

Time to Change Wales – case study

At Wales & West Utilities, we don't sell gas; instead, we use our network of over 35,000 kilometres of pipes to transport gas to homes and businesses throughout Wales and the southwest of England. Every day, our team of more than 1,900 skilled and dedicated colleagues work diligently to serve a population of 7.5 million people, keeping customers safe and warm, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

1. Why did you sign the Employer Pledge?

Wales & West Utilities originally signed the Employer Pledge in 2018. We were making strides to support colleagues' mental health at the time and wanted to formalise our commitment to doing this within the excellent framework the pledge provided. Our dedication in this space meant we met many of the commitments at pace and so we chose to refresh our pledge in 2025, which we published internally alongside Time to Talk Day. This gave us the opportunity to align the refreshed commitments with our new Better Wellbeing Strategy and its action plan, as well as allowing our recently recruited Wellbeing Advisor to provide input. Our rationale behind refreshing the pledge in 2025 was clear and simple – work is never done when it comes to supporting mental health.

2. How do you promote mental health awareness?

Accessibility and effective communications have been central to this work. Our Internal Communications Team regularly publish content about wellbeing and mental health, including how to access support, drive engagement for events, and highlighting messaging from our senior leaders which reinforce the business's commitment to tackling stigma. Additionally, we recently centralised all the support service information in one easy to reach digital hub. Colleagues can log on to our benefits website and see a 'Better Wellbeing' section, which is further segmented into appropriate areas including mental and physical health. The information contained here includes contact numbers, access codes, website addresses and a directory of our Mental Health First Aiders. We strive to ensure colleagues are made aware of this information in a variety of ways, however, such as speaking at colleague events – we have ensured our Wellbeing Advisor has a protected slot at dozens of colleague events throughout the year to highlight all the support available to our people and answer any questions.

Beyond this, we understand that our managers play a key role in raising awareness of mental health. For that reason, we train all managers in psychological safety and ED&I awareness, as well as including a 'wellbeing' section in many of our in-house training sessions (something which is due to be expanded to more deeply explore mental health). Additionally, we have provided access to our EAP's Manager Consultation Service, from which they can receive advice on all-things management, including supporting a colleague's mental health. And they can refer colleagues (with consent) to the EAP, which we hope further removes a barrier to our people being supported appropriately.

3. What long-term actions will you take to enable a positive mental wellbeing environment in your workplace?

Our long-term approach to fostering a workplace of positive mental wellbeing aligns with our Better Wellbeing strategy, which we developed following colleague feedback and in accordance with our company values and behaviours. We firstly intend to expand our support provisions

where appropriate, to better meet the needs of our colleagues. Several pieces of work are already ongoing in service of this aim. These include:

- Bringing in a new trauma response process, following NICE guidelines and training specific colleagues to fulfil the role
- Refreshing our approach to mental health first aid and developing mental health responders, equipping them with specialist knowledge, such as support for carers and neurodiverse individuals; widening the scope of support and signposting knowledge available to our people
- Working with partners to expand training and skills for colleagues, especially our managers, in how to support oneself and others with mental health concerns. This would also cover topics such as mental health awareness, having supportive and empathetic conversations, and what to do if safety concerns arise
- Exploring partnership opportunities to deliver specialist interventions such as addiction support, to ensure our colleagues can request the appropriate help and continue working safely. Our work is safety critical, and we encourage colleagues to proactively come forward if they have concerns about drug or alcohol use while at work so we can support them

We will also be pushing consistent messaging to our people about mental health and wellbeing. Our Internal Communications Team will play a key role in this, as will the development of new ways of communicating. Our new wellbeing-focused internal magazine – *Thrive!* – is published quarterly and strives to balance recognising our colleagues and celebrating their achievements, with highlighting the support available to them. The magazine also allows us to reflect on events we hold in recognition of important wellbeing-themed campaigns. Additionally, we are in the process of developing Z-Cards, which will provide colleagues with a credit card-sized document with all the relevant support information, as well as being available digitally to increase accessibility.

Accountability plays a crucial part in much of this work. Alongside our refreshed 2024 Better Wellbeing Strategy, we published a 3-year action plan, outlining our commitments to implementation. This action plan informs the whole-business approach to wellbeing and is driven by our Wellbeing Advisor. Similarly, we refreshed our Time to Change Employer Pledge in 2025, and we will be reviewing and aligning our wellbeing work with the commitments made in the pledge over the years to come.

Finally, we also place priority on collaborative work. Our main example of this in the wellbeing space is working with the other three UK Gas Distribution Networks. We recently held our first all-GDN step challenge, which was a fantastic success in stimulating colleague engagement. We intend to continue these joint projects and expand this work, with two collaborative events planned for 2025, one of which will recognise Mental Health Awareness Week. This will not only give us the opportunity to signpost our colleagues to support, but we will be able to highlight that colleagues are not alone in the challenges they face – mental health is a national concern and deserves to be recognised.