

Why we signed the pledge

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, we knew it was very important that we signed the Time to Change Wales Pledge to help us build on the existing mental health support we had in place and for staff to consider new ways of tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Therefore, a commitment was made to sign the Pledge in our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024. Since the start of the pandemic, this work has become increasingly important as staff have experienced huge changes and challenges over the last couple of years – including those who have been working on the frontline as well as those who have been working from home.

It's been a couple of months since we've signed the Pledge and we're still in the early stages of implementation. We kicked things off at our Manager Forum, where over 50 managers heard about Time to Change Wales as part of the Pledge signing process. We've identified over 30 Employee Champions who will be leading on this programme across the organisation.

Time to Change Wales have supported us with training for our Employee Champions and we arranged an amazing action-packed day on February 3, to celebrate Time to Talk Day, where we formally launched our programme with staff by offering a range of activities and talks to support mental wellbeing, including sessions on mental health awareness, yoga, qigong, nordic walking, reading well, healthy eating and managing the menopause. Over 250 staff attended the sessions.

How to promote mental health awareness

Since signing the Pledge, we have maintained regular communication and awareness about Time to Change Wales within the organization. We recorded many of the activities and talks from Time to Talk Day as we intend to share them with staff who couldn't attend on the day. We've created a promotional video using Biteable to share with staff as part of the programme launch and will be promoting this further in the coming weeks and months. We'll continue to use our monthly Staff Briefings and emails to all staff to raise awareness of the programme and invite staff to get involved and share their stories about their own mental health experiences.

At our first Employee Champion meeting, we will be discussing our Time to Change Wales Action Plan and will explore with Champions on how we can create further opportunities within their own work areas as well as corporately to have open and honest conversations about mental wellbeing. We received great feedback from attendees of Time to Talk Day sessions and will listen to staff to shape how we promote mental health awareness across the organisation going forward:

- *"The planning, the variety of information available, the expert trainers, the preparation and enjoyment for those who attended was exemplary"*
- *"The programme was great – lots of variety and important topics covered"*
- *"The nurse at my local surgery was very impressed that you'd included a session on the menopause!"*

We're looking forward to harnessing the passion we've already experienced from participants to help break down mental health stigmas in our organisation.

How this helps the workplace

Our Time to Change Wales Action Plan includes looking at our existing support mechanisms for staff and ensuring that staff are aware of what is already available to support their mental wellbeing. We're also keen to give our newly appointed Employee Champions the opportunity to shape the direction of the programme within our organisation.

Some of the actions we've identified include: having an event calendar with bi-annual events across the organisation as well as more regular 'local' activities led by Employee Champions within services; exploring the possibility of developing a space (e.g. a blog) for people to share their mental health experiences; normalising mental health conversations as part of the supervision/appraisal process, working with our existing staff support providers (e.g. Occupational Health, Care First) to build on and promote existing resources to ensure staff are aware of what's available to them; and ongoing recruitment and development of Employee Champions across the organisation. We will meet with our Employee Champions at least quarterly to keep the momentum going and provide support for them too. We also intend to review progress after 12 months and report back to the Management Team.