

Mind the *mental health* gap: Employees are THREE times more likely to discuss physical ailments over mental health issues at work

The disparity in physical and mental health at work is laid bare in new research from the ‘Where’s Your Head At?’ campaign, as it launches its new Workplace Manifesto¹ ahead of Mental Health Awareness Week (13-19 May 2019). A OnePoll survey of 2,000 employed adults reveals that, on average, 42% of employees feel comfortable discussing prevalent physical conditions, compared to just 14% who feel they can talk about common mental health issues.

Commissioned by Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England and Bauer Media UK for the ‘Where’s Your Head At?’ campaign, the research also shows that:

- Only around 1 in 10 workers would feel comfortable speaking about self-harm, psychosis, eating disorders, postnatal depression or schizophrenia
- Almost 40% of employees would be ok talking to their manager about cancer compared to just 12% who feel they could discuss bipolar disorder
- We would rather talk about diarrhoea [29%] than depression [26%] with our manager

The research shows the persisting mental health gap in the workplace, with first aid skills a clear indicator of this. Over 7 in 10 employees know basic physical first aid, such as how to bandage a finger or treat a minor burn. But just over a third [36%] feel confident talking to colleagues about common mental health struggles with stress and depression in the workplace - a basic part of Mental Health First Aid training.

The findings illustrate that there must be a fundamental change to ensure we treat mental and physical health equally in the workplace. In response to this, and to mark the ‘Where’s Your Head At?’ campaign’s first birthday, its new Workplace Manifesto is setting out a bold call for leaders to strive for an understanding and commitment to workplace wellbeing.

From today employers up and down the country will be encouraged to sign up as official supporters of the Manifesto and commit to recognising the need to prioritise mental health, build diverse and inclusive workplaces, treat mental and physical health equally and turn mental health awareness into positive action.

Commenting on the findings Simon Blake OBE, Chief Executive of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England said: “Despite the increased awareness around mental health in the workplace, employees are telling us that there is still a significant gap in how we think and act about physical and mental health at work.

“To address this gap, employers are being encouraged to translate awareness into action and stamp out the stigma of mental ill health in the workplace. The manifesto we are launching today gives employers the opportunity to show their commitment to protecting and supporting their people’s mental health.”

“This manifesto is a mission statement for a healthier working world, where people’s mental health is supported and protected and where wellbeing is at the heart of all we do. By signing this manifesto organisations from all sectors, and of all sizes, will join us in striving towards healthier working environments for everyone.”

Paul Keenan, President of Audio Bauer Media Group commented: “Our manifesto is a call for change: a call for fellow employers and MPs to join us in striving to do more for mental health care in the workplace for the benefit of our people and our businesses. The ‘Where’s Your Head At?’ campaign is putting a spotlight on mental health in the workplace and we hope this movement will deliver true cultural impact and create a seismic change in society.”

Karl Simons, Chief Health, Safety and Security Officer at Thames Water, and a signatory of the Workplace Manifesto, said: “Our mental health first aiders are a catalyst for engagement and have inspired a cultural revolution at Thames Water. Confidence has grown throughout the company with people now much more willing to come forward, talk and seek support at their time of need, with records showing we’ve had five mental health first aid interventions for every physical one over the last year.”

Natasha Devon MBE, campaigner and author said: “Whilst many employers are claiming to take mental health more seriously, the feedback I’m getting on my travels around the UK is that many of them are paying it lip service. Our research shows that people still feel the stigma of discussing mental health in the workplace, fearing they will be seen as ‘unprofessional’ if they do disclose a mental health issue. That’s why, one year on from when we called for a law change to make mental health first aid mandatory in the workplace, we have expanded the range of recommended actions employers can take. We spend a third of our lives at work and we can’t leave our mental health at the door - it’s essential businesses get this right”.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England, Bauer Media UK and Natasha Devon MBE are calling on employers, business leaders and MPs from across the country to sign up to support the ‘Where’s Your Head At?’ Workplace Manifesto. The goal is to sign-up 50 leading employers by the end of Mental Health Awareness Week. Visit: <http://www.wheresyourheadat.org/>

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

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About the research

This new research was undertaken by OnePoll during w/c 29 April 2019. A nationally representative sample of 2,000 Employed UK Adults (Full-time, Part-time, Self-Employed) across the UK were interviewed. OnePoll are members of ESOMAR and employ members of the MRS.

The 'Where's Your Head At?' Workplace Manifesto

'Where's Your Head At?' is calling for a working world where mental health is supported and protected, and where wellbeing is at the heart of all we do.

In this world, we'll talk openly about our mental health at work, we won't be afraid to ask for support when needed, and we'll thrive in both work and life. After all, we spend a third of our adult lives in the workplace, and we shouldn't have to leave our mental health at the door each morning.

The sustainability of our economy depends partly on improving how we approach mental health in the workplace. Annually, mental ill health costs employers up to £42 billion, and the UK economy up to £99 billion, as over 300,000 people fall out of work every year due to mental ill health. So, as the 'Where's Your Head At?' campaign celebrates its first birthday, **we are championing a bold new call for leaders to strive for an understanding and commitment to workplace wellbeing as outlined in our manifesto.**

Bauer Media UK, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England and Natasha Devon MBE are calling on employers, business leaders and MPs from across the country to sign up to support the 'Where's Your Head At?' Workplace Manifesto.

In signing up to this manifesto // we recognise that:

1. Everyone has mental health - whether you're a CEO, manager, construction worker, MP, celebrity or a member of the royal family. Mental ill health doesn't discriminate, so every organisation needs to stand up, tackle the stigma, and prioritise mental health in the workplace.
2. We need to build a diverse and inclusive workplace to lead to a happier and healthier working environment where people feel free to bring their whole selves to work.
3. We need to treat mental and physical health equally in the workplace. Strengthening how mental health is protected under health and safety legislation is a key part of this - every employee has a right to mental health first aid just as they do physical first aid.

4. Employers need to turn mental health awareness into positive action and develop a ‘whole organisation’ approach to workplace mental health by striving to implement the six ‘core standards’ for a mentally healthy workplace as set out in the Government’s *Thriving at Work* review.
 1. Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan
 2. Develop mental health awareness among employees
 3. Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling
 4. Provide your employees with good working conditions
 5. Promote effective people management
 6. Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

About the ‘Where’s Your Head At?’ campaign

‘Where’s Your Head At?’ is a campaign partnership between Bauer Media UK, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England and Natasha Devon MBE. It launched during Mental Health Awareness Week 2018 by calling for a change in health and safety legislation to put mental and physical first aid on an equal footing. The associated petition garnered support from a host of celebrities and MPs, and has gained over 210,000 signatures in the past year.

In November 2018, more than 50 industry leaders and executives from the likes of WHSmith, PwC, Ford and Royal Mail all came together to back the campaign’s call through an open letter to the Prime Minister.

Visit: <http://www.wheresyourheadat.org/> to find out more.

About Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England

1. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England is a community interest company (CIC), established in 2009.
2. Mental Health First Aid is the mental health equivalent of physical first aid training and provides people with the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues, start a conversation, and effectively guide a person towards the right support, be that self-help or professional services. To date over 400,000 people in England are trained in MHFA England skills.
3. As well as the Adult MHFA course, the organisation runs a number of tailored courses including Youth MHFA, Higher Education MHFA, Workplace MHFA and Armed Forces MHFA.
4. MHFA England’s vision is to normalise attitudes and behaviours around mental health by developing the skills we need to look after our own and others’ wellbeing.

5. More information about MHFA England and its courses can be found at www.mhfaengland.org or by emailing info@mhfaengland.org.

About Bauer Media UK

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