

Making a Difference

These comments were gathered in October 2009, to mark the 5th anniversary of MINDFUL EMPLOYER.

MINDFUL EMPLOYER commitment has raised awareness of mental health issues with staff at ACER. We are only a small company, but signed up for the Charter to promote wellbeing amongst our employees. We have now extended this further and encouraged our member further education colleges in the Eastern region to sign up. 5 have already made the commitment and many others are planning to join. It has been a very useful experience for us and I'm sure MINDFUL EMPLOYER will grow from strength to strength in years to come.

Debbie Dear, Deputy Chief Executive, ACER (Association of Colleges in Eastern Region)

We employ more than 150 staff and provide a range of services to over 550 people. As a mental health organisation we signed up to the MINDFUL EMPLOYER Charter in August 2007, and have just been through our first review. We have found the standards in the Charter fit very well with our aims and values. We have used the Charter as a toolkit to check our employment practices and to help us promote good mental health at work. Some of the changes we have made since signing up to the Charter are:

- Including positive statements in all our recruitment literature about encouraging applicants with lived experience.
- Introducing a new post "Peer Support Assistant" which promotes recovery based on lived experience.
- Implemented an Employee Assistance Programme for all employees and their families.
- Trained our HR department in Mental Health First Aid
- Trained all interviewers in mental health awareness and the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Increased the amount of reasonable adjustments made, and improved our expertise in this.

On a practical level the Charter aims have certainly helped us drive forward some real improvements. The resources available via MINDFUL EMPLOYER such as the SHIFT Line Managers Resource have also been really useful in supporting us to continue to increase awareness about mental health at work.

Gill Pickford, Head of Quality Services, Second Step

Over the past 5 years we have seen an unprecedented number of organisations across the nation open their minds on the issue of mental health in the workplace, something that affects 1 in 4 people in society at some point in their lives and is therefore currently being experienced by up to 25% of your workforce. Are you being a MINDFUL EMPLOYER to seek out creative ways that can help you sustain the health and productivity of your workforce? Some of your competitors/organisations in your sector are.

Darran Armitage, Associate Director HR & OD, Devon Partnership NHS Trust

The MINDFUL EMPLOYER initiative has enabled us to have a greater focus on mental health issues within the organisation, and in particular identify clearer management actions needed to promote good mental health, and given managers greater confidence to address these issues.

Alistair Macintosh, Executive Director, Exeter Community Initiatives

We have all fundamentally agreed that the organization can only benefit in working towards this accreditation. The process of achieving MINDFUL EMPLOYER status at Horton Housing Association (HHA) will no doubt raise awareness of mental health issues in the workplace and identify levels of stress

that do need to be addressed. The initiative will allow (hopefully) employees to be more 'comfortable' and 'open' about talking about mental health issues. The performance of employees should increase as in times of high stress the organization will support the individual employee and provide a channel of constructive help and be solution-focused in its approach. HHA's approach to recruiting disabled employees will also raise the profile of helping certain individuals back into work that are often marginalized by society. The support base and encouragement within HHA will make employees feel more understood and supported under MINDFUL EMPLOYER.

Paul E. Gartland, Service Director, Horton Housing Association

Being a member of MINDFUL EMPLOYER has helped remind me to promote mental health and wellbeing to the companies I meet simply through mentioning your initiative. As a result spreading the word has become easier, and a topic that can sometimes be seen as a sensitive one is now easier to talk about, thanks to your groundbreaking initiative.

Karen Kimberley, Communication Coach and Hypnotherapist, Karen Kimberley Ltd

As a recent signatory to the MINDFUL EMPLOYER initiative, I feel that this has helped the Trust to think pro-actively about the way in which it supports staff with mental health problems. It has also enabled us to discuss this sensitive area of work at a wide range of Trust meetings and to publicise it widely through the Trust newspaper and other media. We still have significant work to do in progressing our commitment, but feel that signing up to MINDFUL EMPLOYER has helped to raise this issue further up our agenda.

Denise Langley, Assistant Director of Human Resources, United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust

Richmond Fellowship is delighted to be able to display the MINDFUL EMPLOYER Logo. It provides a clear message both to employees and to those who are seeking work that we have a positive and enabling attitude - that we are actively engaging with the MINDFUL EMPLOYER principles. Those principles fully reflect Richmond Fellowship's recovery and social inclusion values. For people with mental health problems to achieve social inclusion, we know through 50 years as a mental health service provider how critical it is that a growing number of employers embrace these principles.

Stuart Riggall, Director of Central Services, Richmond Fellowship

Scarborough & North East Yorkshire Healthcare NHS Trust became a MINDFUL EMPLOYER late December 2007 as the Trust prides itself on being an equal opportunities employer and includes staff with mental health issues and wanted to participate in this excellent initiative. Since then, in conjunction with the Trust Occupational Health Department, we have run awareness sessions for our managers in the context of being a MINDFUL EMPLOYER which includes a definition of mental health, signs and symptoms of both positive and poor wellbeing and the impact of not handling the situation on the individual, other staff and patients and early interventions. Becoming a MINDFUL EMPLOYER was the Trust prompt to run these awareness sessions.

Helen Long, Divisional Human Resources Manager, Scarborough & North East Yorkshire Healthcare NHS Trust

As publishers of *One in Four*, England's first national, aspirational, lifestyle magazine for people with mental health difficulties, being able to show the MINDFUL EMPLOYER logo helps Social Spider CIC to publicise and advertise our commitment to a better deal for all people who experience mental health difficulties.

Mark Brown, Editor, One in Four, Social Spider CIC

Richmond Fellowship Wiltshire is proud to manage the Swindon MINDFUL EMPLOYER Network working closely with NHS Swindon. Staging regular network meetings and a launch conference we have seen an increase in employers engaging in our activities. What is particularly pleasing is the response to the work. In a recent meeting with a local influencer he indicated that the conference had changed his understanding of mental health. He was able to identify symptoms of stress and depression in members of staff and help arrange coping strategies for those affected. MINDFUL EMPLOYER has taken off in Swindon but we know we face considerable challenges especially during uncertain economic times. We believe MINDFUL EMPLOYER has the appeal and flexibility to face those challenges!

David Latham, Richmond Fellowship Wiltshire

NHS Swindon is proud to be part of the MINDFUL EMPLOYER initiative. The sharing of experience and learning from other organisations is invaluable in enabling us to ensure appropriate awareness raised and advice and guidance provided to potential and existing employees and their managers to help reduce mental health concerns and issues in the workplace. We have used information to inform our policies and procedures including Stress Management, Attendance Management and Recruitment and Retention, linked positive action into our workforce objectives and action planning, and also are working closely with local organisations such as Stepping Stones and Richmond Fellowship to explore options regarding return into employment for individuals with mental health issues.

Chris Howells, Head of HR & Corrina Evans, Health & Safety Advisor, NHS Swindon

South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) has proudly displayed and publicised our commitment to MINDFUL EMPLOYER and we have succeeded in encouraging our partner health and social care organisations in South Essex to join us in making the statement that we as major employers in the area are positive about the employment of people with mental health problems. We also see Mindful Employer as a key component of our public health promotion agenda. The MINDFUL EMPLOYER initiative has been a great way of engaging with our local communities and helping local businesses understand mental illness, thereby combating stigma and discrimination based on ignorance. MINDFUL EMPLOYER has been useful in helping managers and colleagues to understand and support people in their organisations who experience mental ill-health from time to time, and SEPT has demonstrated the benefits of supporting people appropriately and effectively to continue in employment through the provision of flexible working options. The people working at SEPT are our greatest asset and MINDFUL EMPLOYER has helped us to value each person's contribution and recognise that the organisation as a whole is enriched by the support we give to one another.

Jan Hutchinson , Vocational Services Manager, South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Being a part of MINDFUL EMPLOYER and promoting mental health in the workplace has led to an awareness of the valuable contribution that employees with mental health conditions can make. It has given the Trust the means to encourage staff and get the best from them whilst protecting from any specific factors that could work against them or ultimately do harm.

Christopher Chapman, Equalities Officer, County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

For many people experiencing mental health issues and considering returning work the issue of making a declaration about their experience causes no little anxiety. Concern that they may be rejected at the first hurdle if they do declare and concern that they may not get the support they require if they don't. MINDFUL EMPLOYER has made a major contribution in encouraging employers to proactively address psychological well being in their workplaces and in their recruitment practices. The simple act of an employer carrying the MINDFUL EMPLOYER logo is a powerful sign that psychological wellbeing is on

the agenda both for current and prospective employees. Pluss is proud to be a charter signatory and will continue to support the development of MINDFUL EMPLOYER.

Tom Bromwich, General Manager, PLUSS

As our work is with people who experience anxiety/stress through to long-term mental health problems, we recognise the great importance of employers doing all they can to help/support their employees when they are going through an emotionally difficult time.

Sheila Chesney, Chief Executive, Basildon Mind