

Leeds Mindful Employer



Objective:

Supports employers and employees in understanding and addressing poor mental health, promoting mental health-positive practices in the workplace.

Rationale

- **Mental Health in the UK:** Over half of work-related ill health stems from stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Impact:** Poor mental health reduces productivity and increases absenteeism. Linked to worse physical health and health inequalities.
- **Local Statistics:** In the Leeds Suicide Audit (2019-21), 22% of suicides were linked to work-related issues, highlighting the importance of workplace mental health support.

Background and Key Aims

Founded in 2013 to meet growing demand for workplace mental health support in Leeds. Commissioned by Leeds City Council's Public Health team at a cost of £39k, delivered by Leeds Mind to:

- **Promote mental health awareness:** Offering workshops, resources and support networks to raise awareness.
- **Provide practical tools:** Like the "Mindful Employer Ten Step Toolkit" to embed good mental health practices.
- **Encourage early intervention:** Reducing stigma and fostering open discussions around mental health.
- **Create sustainable well-being:** Establish healthier, long-term workplace environments for employees.

Approach:

Uses the national Mindful Employer strategies, delivering the following:

- Offering advice on reducing mental health stigma, promoting good mental health, and providing workplace support for employees with mental health issues.
- Supporting Leeds-based employers to become Mindful Employer Charter Signatories.
- Coordinating a Network of 450+ active employers across private, public, and third sectors.
- **Connects over 700 employers:** Promotes mental health and wellbeing, addressing the impact of poor mental health on absenteeism, presenteeism, and employee turnover.
- Promoting and evaluating the "10 Steps Toolkit" developed with local employers and tailoring mental health support for network members to implement in the workplace.
- Understanding and addressing the mental health training needs of the Network.
- Providing a link to local mental health support for both managers and employees.
- Using social media and digital platforms to promote mental health awareness and collaborate with local partners.
- Contributing to public health evidence and focusing on impactful and positive mental health interventions.



Current Priorities

- **Supporting low-paid and insecure workers:** Workers in these positions face greater mental health challenges.
- **COVID-19 Recovery:** Helping businesses support employees recovering from pandemic-related mental health issues.
- **Focusing on deprived areas:** Prioritising interventions in Leeds' most deprived communities where mental and physical health risks are highest.

Mindful Employer Ten Step Toolkit: Helps employers spot early signs of mental health struggles and start conversations, with tailored training to address specific needs such as financial stresses during the cost-of-living crisis

The ten steps

Engage with your employees, increase their awareness of mental health

- Step 1** Take stock of your workplace mental health.
- Step 2** Raise awareness of your commitment to creating a mentally healthy workplace.
- Step 3** Communicate the resources and support available. Ensure they can be easily accessed by all staff.
- Step 4** Increase awareness of mental health.

Help your employees to understand their role, building confidence and reducing stigma.

- Step 5** Tackle stigma in the workplace.
- Step 6** Ensure that staff understand their roles and feel valued.
- Step 7** Enable staff to develop skills and confidence to support each other.

Implement a solid approach to prevent bullying and discrimination and use a sustainable approach to supporting employees.

- Step 8** Minimise workplace stress.
- Step 9** Support employees with mental health difficulties to stay at or return to work.
- Step 10** Promote diversity and inclusion and take a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and bullying.

AW Hainsworth Case Study

AW Hainsworth, a heritage woolen mill founded in 1783, has been on an inspiring journey to improve workplace mental health since joining the Leeds Mindful Employer Network in October 2022. The company's HR Manager, who joined at the start of their involvement in the network, is passionate about supporting employee wellbeing.



Since working with Mindful Employer, key initiatives introduced include:

- Partnership with Unmasked Mental Health: Hosting monthly mental health sessions and offering onsite one-on-one counselling.
- Mental Health First Aiders: 25 employees (10% of the workforce) have been trained to identify mental health struggles and offer support.
- Promoting Open Conversations: Breaking the stigma around mental health, especially in a male-dominated industry.
- Employee Engagement: Initiatives like the "Hainsworth Harriers" running group encourage fitness and wellbeing.

"We've been tracking the percentage of staff attending counselling sessions and the Unmasked Mental Health meetings, and the numbers have been very positive. We're also analysing the reasons reported for staff absence and if they relate to mental health. It's not a foolproof method but it's providing a good indicator that our approach is encouraging a more open discussion about mental health across the business."

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