



End mental health
discrimination

A guide to supporting your anti-stigma champions



The following guiding principles are designed to help you engage with and support your anti-stigma workplace champions to be the best they can be, and allow you to get the most from them.

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This resource was developed by Time to Change England and Wales and has been adapted by See Me, with their permission, for a Scottish audience.



Why is ongoing support for your champions important?

We know that poor mental health is an issue your organisation can't afford to ignore:

1.7 million

working days are lost in Scotland every year due to work-related stress, anxiety or depression¹.

Mental health related sickness absence costs Scottish employers an average of

£2,140

per employee per year².

38%

of Scottish workers think that someone would be unlikely to disclose their mental health problem at work for fear of losing their job³.

71%

of people with mental illness said they experienced stigma and discrimination in the workplace in the last 12 months⁴.

Having workplace champions can make a real difference to your workplace culture and to the lives of colleagues working with you and your organisation, to make mental health an everyday topic of conversation, dispelling myths and making it easier for people to seek support.

If you have already started the process of recruiting champions in your organisation, this guide can help you to think about how you can support your champions, and keep them engaged and empowered for the long term.

Alternatively, if this is something that your organisation is in the early stages of planning, you could use this guide to help you think about incorporating a strategy as to how you can support champions with regard to engagement and retention.



1. HSE, 2022. www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/regions/scotland-statistics.pdf
2. Deloitte, 2022. www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/consultancy/deloitte-uk-mental-health-report-2022.pdf
3. See Me & Censuswide, 2021.
4. The Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study, 2022. www.seemescotland.org/stigmastudy

Share your vision

Supporting mental health, challenging stigma and promoting wellbeing in the workplace can help your organisation deliver on its priorities. Your organisation's vision for mental health and wellbeing must be shared with your champions, so that they understand not just **what** you're asking them to do but also **why**.

Whether you are taking part in the See Me in Work programme and developing an improvement plan, or working on a strategy internally, we recommend that you include your champions' input in building this vision. Allowing more contribution and ownership of organisational objectives will help maintain enthusiasm and engagement.

1

Share your improvement plan and/or strategy with your champions so they know what you want to achieve.

2

Take the time to know what your champions want to achieve, and see how this fits with your vision and plans.



Support, support and more support

If your workplace champions are taking on this role voluntarily whilst remaining responsible for their normal role, this can potentially lead to pressure, symptoms of stress and challenges with time management, which in turn could have a negative impact on their mental health. You can ensure your champions' wellbeing by providing them with the right support and resources to achieve the outcomes they are working towards.



When you support your champions' wellbeing, it demonstrates the value of a their contribution and encourages others to take on the role. You can never have enough motivated and empowered champions!

Encourage champions to fill in a Wellness Action Plan, especially if they have disclosed any experience of mental health problems so that their line managers and the Champions Network know how to support each champion. You can find templates and guidance for this in the key resources section.

1

Communicate to line managers that they need to support champions by giving them time to be able to carry out the role, and that this is for the good of the whole organisation. The times may need to be flexible depending on the activities that champions undertake. For example, they may need more time to prepare for activities to support your work around key dates such as Time to Talk Day or World Mental Health Day.

2

Encourage peer support amongst champions by enabling them to meet up as a group regularly, consistently and as frequently and practically as they need to. It may be helpful to allocate time for this as part of the role, e.g. one-half day per month.

3

There might not be an allocated budget, but prioritising their activities through in-kind support, or if funds or other resources do become available, is very important.

4

Always encourage champions to prioritise their wellbeing, as well as supporting them in developing key skills such as managing their workload – or balancing two roles!

Incorporate people who have experience of mental health problems in your plans, processes and policy reviews associated with mental health

This principle can be really powerful because sharing people's stories is proven to make a big impact in changing workplace culture around mental health. It is a way to get people talking about mental health as people start to recognise symptoms that they, or people they know, may be experiencing when they hear about someone else's experiences.

Often people do not realise that their colleagues, friends or family might need help. Your champions are a great way to reach people you may not otherwise, and can generate these much-needed conversations about mental health.

You can also demonstrate your commitment towards using personal experience of mental health problems as a driver to shape and inform your work, by consulting champions that have disclosed personal experience and are comfortable talking about this, to give feedback on how your plans and policies may affect them, with consideration to their mental health problem.

1

Find out if champions would feel comfortable sharing their stories, and ask them how you can support them to do so.

2

Identify a piece of work that could benefit from input from a person who has experienced mental health problems. For example: relevant policies; the organisation's annual objectives; guiding how different teams and departments can introduce mental health related activities, thus supporting champions to work with them. Alternatively, you can consider representation of champions for each team or department.

3

Identify which teams or departments will find it challenging to use real experiences of mental health problems, and work with champions to make the conversation fair between teams or departments. Consider how a team structured with roles that are not desk-based or that have no access to a PC might struggle to take part in the same way that other teams do, and how you and your champions may be able to solve this problem.

Show champions you value them

We all like to feel that we are needed, important and significant, and that we are making a difference. Feeling this way keeps us motivated, enthusiastic and passionate because it gives us a sense of purpose and belonging. The same principle will apply to your champions. Ideally, you want to build a network of fully engaged champions who want to do their best to improve wellbeing, by eliminating mental health stigma and discrimination, and encouraging normalising the conversation about mental health.

1

Demonstrate that you value your champions' contributions by celebrating their achievements across the organisation.

2

Include celebrating their achievements during supervisions, one-to-one meetings and appraisals. We recommend adding associated objectives to a champion's personal development plan.

3

Take note of what champions tell you, and learn from their experience. Then go on to show them how you have used these experiences for the organisation's benefit.

4

Champions want to see they are making a difference, and you can help them to see this by being transparent about data and surveys, and demonstrating how champions have attributed / impacted on some positive outcomes.



Empower your champions and benefit from their potential

Empower your champions by gauging what skills, abilities and strengths they can bring to the table; then ask them how they could be empowered to put their strengths forward in delivering activities they feel confident in.

This can result in an innovative set of activities delivered by champions, which generate some great conversations about mental health within your organisation.

1

Gauge what skills, abilities and strengths champions have, and how they would like to use these to start conversations.

2

Encourage champions to be creative and innovative in terms of the activities that they want to do.

3

Encourage champions to plan for the year ahead, and to streamline activity accordingly. For example, ask champions to think about what they want to deliver during key times, and how they will keep the momentum going by delivering on a smaller scale in between key dates.



Always keep in mind what truly motivates your champions

Employees who express an interest in the role are usually motivated from the outset. This is because they tend to be driven by their personal experience, or having cared for someone with a mental health problem. Showing you understand what motivates your champions is a great way to mirror that you, as the organisation, are also motivated. This can demonstrate that your organisation values speaking about mental health, and supports those champions who speak out about their personal experiences.



As part of your workplace champions strategy, under how you will support them, include a focus on how to keep champions motivated for the long term. Foundations for that include:

1

Champions will remain motivated if they continue to enjoy **WHAT** they do and **WHY** they do it.

2

Champions who are supported to deliver the role to the best of their skills and abilities tend to stay motivated and committed to making that difference to the organisation and its employees.

3

Encouraging a goal-setting approach can help champions to look back over what they have achieved, and remain motivated to keep going if they face any barriers or challenges. Goals can be both organisational and personal; for example, if a champion wanted to use their role to help them develop their confidence in public speaking.

Manage champions' motivations against the current organisational context

Whilst people's knowledge and understanding of mental health is increasing, it is still something that is mired by stigma. More needs to be done to change how we all think and act in regard to mental health, mental health problems and mental illness.

It is important to take into account that most champions tend to be motivated because of their personal experiences and are, therefore, enthusiastic and passionate. It is worth managing their expectations in terms of how their activities/agenda may be received by colleagues, especially if your organisation is very new to approaching the subject of mental health.



If your organisation can support champions in pitching their activities right, it is more likely to have an impact overall and not de-motivate champions in the process with what could be interpreted as lukewarm receptiveness to their passions and efforts.

1

As an organisation, ask yourself the difficult question of 'where your organisation is at in terms of receptiveness and needs around mental health'. If you are taking part in the See Me in Work programme, the results of the staff survey will give valuable insights into this area.

Consider solutions; for example, do employees have access to a basic peer support network? You could support your champions to coordinate this. The more innovative and creative the network, the more likely it is to succeed.

2

Help champions to pitch their conversation starters from a point that employees are likely to be receptive to that activity. For example, if your organisation is new to speaking openly about mental health problems, it might be better for champions to start with the Power of Okay campaign first.

Help champions to understand how your organisation is growing so that they can support their colleagues more effectively

Champions need to understand how your organisation is growing and changing, and the potential impact that growth could have on their colleagues' mental health. This way, they can support by designing and delivering activities that adequately respond to needs they identify.

For example, a change management process that involves redundancy might create anxiety for some employees. So champions can amplify material promoting internal support services such as an Employee Assistance Programme, HR information and external resources from organisations like SAMH and Citizens Advice.

1

Inform the champions network of plans around organisational change, and ask for feedback on the potential impact on colleagues' mental health.

2

Where the organisation is undergoing a critical process, such as change management, take advice from champions to inform your strategy for coping with the impact on employees' mental health as a result of it.

3

Invest in supporting opportunities for employees to have open and honest conversations about mental health.

Key resources and reading

- **Anti-Stigma Workplace Champions – A Spotlight On, See Me:**
www.seemescotland.org/media/fslbhv5g/see-me-spotlight-on-resource-8_final.pdf
- **Case study: A community champion creating change in his workplace, See Me:**
<https://report.seemescotland.org/gary-macdonald>
- **Guide for employees: Wellness Action Plans (WAPs), Mind:**
www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5760/mind-guide-for-employees-wellness-action-plans_final.pdf
- **Let's Chat Tool, See Me:**
www.seemescotland.org/workplace/resources-and-e-learning/tools-and-packs/
- **Peer Group Facilitation Guides, Scottish Recovery Network:**
www.scottishrecovery.net/get-your-free-peer-group-facilitation-guides-during-co-production-week
- **See Us Movement: Everything you need to take action in the workplace, See Me:**
www.seemescotland.org/seeus/
- **The impact of real stories, See Me:**
www.seemescotland.org/media/10033/the-impact-of-real-stories.pdf
- **The Power of Okay campaign, See Me:**
www.seemescotland.org/seeus/campaigns/power-of-okay
- **Workplace Mental Health Champions, Mind:**
www.mind.org.uk/media-a/6077/section-two_workplace.pdf

Find out how See Me in Work can help your organisation at:

www.seemescotland.org

Phone: 0141 530 1111

Email: info@seemescotland.org

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