life balance, illness, crisis, anxiety, loss, self-confidence, workplace pressure.
- Family relationships.
- Communication, manage, civil partnerships.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Problems sleeping, fitness, weight management, alcohol, nutrition.
- Work and career issues.
- Change, team dynamics, work overload, conflict.
- Housing.
- Buying and selling, tenancy, neighbour disputes.

Life can be a rollercoaster and many of the issues above are an inevitable part of life, but it often helps us to manage them positively if we have prompt access to the right information and support. The team are experts at helping to identify, plan and manage life events, helping you to stay in control, happy, healthy and fully focused on life and work. It is okay to ask for help and this confidential and independent service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Workplace Wellbeing expert advisors are there to help - whenever you need them you can access the service either on-line or over the phone. The services are available for all employees, you can self-ref or ask a manager, first aider or OH to refer. The online EAP service has a large library of one-to-one factbooks, self-help programmes, podcasts and links on many subjects. The service can be accessed on-line or over the phone 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

0800 1116 387  
myeap.com  
username: thameswt

**SPOT**  
Help • Talk

**A manager's guide.**

Right now 1 in 6 workers in the UK are dealing with a mental health problem such as stress, anxiety or depression.

As a manager you have a crucial role to play in promoting a healthy culture in your team, where your employees feel valued and supported on a daily basis.

We're committed to supporting Thames Water employees who are experiencing mental health problems to cope, recover and get back to top performance.

This guide is designed to help you support anyone in your team who is experiencing mental health difficulties.

experience of someone suffering from severe depression, so they can spot warning signs.

A series of Executive Illness Reviews involves senior managers in reviewing the outcomes

**Presented by:**



of investigations in staff who have had time off due to work-related illness, and an online manager's pack pulls together supportive documents and information, enabling managers to have effective conversations around mental health. Senior managers are instrumental in setting the tone across the organisation, and delivery of the Time to Talk strategy is a fundamental part in continuing the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing throughout the company.

## Achievements

Since the launch of the Time to Talk strategy, Thames Water has seen a 20% reduction in work-related illness; confirmed cases are subject to full Executive Reviews by senior management. Engaging with executive team members is helping remove the stigma around work-related illness. A mental health group launched on Yammer is accessible by all employees and now has more than 400 members posting about their personal experiences with stories and tips on how they manage their mental health.

Thames Water has recorded an increase in Occupational Health (OH) referrals for those recognising their symptoms and seeking support. Across the business there are frequent emails and phone calls to OH from managers, with Mental Health First Aiders also requesting support – they now handle around 30 mental health contacts every month, five times the number of physical first aid contacts. ■

## Judges' comments

Really like their approach to ensure it was relevant to their employees. Great use of training and data. Their approach is targeted and relevant to their employees. Good use of data both at the 20% drop in work-related illness and in the increased usage of the Employee Assistance Programme

A strong entry which has shown good innovation with the use of things like virtual reality to get strong messages across to all levels of colleagues. Perhaps could have given more tangible outcomes but clearly a strategy with real longevity

The strategy was set with clear objectives in mind. The use of illness reviews is very interesting, mirroring the investigation that would follow if someone had a physical accident at work

→ Accenture  
**Accenture**

→ Aon  
**Aon**

→ Great Mental Health  
Matters  
**Companies House**

→ Group Mental Health  
Strategy  
**Lloyds Banking Group**

→ Mental Health  
at MediaCom  
**MediaCom**

→ Mental Health and  
Wellbeing Strategy  
**Northern Trust**

→ Schroders Investment  
Management  
**Schroders Investment  
Management**