



COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPION

FACTFILE

NAME

CHRISTINE CAMPEY

ORGANISATION

BRAMALL CONSTRUCTION LTD

ALTOGETHER BETTER PROJECT

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, ROTHERHAM

WHAT SHE DID

Engaged with Mind Your Own Business to provide mental health first aid (MHFA) training for company staff at Bramall Construction Ltd. Instigated an on-going series of measures at the company designed to provide support for vulnerable employees and reduce stigma around mental health.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID SHE MAKE?

Began to challenge stigma about mental health in the construction industry.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Mind Your Own Business aims to improve the mental well-being of people and communities through targeted work with employers, large and small, in Rotherham. In doing so, the project aims to contribute towards improving employment outcomes and reducing health inequalities for one of the most socially excluded groups in society.

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Christine Campey’s motives for becoming a community health champion were to understand possible ways of improving the mental health of workers in the construction industry and to expand her skills as a human resources professional.

Christine joined South Yorkshire-based Bramall Construction as HR manager five years ago. With the assistance and support of the directors the company had already adopted a forward thinking approach and linked together a number of healthy living initiatives when she came across the Mind Your Own Business project and its work with local companies to improve mental well-being.

“The approach was: ‘Let’s see how we can prevent people getting ill,’” said Christine. “That’s what I liked about it.

“I knew people at Bramall who were suffering. Mental health issues are very diverse but by having an

▶ awareness you can see if somebody is getting close to the edge.”

Christine and the rest of the HR team completed the project’s mental health first aid training – an experience which ‘opened her eyes’.

“We learned that we can adjust the work environment to help people. If people have an anxiety disorder, I can signpost them. If I’m giving advice to a line manager about why someone isn’t performing, I can try to make them look at why they’re not performing. There may be other issues in a person’s life that are affecting his or her performance.”

The MHFA course underpins a number of measures, including a new training programme, incorporating strategies for recognising and coping with stress and depression. The company has also started offering stop smoking courses and health screening and introduced a help line to allow people who feel under pressure to talk in confidence.

“You can’t change everything overnight,” she said. “But we’re now in a better position to offer solutions to help people cope with mental health problems and every day life.”

Christine has been able to call on the expertise of the Mind Your Own Business project team when required.

“We had a tragic bereavement and the project sent through information about bereavement counselling,” she said. “It’s good to know they are there and have information to utilise. As a result we’ve now started to put together our own library of resources.”

Christine admits that getting mental health on the agenda in a traditional industry like construction has been and continues to be a challenge.

“Changing the culture is a slow process,” she said. “People are still frightened about mental health. They’re happy to talk about the procedure for dealing with a

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broken leg but mental health problems are invisible.

“Managers are extremely busy and some are not comfortable dealing with people who appear upset, withdrawn or acting out of character. It’s not the norm to put your arm around someone who’s having problems. What we’re doing is drip-feeding awareness into the work environment. But I think it’ll take two to three years to establish a new culture.”

Despite knowing that there are still lots of barriers in the way to people being open about mental health issues, Christine is continuing to enjoy her role as a workplace community health champion.

“I find it interesting,” she said. “I’m looking at stress and depression as part of my Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development qualification. I think it makes me a better HR manager and I feel a more rounded individual as a result too.

“I want to do more for people who work for Bramall. I want to make their lives better, make them feel valued. If we help one person because of it, I’ll be happy.”

CONTACT:

Ruth Fletcher-Brown
Ruth.fletcher-brown@rotherham.nhs.uk
01709 302090

Jessica Wilson
Jessica.wilson@rotherham.nhs.uk
01709 302727

Altogether Better was founded on the firm belief that community health champions have the potential to make a significant impact on health inequalities. In 2008, we were awarded £6.8m from the BIG Lottery Well-being Fund to run our innovative, five-year programme in Yorkshire and the Humber. We have 16 locally-delivered flagship projects across the region, testing out different community health champion approaches in a range of settings.

