

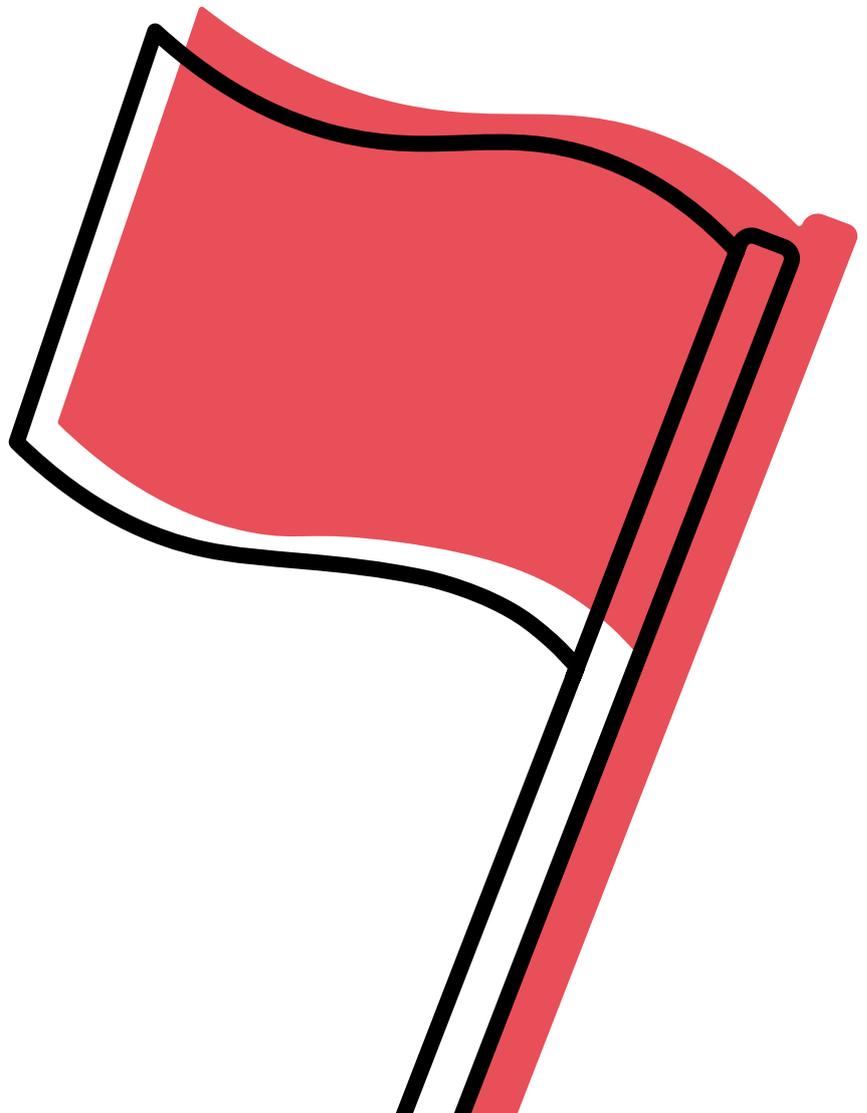
**time to change**

**Wales**

let's end mental health discrimination

Employer Pledge

# Supporting your Champions



## **A Guide to Supporting your Champions**

We have put this guide together to support you to get the most from your Employee Champions.

The following guiding principles are designed to help you support and engage with your Champions to be the best they can.

This resource has been developed by Time to Change in England and adapted to a Welsh audience.

### **Principle One**

Share your Vision

### **Principle Two**

Support, Support and more Support

### **Principle Three**

Always consider how you can incorporate people who have experience of mental health problems in your processes associated with mental health

### **Principle Four**

Show Champions you value them

### **Principle Five**

Empower your Champions and benefit from their potential

### **Principle Six**

Always keep in mind what truly motivates your Champions

### **Principle Seven**

Manage Champions' motivations against the current organisational context

### **Principle Eight**

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



## Why Support Your Champions?

Staff members can support your organisation's work with the Time to Change Wales campaign by signing up to be an Employee Champion. We know that mental health is an issue your organisation can't afford to ignore:

**1 in 6 British workers are affected by conditions like anxiety, depression and stress every year**

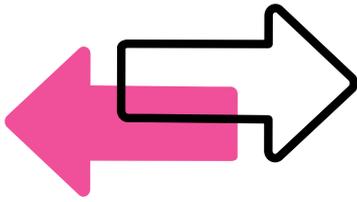
**Mental ill-health is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, costing an average of £1,035 per employee per year**

**95% of employees calling in sick with stress gave a different reason**

Having Employee 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 a normal 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 regards to engagement and retention.

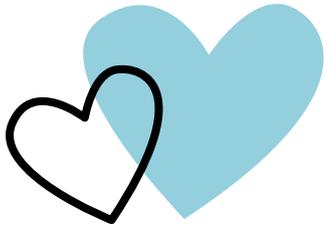


## **Principle One:** Share your Vision

It is really important that your organisation's vision for mental health and wellbeing is shared with your Champions.

We recommend that you include their input in building this vision, allowing for more contribution and ownership of the actions you have pledged to achieve.

1. Share your action plan with your Champions so that 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.



## Principle Two: Support, Support and more Support

Champions will be taking on this role on a voluntary basis 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 in order to achieve the outcomes they are working towards.

When you support your Champions' wellbeing, it demonstrates the value of a Champion's 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 so that their Line Managers and the Champions Network know how to support each individual Champion. You can download templates and guidance here. [\[link here\]](#)

1. Communicate to Line Managers that they need to support Champions by giving them time to be able to do 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.
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 to develop key skills such as managing their workload - or balancing two roles!



### **Principle Three:**

**Always consider how you can incorporate people who have experience of mental health problems in your processes 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 maybe 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 otherwise not 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 with personal experience to feedback on how your plans and policies may affect them with consideration to their mental health problem.

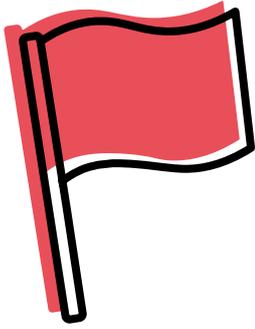
1. Find out if Champions would feel comfortable sharing their stories and ask them how you can support them to do so.
2. Identify a piece of work that could benefit from input from a person who experienced mental health problems. For example: relevant policies; the organisation's annual objectives; guiding 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 experience of mental health problems and work with Champions to make the conversation more equitable between teams or departments. Consider how a team structured like Finance might struggle to take part in the same way that Health and Wellbeing might not and how you and your Champions may be able to solve this problem.



## Principle Four: 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 provides us with a sense of purpose and belonging. The same principle will apply to your Champions. Ideally, we want you to build a network of fully engaged Champions who want to do the best to improve wellbeing through eliminating stigma of mental health problems, encouraging normalising the conversation about mental health.

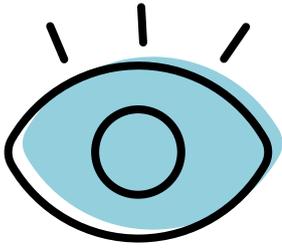
1. Demonstrate you value your Champions' contributions by celebrating their achievements across the organisation.
2. Include celebrating their achievements during supervisions, one to ones and appraisals. We recommend adding associated objectives to a Champion's personal development plan.
3. Take note of what Champions tell you and learn from their experience. Then go on to show them how you have utilised that gained experience for the benefit of the organisation.
4. Champions want to see they are making a difference, and you can help them to see this by being transparent about data, surveys, and demonstrate how Champions have attributed / impacted on some positive outcomes.



## **Principle Five:** Empower your Champions and benefit from their potential

Empower your Champions by gauging what skills, abilities and strengths Champions can bring to the table and then ask them how they could be empowered to put their strengths forward in delivering activity 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 and abilities and strengths Champions have and would like to use 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 would like to deliver during key times and how they will keep the momentum going by delivering on a smaller scale in between key dates.



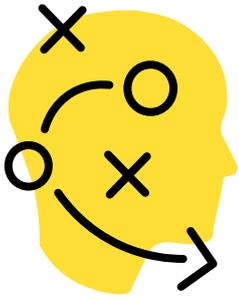
## **Principle Six:** Always keep in mind what truly motivates your Champions

Staff members who express an interest for the role are usually motivated from the outset. This is because they tend to be driven by either their personal experience, or have cared for someone with a mental health problem.

Showing that 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 not only values speaking about mental health but also values their Champions who speak out about their personal experiences.

As part of your Employee Champions strategy under how you will support them, include a focus on how to keep Champions motivated for the long term taking note of the following points as a foundation for that part of the strategy:

1. Champions will remain motivated if they continue to enjoy WHAT they do and WHY they do it.
2. Champions who are empowered to deliver the role to the best of their skills and abilities, tend to also stay motivated and committed to making that difference to the organisation and its employees.



## **Principle Seven:** Manage Champions' motivations against the current organisational context

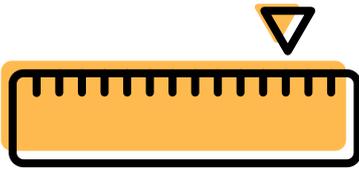
Whilst people's knowledge and understanding of mental health is increasing, it is still something that is mired by stigma. Work remains needed to change the way we all think and act about mental health.

It is important to take into account that most Champions tend to be motivated because of their personal experiences and are, therefore, suitably enthusiastic and passionate.

It is worth managing their expectations in terms of how their activities / agenda maybe received by colleagues, especially if your organisation is very new to approaching the subject of mental health.

If your organisation can support Champions to pitch their activities right, it is more likely to have 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. Consider solutions, for example, do employees have access to a basic peer support network run by their peers? You could support your Champions to coordinate this innovatively and creatively.
2. Help Champions to pitch their conversation starters from a point that employees are likely to be receptive to that activity. For example, it might be better for Champions to campaign and increase an information base that can be safely accessed over a one to one drop in for colleagues if your organisation is new to speaking openly about mental health problems.



## Principle Eight:

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 the potential impact that growth could have on their colleague's mental health. This way they can support by designing and delivering activities that adequately respond to needs they identify.

For example, during a change management process Champions can amplify material promoting internal support services such as an Employee Assistance Programme.

1. Inform the Champion network of plans around organisational growth and ask for feedback on the potential impact on colleague's mental health.
2. Where the organisation is undergoing a critical process such as change management take support from Champions to inform your strategy in coping with the impact on employee's mental health as a result of it.

**Be part of Time to Change Wales' movement for change in workplace mental health.**

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