



York Ending Stigma

Let's Talk Mental Health at Work



“I’ve worked for a wide range of organisations, some of which have left me with poor mental health due to the culture, management and organisation expectations. This led to stress, burnout, a feeling of being ashamed that I ‘couldn’t cope’, and a fear of going to work. I’m lucky now as I work for a fantastic organisation and I want to concentrate on the positives.” A York Ending Stigma Champion

Many of us spend a lot of time at work, or trying to return to work, so we’re sharing our experiences of what helps to keep us mentally well at work. We are all unique, as people and in terms of the employment that we undertake, and therefore not all of our tips and experiences will apply to you and your colleagues, but we hope that you can pick and choose the ones that do, and that you find them useful.

Our top tips for a mentally healthy workplace



- Honest two-way communication between managers and staff – managers are available and listen to employees, but don’t micromanage



“I was micromanaged, which really impacted my performance levels and certainly my stress levels. I started to make mistakes that were really uncharacteristic for me.” YES Champion Lauren



- Create jobs/roles that have a sense of purpose for the employee
- Training for staff on the subject of mental illness at work
- Create a workplace culture where employees feel valued and respected at work



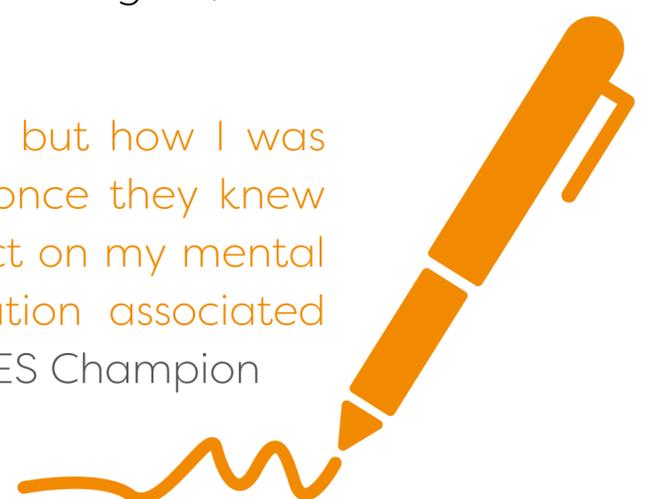
“The themes are always the same; poor line management, a performance driven culture where honesty, a person-centred approach and kindness are not valued (even, or especially, when the organisation has values that say they do) and a lack of open communication.” A YES Champion



- Create a workplace culture that fosters social connections at work
- Create a positive environment where colleagues feel they can relax and enjoy work
- Validate and have a positive attitude towards all colleagues, including those with poor mental health

“My mental ill-health had nothing to do with my work, but how I was subsequently treated by my employer and colleagues once they knew about my mental illness had an incredibly negative affect on my mental health. The misunderstandings, stigma, and discrimination associated with mental illness in the workplace need to change.” A YES Champion

#StigmaStillExists





- Provide flexible working arrangements
- Avoid insecure / short term job contracts
- Avoid unmanageable targets and workloads
- Employers setting realistic boundaries and expectations at work
- Foster an open culture where it is ok to talk about mental illness, work successes, and work failures

“Not being silenced or judged - not being silenced, but equally not being forced to share or ‘overshare’ at work. My most trusted confidants are friends outside of work, but my colleagues play a huge part in keeping me well. For me, knowing that I could talk about my mental ill-health to some colleagues is preventative.” A YES Champion



- Provide employees with a sense of control, trust, autonomy, and a ‘voice’ at work

“When I disclosed my mental illness, they did the best thing that an employer has done for me, they listened to me without judgement and asked me what they could do to help me at work with my mental health.” YES Champion



Although workplaces have improved, we think that there is still far too much mental health stigma and discrimination at work. There are many well-meaning and good initiatives such as Mental Health First Aiders, Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), and ‘wellbeing’ initiatives, but, as Champions with experience of mental ill-health, we’re not convinced that these alone are that effective at solving mental ill-health at work and related absences from work. We believe that it is the much simpler, yet harder to quantify, everyday positive human interactions at work that really help to keep us mentally well; sharing an impromptu joke with a colleague and feeling valued by our managers can make a huge positive difference to us all. Perhaps it is a combination of what works best for each of us on a case by case basis that is the most effective.

Use our York Ending Stigma Employer Framework and become a York Ending Stigma Employer Champion

Some of our York Ending Stigma Champions with experience of poor mental health, and our steering group members, have created this self-assessment tool and framework [insert link] free for you to use to help your workplace to become mental health stigma-free. To find out more about us please refer to our website (www.yorkcvs.org.uk/york-ending-stigma) or email yes@yorkcvs.org.uk to arrange a conversation with us. Working with us demonstrates that you want to make a commitment to change, gives you access to our lived experience Champions, and access to knowledge sharing and best practice.

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Other resources

Below are links to some resources (certainly not exhaustive) that we think may be of use to help determine what may work for you and your colleagues:



- [My Whole Self · MHFA England](#)
- [Home – Mental Health At Work](#)
- [This is Me | This is Me Yorkshire](#)
- [mind-wellness-action-plan-workplace.pdf](#)

