

Workforce Mental Wellbeing & Suicide Prevention campaign

Fife Voluntary Action, Lived Experience Team

Partnership Case Study

Introduction

Lived Experience Team is a small, welcoming group of people with various lived experiences of mental health conditions. They work together to raise awareness and reduce stigma surrounding mental health.

The team are part of Fife Voluntary Action who have regular input to Fife's Suicide Prevention Network agenda. They have recently contributed to **#ItsEveryonesJob**, Fife's Workforce Mental Wellbeing & Suicide Prevention campaign, having heard about the campaign aims and objectives through a regular network meeting.

Lived Experience Team volunteers with a particular interest in the Workforce Mental Wellbeing & Suicide Prevention campaign participated in a facilitated discussion that was recorded, transcribed and edited to provide insightful lived experience to inform the campaign efforts.

All gathered experiences have been permitted by participating volunteers for use within the campaign resources.

Case Study

One of the Lived Experience Team volunteers spoke of his personal mental health problems as well as advising of employer approaches to workforce mental wellbeing. This volunteer was employed as a people manager and his experiences bring valuable insight to **#ItsEveryonesJob**.

"The issues that I faced as manager at a mental health charity was that we were supporting people who had mental health issues; poor mental health...some of which was suicidal.

We had two people who had attempted suicide. And as manager I had two roles: one was to try and make sure that people were being supported to help them survive another day basically, that life is worth living, giving them the strength and the courage and the hope to get through another day. That was one thing. The other thing was to support the staff themselves who were supporting the people who were suicidal, and their circle of friends...

What I would say though, if you're faced with that situation as far as an employer is concerned is - be aware...look for differences in people's behaviour.

Your staff are your greatest asset and try and support them before they get suicidal. If they're sat there with stress or challenging behaviour or whatever, you don't know what they're dealing with at home so don't just see the number, see the person and support them before they may become suicidal.

If they are suicidal already, it's likely they're off work... Keep in touch with them, let them know they are still valued.

If you have concerns that they may be feeling suicidal, ask.

Don't be frightened to ask... Because that may be the opening for them to be able to talk about it...

Then they don't try and bury it all the time and keep it all inside, which makes it much worse. So ask, and if they start to open up, then listen.

Don't tell them to pull themselves together; they're not a pair of curtains, they're ill. If someone had broken a leg you wouldn't criticise them for wearing a cast...Listen to them, let them talk and encourage them to try and seek other help, professional help...

...If you think they're at risk and if they want to leave the place, follow them. Don't be afraid to follow them and try to go with them, (contact) the police or whoever, say - we are here, this is where we are, and we need help here...

Don't be frightened of doing the wrong thing. Keep an eye on things and also keep an eye on yourself..."

The Lived Experience Team volunteer offers the following advice on how you would look after yourself:

"Talk to other people as well...Talk to their managers, talk to people that you got on well with and say, how are you coping with this and how are you coping with that?"

Talk to your family, talk to your GP if you need to. And don't be afraid to admit, as a manager you are human first and foremost before you became a manager.

Look after yourself, find people that you can talk to at support groups, or on a telephone system, you will find somebody that you can talk to...

When you come into work, you take your personal head off and put your work head on. And when you leave here, you will change over again and leave your work head inside the place - don't take your work home with you - easier said than done, but I try to practise that a lot of the time as well".

Conclusion

Workplace Team thank Lived Experience Team for their contributions to the Workforce Mental Wellbeing & Suicide Prevention campaign.

Lived Experience Team brought valuable contributions to **#ItsEveryonesJob**, demonstrating personal accounts of mental health problems and bringing into perspective how support can help people cope through challenging times.

Find out more about the Lived Experience Team and how they can help with your own project by contacting them at info@fva.org