

Managing Mental Health within Rail

Case study: Delivering Psychoeducation Mental Health Stigma and Time to Change

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Abstract:

A 20-minute psychoeducational training was delivered to health and safety managers as part of a wider health and safety conference. The aim of the presentation was to improve knowledge around the causes, impact and management of mental health stigma and describe the RSSB Time to Change journey and how the company could get involved. The presentation was delivered during the health and safety conference and formed part of the wider programme looking at the development of wellbeing initiatives and the wider company direction. The material was well received and attendees reported increased knowledge of and confidence in discussing mental health issues. Managers also reported increased self-awareness and the necessity to recognise their own and others mental health symptoms following the presentation. Excellent feedback endorsed the presentation and provides encouragement for further delivery of such training to industry.

Background:

The appetite for improved mental health management within rail has grown an unprecedented amount over the last 18 months. Companies are now actively seeking input from mental health experts to speak at conferences, events and activities. Mental health is now considered an essential part of the agenda at events where line managers and those called upon to manage mental health will be attending.

As part of the RSSB mental health work-stream, a clear need to better the practice of mental health management was identified. Additionally as part of our stakeholder engagement the HWB team have been working with TOC Boards and SLTs in order to improve understanding of mental health and how to progress in these areas. Following one of these Board meetings, the trainer was asked to deliver some training as part of a wider Health and Safety conference agenda focusing on the area of mental health, stigma and the Time to Change journey.

Aims:

The aims of the training were to:

- Improve understanding of mental health disorders and sources of stigma
- Actively engage with delegates to promote mental health conversations in the workplace
- Understand Time to Change and the role that this can play in reducing mental health stigma

Participants:

75 Health and Safety managers from across the company attended the conference and the presentation. Across the business these managers were responsible for line-managing large teams and supporting individuals with mental health concerns and diagnoses. The majority of participants reported both personally experiencing and managing those who had experienced a mental health problem within the workplace. The participant demographics were mixed-gender and seniority including members of the SLT and Board.

Method:

A 20 minute psychoeducational training was delivered to the conference delegates, mainly comprising of managers at different levels. The training was based around the attached slides and was delivered by a Chartered Clinical Psychologist specialising in workplace wellness. The psychoeducation delivered had several key components:

- Explaining what was meant mental health.
- Examining a 'typical' response to a mental health disclosure, and the difficulties that can arise from this.
- Teaching participants to recognise symptoms of common mental health disorders including stress.
- Explaining the role of Time to Change in reducing stigma around mental health disclosures and emphasising the message of 'it's ok to not be ok'.

The session was followed by a session from the organisation about relevant support and help delivered by the company chaplain.

Results:

All participants reported an increased understanding of the importance of discussing mental health in the workplace and engaging in programmes such as Time to Change. Several participants also reported recognition of symptoms in colleagues they are working with which had gone 'unnoticed'.

Conclusion:

The presentations was popular, well received and delivered on its aims to improve the understanding of mental health and Time to Change. A recommendation is to widely deliver this presentation to other companies in order to improve their understanding and engagement, to develop a more consistent approach across the industry. Given the limited resources within the health and wellbeing team it is recommended that additional modes of delivery such as e-learning and resources are considered.

Discussion:

The anonymised feedback below is from Head of Safety and Environment and should be seen as an endorsement for the training to be more widely rolled out across industry

"Just a quick note to say thanks very much once again for giving up your time on Friday to make such an excellent presentation to our H&S reps conference. Your messages were genuinely powerful and really set people thinking about a subject that they may have ignored or shied away from in the past. You certainly threw down a challenge to us to make it OK to not be OK in our business, and indeed to make it OK to talk about not being OK, and I hope that we can rise to that challenge."

Feedback from both your presentation and the conference as a whole has been universally positive, and one of my Executive colleagues told me yesterday that listening to you made him realise he was a "dinosaur" and that he needed to start thinking about mental health as a serious topic when it hadn't really been on his agenda before. In discussion with the Exec team yesterday it is clear that you have put mental health much more firmly "on the map" for them all."