Mental health
Communications toolkit

Celebrating your company’s commitment to ending the culture of silence around mental health. Ensuring that you are receiving maximum recognition for your work. Can also be another good way to ensure that the company is kept updated on the campaign’s progress. Ensuring that your commitment around mental wellbeing is used effectively. Being a BITC Workwell Champion demonstrates your status as a responsible, progressive and enlightened employer. The positive case for driving mental wellbeing at work. You have pledged your commitment to ending the stigma around mental health at work. Strengthens your status as a responsible business. Talking openly about mental health is responsible business.
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1. Introduction

We’re delighted that your company is a Business in the Community (BITC) Workwell Champion. Across the UK, employees right now are suffering as a result of feeling unable to speak openly about mental health at work.

This toolkit is intended to help BITC Workwell Champions demonstrate a transparent approach to talking about mental health and promotes the positive case for driving mental wellbeing at work.

It will consider how practical resources can be developed by business, for business, to help other organisations engage with the campaign on a national scale, demonstrating how your organisation is working to change the culture of mental health at work, for the better.

The Workwell Model provides an evidence based framework which is critical to driving this movement, whilst helping to embed mental wellbeing into the core culture of organisations, positioning mental health on par with physical health and ensuring that it is a strategic boardroom issue.

Louise Aston
Workwell Director
Business in the Community

The BITC Workwell Champions Group

- The BITC Workwell Champions Group is a collaborative, business-led movement, providing dedicated support and momentum to help affect change in the debate around mental health at work.

- It has been founded through a desire from leading businesses like yours to end the hugely damaging culture of silence around mental health and to develop positive steps that every business can take to improve public dialogue around the issue, making good mental health a core business priority for all businesses. Companies that don’t take preventative action on mental health risk reduced competitiveness, lower productivity and fewer prospects for sustainable growth.

- By joining the BITC Workwell Champions Group you have pledged your commitment to ending the stigma around mental health at work. You’ve also made a huge step by committing to sign the Time to Change pledge – an aspirational statement of intent backed by a realistic action plan which shows employees, service users and the public that your organisation is taking action to tackle the discrimination caused by mental health problems in the workplace, to the benefit of individual employees and the business as a whole.
2. The challenge

The challenge for all organisations is successfully communicating the business and moral case for an open culture around mental health across their business, and proactively promoting positive mental wellbeing.

There is no one size fits all approach and each business’s route to achieving this will be unique. Companies should feel reassured that the most important step to take is the public commitment to the cause, which, as a BITC Workwell Champion, you have done. This is significant in itself and serves to strengthen your status as a responsible business which fulfils its moral and social obligations for its people as part of this.

Businesses should feel confident that they have overcome the biggest challenge by engaging publicly with the issue. The vast majority of other organisations are still early on in this process.

The business case for transparency around mental health at work and promoting mental wellbeing is well established and compelling.

Research compiled by BITC Workwell Champion Friends Life in October 2014 found that:

- 4 in 10 UK employees have experienced stress, anxiety or depression in the past year and did not tell their employer
- Over 50% of all workers believe being open about a common mental health problem would damage their career prospects
- More than a quarter of employees have taken a sick day saying it was for a physical problem when it was actually due to a mental health issue

Here is a summary of the key points of evidence:

- One in four is affected by a mental health condition each year
- The cost of mental ill-health to the UK economy is estimated at £70 billion per year. Stress is now one of the biggest causes of long-term sickness absence among all workers, with one in six employees experiencing depression, anxiety or stress at any one time
- Mental ill health at work is thought to cost UK employers £26 billion each year – on average £1,035 per employee
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) states that 15.2 million days of sickness absence across the UK in 2013 were caused by stress, anxiety or depression, a dramatic increase from 11.8 million days in 2010
3. Champion commitments

We are a collaborative business led movement that has committed to the following actions, to help end the culture of silence around mental health in the workplace:

- **Signing up to Time to Change pledge** – The Time to Change pledge is a public statement of aspiration that an organisation wants to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. The pledge is supported by an activity plan.

- **Help end the culture of silence around mental health in the workplace** – your organisation will provide business leadership and overall direction for the campaign, as well as set an action plan, determine priorities, and review the impact of the campaign to ensure that it is measured and communicated. You have helped demonstrate that taking a stand on this issue isn’t just about improving business productivity; it’s also about fulfilling a moral and social obligation to help alleviate unnecessary suffering, strengthening your status as a responsible employer.

- **Demonstrate mental health is a strategic boardroom issue** – your organisation will contribute intellectual capital and thought leadership to build the business case and help generate practical resources based on the latest evidence and collective business experience. These will support the creation of a membership offer that can be rolled out to more employers in the private and public sectors, to enable them to better support and manage positive mental wellbeing amongst their workforce.

- **Help businesses to take effective action to improve the mental wellbeing of their people** – your organisation will act as an ambassador to help promote the Workwell mental health agenda, share best practice, encourage others to join as Champions and sign the Time to Change pledge, as well as building a movement of companies committed to fundamentally improving mental wellbeing at work.

As a BITC Workwell Champion, you have access to the following resources and the support of our media consultants at Forster Communications to support these commitments:

- PR and media opportunities in association with BITC – generated through the development of senior leader opinion pieces, interview opportunities and speaking platforms at external events as well as targeted placement of case study collateral

- Opportunities to contribute to collaborative thought-pieces to provide leadership to other businesses and share leading-edge thinking on employee mental health

- Platform opportunities to promote your business’s approach to mental health and wellbeing at Business in the Community events and webinars

“We decided to join BITC’s Workwell Champions Group and take the Time to Change pledge because we believe that working to create an open conversation around mental wellbeing at work is vital for our people and our business. Ensuring that our staff have the right support to help achieve positive and sustainable mental wellbeing and deal with life pressures is not only key to help them perform to the best of their ability, but it is also crucial to supporting our long term ambitions for business growth and strengthening Royal Mail’s status as a responsible and progressive employer. We look forward to working as part of the BITC Workwell Champions Group and encouraging more businesses to show a public commitment to driving transparency around mental wellbeing, for the benefit of business and society.”

Shaun Davis, Group Director of Safety, Health, Wellbeing & Sustainability, Royal Mail Group
4. Key messages

Being a BITC Workwell Champion demonstrates your status as a responsible, progressive and enlightened employer who is leading the fight against the injustice of people suffering in silence through fear of disclosing mental health conditions.

You are demonstrating why businesses need to take a leading role in driving transparency in the debate around mental health, and helping companies realise that you can’t manage what you don’t talk about. Your support will be of great value in helping to normalise mental health issues for employees and helping to position mental health as being on a par with physical health.

The following messages should be included where possible in communications materials which articulate your company’s commitment to the BITC Workwell Champions Group and its reasons for proactively increasing transparency around employee mental wellbeing support at work. Including this messaging will help to strengthen outreach to external organisations and media, and provide senior leadership with greater confidence to speak out on the issue.

Below is an overview to reference which may help to provide a concise descriptor of your company’s reasons for becoming a BITC Workwell Champion, and what this gives you cause to showcase. This section also summarises the main benefits for companies that are committing to bring greater transparency around mental wellbeing in the workplace – and the risks posed to companies that don’t take positive preventative action on mental wellbeing.

We are a BITC Workwell Champion because...

We have vowed to talk about mental health within and outside of our organisation because we believe that it is a marker of responsible business to talk openly about mental health. As a responsible business we are taking a proactive approach to talk openly about mental health and to position it as a strategic boardroom issue.

The culture of silence around mental health at work results in discrimination and suffering – both on an individual and organisational level. We would urge other businesses to apply the same urgency to help end stigma and improve the capacity for positive mental wellbeing.

We want to play our part in making good mental health a core business for all employers. Doing so will help to create more employees who are resilient, motivated and focused.

“Having a healthy and happy workforce is vital not only to help ensure that Marks and Spencer is a great place to work, but also in supporting our long term ambitions for organisational growth, helping us to deliver the best possible service for our customers. We have joined BITC’s Workwell Champions Group because encouraging more organisations to speak openly around the challenges and solutions of supporting employee mental wellbeing is the right thing to do. It is crucial for employees to feel able to discuss and seek support for any mental wellbeing challenges they may be facing, whatever the reasons.

We’re looking forward to contributing our ideas and learning from our own mental wellbeing programme to help increase transparency around mental wellbeing at work and to help break down the culture of silence that is preventing employees from discussing these issues openly. We hope that by playing our part we can ultimately help to improve mental wellbeing support for employees right across the UK and make mental wellbeing a strategic boardroom issue.”

Beth Ryder, Employee Wellbeing Manager
Marks and Spencer
4. Key messages

**Benefits**

- Positive mental wellbeing is vital to the health, happiness and productivity of employees, leading to higher motivation and better performance. A robust support framework for mental wellbeing can reduce staff turnover and lead to increased brand reputation, maximising the opportunities for long-term, sustainable business growth. Research has indicated that highly engaged organisations have the potential to reduce staff turnover by 87%.

- Promoting good mental wellbeing is most effective through a strategy of prevention. With the right support system in place, businesses can help mental wellbeing to take care of itself by providing opportunities for increased employee resilience and improving individuals’ abilities to take care of problems before they arise.

- Good mental wellbeing relies on a host of related factors: robust physical health, a varied and balanced diet, availability of specialist support. Positive approaches in the workplace will ensure that employees are best able to become resilient, productive and engaged, lowering the risk of more serious, long term problems arising.

**Difficulties and risks**

- Common mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression arise through a combination of work and non-work related factors, but these can soon become exacerbated through the lack of wellbeing support from employers.

- Employees operating consistently under excessive pressure are more likely to provide poor customer service, to take time off sick, be present but not fully productive or leave permanently. One in six employees experiences depression, anxiety or stress at any one time and studies suggest that presenteeism from mental ill-health alone costs the UK economy £15.1 billion per annum, which is almost twice the business cost of actual absence from work.

- Mental health is often a difficult subject to engage with because the symptoms of mental ill-health are hard to spot, but everyone has a state of mental health, whether good or bad. Employees across the board need to learn to recognise the common indicators of conditions such as stress, depression and anxiety so they can act quickly to address them.

- Companies that don’t take a proactive approach to creating a culture of ‘good work’ and promoting positive employee mental wellbeing risk exposing themselves to higher staff turnover, reduced competitiveness and damaged corporate reputation.
5. The BITC Workwell model

Using the BITC Workwell model

- Wellbeing is comprised of the mutually supportive relationship between the physical, psychological and social health of the individual.
- The BITC Workwell model was developed by business for business, and provides an integrated framework to help organisations to create an environment where the whole person can flourish. Collectively, all aspects of the model progress employee mental wellbeing, either directly or indirectly.
- Providing practical examples of employee support services and how they support different aspects of the Workwell model will help to evidence internally that businesses are helping to improve employee mental wellbeing support through their wider employee support framework – even if these do not explicitly relate to mental health directly.

Creating the conditions for the whole person to flourish

All sections of the Workwell Model play a role in creating a workplace that promotes mental wellbeing.

**Working well**

The central Working Well section of the model positions employee wellbeing and engagement as strategic boardroom issues that are embedded into the DNA of an organisation:

- Employees feel trusted and that their work is valued and makes a difference.
- Employees believe their views are respected and considered.
- A proactive approach to employee physical, psychological and social wellbeing.
- Customers and business partners proactively want to work with the company and its employees.
- Employees’ and company’s aims and objectives are aligned in a way that generates win-win for both parties.

**Key Indicator/metrics include:**

- Diversity and inclusion, for example, the proportion of potentially disadvantaged groups employed by the company.
- Voluntary staff turnover.
- Engagement and wellbeing strategy and programmes.
- Management scorecard.
- Governance of engagement and wellbeing
## 5. The BITC Workwell model

### Better physical and psychological health

**Creating a safe and pleasant working environment:**
- Promoting a physically safe working environment.
- Promoting healthy behaviours, such as emotional resilience which builds self-esteem, healthy eating, physical activity, smoking cessation, sensible drinking and avoidance of drug misuse.

**Key Indicator/metrics include:**
- H&S training and management systems, e.g. trend health and safety data.
- H&S reporting, e.g. statutory health and safety reporting.
- Health and wellbeing promotions and campaigns, e.g. trend health and safety.
- Data aligned to strategic commitments and measured through multiple channels.
- Workforce demographics marking health status, e.g. trend in workplace demographics marking health.

### Better work

**Creating a happy and engaging work environment:**
- Employment security.
- Talent management.
- Job design: task and variety of challenge.
- Autonomy, control and task discretion.
- Non monotonous and repetitive work.
- Employee voice.

**Key Indicator/metrics include:**
- Your organisation’s values and measuring alignment with those values.
- Your organisation’s approach to training and skill development, e.g. company funded training time per person.
- Employee feedback, e.g. results of annual job satisfaction or engagement survey.
- Leadership and management development, e.g. proportion of senior positions filled by internal applicants.

### Better specialist support

**Provide interventions to manage health and wellbeing:**
- Occupational health.
- Human resources.
- Employee assistance/counselling.
- Training for line managers and employees

**Key Indicator/metrics include:**
- Attendance management/absence, for example, sickness absence rates.
- Occupational health, for example, take-up/utilisation rate for occupational health service.
- EAP for example, take-up/utilisation rate for EAP and related services.
- Other specialist services, for example, rates of rehabilitation.
- Management information of specialist support, for example, utilisation/satisfaction with support services.

### Better relationships

**Promoting and enabling better communications and social cohesion to support good relationships in the workplace particularly among:**
- Line managers.
- Team colleagues.
- Support networks.

**Key Indicator/metrics include:**
- Family friendly policies and facilities, for example, proportion of women returning after maternity leave.
- Employee volunteering, for example, volunteering commitment and take-up trends.
- Grievances and organisational justice, for example, trend data for grievances upheld.
- Coaching and mentoring, for example, performance trend in external surveys of employee engagement.
6. Telling your story

Celebrating your company’s commitment to ending the culture of silence around mental health at work and promoting positive mental wellbeing will be a key motivator to encourage other leading businesses to join the campaign. This can be achieved through a variety of communications opportunities both internally and externally.

**Internally**

- It is important to ensure that your status as a BITC Workwell Champion is announced internally, and keeping your business up to date on your involvement with the campaign is key.
- It can be a good idea to hold regular advice and information sessions to ensure that employees are aware of the campaign’s progress, and the potential opportunities to contribute to the campaign that might be available to them. Including advice in an induction and staff handbooks can ensure that new joiners are aware too.
- Selecting an internal senior champion to lead these sessions and act as a main point of contact for informal advice can be beneficial. Open events also provide ideal opportunities to share details with employees on the wellbeing support that is available to them.
- Regular internal communications channels such as blogs and newsletters can also be another good way to ensure that the company is kept updated on the campaign’s progress. It also offers an ideal opportunity for employees across the organisation to contribute, through written Q&As on managing mental wellbeing and case study write-ups, for example.
- Make sure that all the progress of the campaign and your organisation are given high profile status on your company’s website through newsfeeds and any newsletters that are regularly distributed to internal and external stakeholders.
- Where possible, including a concise descriptor outlining your involvement with the BITC Workwell Champions Group should also be used in any internal or external company reports or communication with customers and members of the public. This is a useful way of ensuring that your commitment around mental wellbeing is used effectively to maximise brand reputation.
- Lastly, making sure that line managers are kept regularly informed and able to speak with authority on the company’s offer around mental wellbeing is crucial.

**Externally**

- The current state of people’s mental wellbeing at work receives lots of interest from the media, who are always looking for new voices willing to speak out on the debate.
- Organising events with guest speakers, senior internal business leaders and expert panellists can be an effective way of engaging with external stakeholders to amplify your company’s commitment to the mental wellbeing agenda, and holds good potential to attract wider media interest. Friends Life, a founding member of the BITC Workwell Champions Group, recently published new evidence on the culture of silence around mental health at work that received widespread national coverage. In partnership with BITC they also provided the following guide: [Listen up – Let’s talk mental health](#).
- It can also be a good idea to try and engage external partners and suppliers with the campaign. Not only will this help ensure that you are receiving maximum recognition for your work, but close existing ties with other organisations offers an ideal opportunity to try and encourage them to join the campaign as well. Don’t underestimate the potential in engaging your supply chain and building on existing relationships with like-minded organisations who may also be keen to contribute to position themselves as progressive employers.
- External opinion editorial pieces from senior leaders on the importance of increasing the transparency around workplace mental wellbeing is an effective way to articulate your business’s ambitions and to celebrate its achievements at the same time. These often work best in reaction to stories relating to mental health that feature on the wider news agenda, although can also work alone summarising an organisation’s individual achievements.
- With the support of senior leaders, contributing intellectual capital and thought leadership on workplace mental wellbeing can be an effective way of increasing your brand reputation and to highlight your involvement with the BITC Workwell Champions Group.
6. Telling your story

Case studies – and building the right media content

To ensure that you have the right collateral in place to evidence your progressive approach to employee mental wellbeing, it is important to develop a range of case study materials to support internal and external communications activity. This can be key in helping to improve chances of positive media coverage and showcasing your status as a progressive organisation.

The focus for these may vary from an individual employee's account of how he or she received support to improve their mental wellbeing, to broader accounts of the impact of a specific programme, project or awareness day. It could also comprise of key impacts that the organisation's wellbeing strategy has had on business performance and staff morale, providing an overview of evidence-based data, with comment from senior figures within the organisation.

Find employees who are passionate about how they have been supported to achieve positive mental wellbeing and also consider drawing case studies from a manager's perspective too. Developing written and video case studies where possible is important to build robust collateral to increase chances of media interest in your story. It is crucial to make sure that case studies are developed from a cross-section of the organisation and they are not too narrowly focused on a particular job role. One of the most important aspects of the campaign is highlighting how mental health affects people's performance at every level, so a variety of case studies will help to highlight this.

Get the timing right

Media activity and internal engagement often has an increased impact where it coincides with external dates or events. The following key dates are all prime opportunities to lead a collective call for change and to publicise your organisation's plan of action for promoting mental wellbeing. These should be included as part of plans for communications activity.

- Time to Talk Day (5 February 2015)
- World Health Day (7 April 2015)
- Responsible Business Week (20-26 April 2015)
- Mental Health Awareness Week (11-17 May 2015)
- World Mental Health Day (10 October 2015)
- National Stress Awareness Day (4 November 2015)

For advice on which media outlets to approach in advance of these dates or for feedback on media collateral itself, you can consult the team at Forster Communications.

You will find a template for announcing your status as a BITC Workwell Champion in the appendix of this toolkit, with other press release templates available on request.

Getting the framework in place

All organisations need to take steps to proactively incorporate better management of mental wellbeing into the everyday working environment. This includes taking action to promote wellbeing among staff, being alert to workplace triggers for poor mental health and having the right policies in place to support staff who may be experiencing mental health problems.

For example, managers can be given training on how to identify and manage stress within their teams. This can be done by increasing awareness and improving stress management skills through training and education activities. Individual factors can alter or modify the way employees, exposed to workplace stress, perceive and react to their environment.

For advice on how to implement new strategies to support employee mental wellbeing, you can access practical resources on BITC Workwell's website.
This is the start of a journey. In the first instance it is worth thinking about what success would look like for your business in five years. Does it include some of the following measurements?

**Does it include some of the following measurements?**

- Mental health becomes widely embedded in organisational culture
- A collective responsibility is firmly established
- Mental health is elevated on a parity with physical health
- Talking openly about mental health becomes ‘business as usual’
- Open employee disclosure on mental health issues
- Increased productivity
- Enhanced brand reputation and employer of choice

**Here are some suggested actions that you can take now:**

- Set up regular meetings for your company’s communications team and the BITC Workwell Champions Group representative to discuss proposed activity to support the campaign, particularly around key dates such as Time to Talk Day and Responsible Business week – and what you hope to get out of it.

- Schedule open advice sessions for employees to provide advice on how they can start to become engaged with the dialogue on mental wellbeing, and how they can use the points raised in this toolkit practically.

- Consider what capacity is available to schedule internal and external activities around mental wellbeing, and liaise with Forster Communications to maximise outreach as well as to discuss further opportunities on how you can report back your progress to the media.

- There has been substantial interest in Workwell because it is a collaborative good movement, led by business for business. The achievements of individual organisations are important but the real power of the campaign will come through increased collaboration and co-ordination to drive a consistent and transparent message to the wider business community that mental health is an issue that needs to be urgently addressed.

- Check for regular news and updates on the BITC Workwell website: [www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell](http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell)

**Useful contact details**

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Announcing becoming a BITC Workwell Champion

Press Release

Date: [insert date]

[Insert company name]

joins landmark campaign to end culture of silence on mental health

- [business name] joins coalition of business leaders committed to ensuring mental wellbeing is recognised as a priority boardroom issue
- It states that promoting mental wellbeing is crucial in its role as a responsible employer and encourages more business to join it
- Business benefits of improved support for mental wellbeing include improved employee motivation, greater staff retention and increased competitiveness

[Business name] has pledged its commitment to tackling the culture of silence around mental health at work, and promoting positive mental wellbeing, by becoming the latest organisation to join Business in the Community’s (BITC) Workwell Champions Group.

The group was created on the back of growing evidence that the current approaches to mental wellbeing at work are stifling UK business productivity and competitiveness, with the overall cost of mental health to the UK economy estimated at £70 billion per year, (4.5% of GDP).[1]

[Business name] joins founding members of the group including BT, Bupa, RBS, Mars and Procter & Gamble, all of which have pledged to ensure that mental wellbeing is recognised as a priority strategic boardroom issue.

[Insert quote from senior business leader at the organisation here – quote to include reference to why your business is taking a proactive approach to wellbeing and encouraging other business leaders to join the movement]

The business case for greater transparency and proactive approaches to mental wellbeing are clear:

- 15.2 million days of sickness absence across the UK in 2013 were caused by everyday conditions such as stress, anxiety or depression – a dramatic increase from 11.8 million days in 2010.[2]
- With one in six employees currently experiencing mental health problems, it is vital for businesses to put in place plans to ensure the mental wellbeing of their employees
- Fewer than half of employees that are affected by mental ill health feel confident to disclose their condition, which can mean issues become more severe.[3] Businesses that promote open dialogue and positive mental wellbeing will ensure a more engaged and productive workforce
In joining the BITC Workwell Champions Group, [business name] has also committed to signing the Time to Change organisational pledge and produce an action plan to actively tackle the stigma and discrimination around mental health and promote mental wellbeing amongst its workforce. Details of its pledge include:

- [Insert details of pledge]

Louise Aston, Director of BITC Workwell, said: “We are delighted to welcome [business name] to joining the BITC Workwell Champions Group. More businesses are standing up to the damaging culture of silence and have confidence in the positive ways that transparency and openness can benefit their organisation and employees. By uniting with a strong voice, we will mainstream good mental health and make it a marker of every successful business.”

The BITC Workwell campaign is calling on every UK business to take action and demonstrate their commitment towards supporting the mental health of their employees by signing the Time to Change pledge. It is also looking for progressive businesses to join the BITC Workwell Champions Group and help affect a step change in the culture of UK businesses.

The BITC Workwell Champions Group launched its inaugural report, Mental Health: We’re Ready to Talk, in April this year. It outlines the benefits for businesses that proactively engage with mental wellbeing; improved employee motivation, greater staff retention rates and increased competitiveness. The full report can be downloaded for free here.

~ ENDS ~

About Business in the Community

Business in the Community is a business-led charity committed to shaping a new contract between business and society. We have over 30 years’ experience forging better relationships between business and society, driven by a unique collaboration of business leaders. We stimulate action by challenging and supporting thousands of businesses to create a fairer society and a more sustainable future – through our local, national and international campaigns.

Business in the Community is one of The Prince’s Charities, a group of not-for-profit organisations of which The Prince of Wales is president. www.bitc.org.uk

About [business name]

[Insert boilerplate]


[3] A recent populus study conducted by Mind found that, of surveyed employees who had ever been diagnosed with a mental health condition, fewer than half told their bosses after being diagnosed. Mind / Populus Media Poll, (March 2013) www.populus.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/130320%20Mind%20Workplace%20Survey%20Eng%20and%20Wales%20Only.pdf