



Workplace Partnership



Supporting your Workplace Champions

Use the following guiding principles to support and engage your champions

Having Workplace Champions in place can support your organisation's partnership working. It will enable you to develop a supportive workplace culture and make a difference to the lives of colleagues. It can help to make mental health a normal topic of conversation, dispel myths and make it easier for people to seek support.

The principles can help you to focus on how you support your champions and keep them engaged and empowered for the long term.



Share your vision

It is important that you share your vision for mental health and wellbeing with your champions. We recommend that you share your action plan and get some input into the objectives that you are working towards.

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





Provide 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 and symptoms of stress. There could also be issues with time management, which could impact on their mental health. Consider how to provide the right support and resources, in order to achieve the outcomes they are working towards. You can never have enough motivated and empowered champions!

- Encourage your champions to fill in a Wellness Action Plan (template here) so that you know how to support them
- Communicate the role to line managers so that they can be supported in their role. Champions may need time to attend Action Group meetings or prepare for events or activities for example in Mental Health Awareness Week each year in May
- Encourage peer support amongst the Champions by enabling them to meet as a group regularly
- Although it may not be possible to have much funding available there may be scope to have a small, dedicated budget or an opportunity to put forward ideas, with the budget required, to a senior team
- Encourage Champions to prioritise their own wellbeing, alongside managing their own workload



Consider how you can incorporate people with lived experience of mental health problems

Sharing 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 experience.

Often people do not know that their colleagues, friends or family members may need help. Having Champions is a great way to reach people that communities might otherwise not reach and can at least start these much needed conversations.

Try these ideas:

- Find out if any Champions would feel comfortable sharing their story with others and ask how you could support them to do that
- Identify a piece of work that could benefit from the input of a person with lived experience eg relevant policies or procedures
- Identify if any teams/ departments find it difficult talking about mental health and consider what activities, training, awareness etc might help and how the Champions could assist with this





Show you value your Champions

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 belonging and purpose. Ideally you want to build a network of engaged Champions who want to improve wellbeing and normalise the conversations around mental health.

- Demonstrate that you value your Champions' contribution and their involvement
- Use one to one meetings and appraisals to praise your Champions for their commitment It would be good to add this to a personal development plan
- If Champions feed back any observations or suggestions thank them, listen to what they have to say and explain what action you might take
- Help Champions see how they are making a difference by being transparent about data, surveys, change in culture etc and how their role has attributed to positive outcomes



Empower and motivate your Champions

Staff who volunteer for this role are likely to be motivated by a personal experience or that of a friend or family member. By showing that you understand what motivates your Champion it is a great way to show that your organisation values the role.

Keep in mind that Champions who are empowered will tend to stay motivated and committed to making a difference to the organisation and its employees. Support them to understand and enjoy what they do and why they do it.

- Gauge what skills and strengths they have and offer learning opportunities where required
- Encourage them to be creative and innovative
- Promote the opportunity for them to think ahead, plan things in and keep momentum going



Manage expectations

It is worth managing your Champion's expectations in terms of how activities may be received by colleagues, especially if your organisation is relatively new to managing mental health.

If Champions get a lukewarm reception to ideas and initiatives it may be demotivating so Champions may need extra help and support at the outset to pitch their ideas in a way that will gain traction.

Help Champions to pitch ideas that are likely to be well received to begin with and increase the involvement slowly over time.





Keep your Champions well informed and involved

Champions need to understand what is going on in your organisation so they can use this information to help and support colleagues . Keep them abreast of what the organisation has in place such as healthcare provider, EAP, Mental Health First Aiders etc.

During a period of change Champions can support a project, to support the potential impact on employees mental health. Champions could also help to inform strategy and policy changes.

