

AMAZING STORIES

FACTFILE

DONCASTER BETTER WORKPLACE - BETTER MENTAL HEALTH (BIG AMBITIONS CIC)

WHAT THE PROJECT DID

Contacted 229 employers; Recruited 71 Workplace Health Champions; Ran a wide range of training courses including: 26 Mental Health First Aid Courses; 14 Line Manager Training Courses; 32 Stress Awareness Workshops; 3 Mental Health Awareness Training Courses; 1 Stress Management in the Workplace Course; 5 Mental Health & Employment Workshops; 3 Working for Better Mental Health Workshops; 1 Job Retention Course; 1 Condition Management Programme Taster; Developed a 'Mental Well-being in the Workplace' Toolkit for businesses and a 'Working for Better Mental Health' Toolkit for GPs, health care professionals and other frontline workers.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID IT MAKE?

Raised awareness and understanding of mental health issues for 21 businesses. Raised awareness of the importance of maintaining positive physical and mental health for participating employers and employees.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Doncaster Better Workplace – Better Mental Health was set up in 2008 to work with employers, employees and GP practices to promote better physical and mental well-being at work. The project breaks down barriers for people with mental health difficulties to help them gain and retain employment and take part in other meaningful activities. Working with Workplace Health Champions, employees, employers and healthcare professionals, it has supported 2,977 people throughout the Doncaster area and beyond. Now reborn as a Community Interest Company, Big Ambitions, it is being funded by BIG Lottery Reaching Communities to continue delivering its high quality vocational support.

**“WE’RE DOING THIS
BECAUSE WE BELIEVE
IN HELPING EVERYONE
TO REALISE THEIR FULL
POTENTIAL”**

HELPING THE 1 IN 4

For the 1 in 4 of us who experience mental health problems at some point in our lives, finding or keeping a job can be difficult.

As well as facing the stigma that still exists in society towards mental ill health, people often suffer a lack of confidence around every day activities, such as socialising, using public transport and even getting up in the morning. The result is even greater feelings of isolation and low self-esteem.

Better Workplace – Better Mental Health came into being in 2008 aiming to break this cycle.

Targeting employers, employees and health professionals, project coordinators Jane Jefferson and Laura Moody have been spreading the message about the therapeutic potential of work throughout Doncaster and the surrounding area.

With their new venture, Big Ambitions, funded by BIG Lottery Reaching Communities, Jane and Laura are broadening their horizons even further.

The new company aims to take forward the best of the innovative approaches Jane and Laura have developed over the last three years as one of Altogether Better's flagship projects.

Better Workplace – Better Mental Health has taken a two-track approach, persuading more GPs and health professionals to help people with mental health problems to return to work as well as making employers and employees more aware of mental well-being.

Working with Yorkshire Health Improvement Partnership, Sheffield Hallam University and NHS Rotherham's Mind Your Own Business project, the team has introduced 'toolkits' for both the business and medical sides of the project and has delivered a highly successful programme of training in a wide range of organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors.

Targeting all levels in an organisation, from the boardroom down, has been a key part of their success in smashing the targets set for the project, with a network of Workplace Health Champions playing a crucial role.

"The Workplace Health Champions have been a vital part of our success in making healthy changes in the workplace sustainable," said Jane. "Their commitment to promoting ideas to improve the health and well-being of their colleagues has been amazing."

The project has also been making a splash with a series of learning events, designed to highlight topical issues relating to health and well-being in the workplace.

Last summer's Chill Out, Don't Burn Out made regional and national headlines after the team dressed up as fruit to persuade employees to take time away from their desks and eat more healthily.

Working with GPs to look at employment issues during consultations with patients helped Laura and Jane to crystallise their vision for Big Ambitions.

"The main thinking behind the company is that we can provide a service on behalf of GPs and employers," said Jane.



"We want Big Ambitions to provide a one-stop shop covering the whole employment journey."

Focusing on personal development, career aspirations, qualifications and experience, the company will support job seekers to fill any gaps in their backgrounds before moving forward. They will also offer a service to support individuals and employers to help people with mental health problems to get back to work or to stay in their jobs.

"There tends to be a perception that people with mental health problems can only do 'low end' jobs," said Laura. "But many people had good careers before they were ill. We don't want to just put them in any job but find out what their ambitions are and help them to realise them."

Big Ambitions are now busy marketing their services to prospective clients, ranging from individual companies to public sector employment services and GP surgeries.

Jane added: "What motivates us is the conviction that good work or another meaningful activity really does promote good mental health. All the evidence points to it and we've seen it first hand. We're doing this because we believe in helping everyone to realise their full potential."



"WE WANT BIG AMBITIONS TO PROVIDE A ONE-STOP SHOP COVERING THE WHOLE EMPLOYMENT JOURNEY"

WORKPLACE HEALTH CHAMPION

THE GREEN GABLES

A housing project that supports vulnerable families in Doncaster is putting well-being first thanks to Better Workplace – Better Mental Health.

The Green Gables project helps vulnerable people to keep a roof over their heads by helping with budgeting, finance and parenting support.

“Because of the type of work we do with vulnerable clients on delicate and sensitive issues, it was important for our staff to have an outlet as well,” said project manager Janine Egan.

Green Gables contacted Better Workplace – Better Mental Health to review its in-house processes and to help develop a stress policy and health and well-being plans.

After a consultation on stress found that staff needed more support, all 16 team members received Stress Awareness training and a Mental Health First Aid course. Janine also received Line Manager training.

“It’s had a big impact on us as a service,” she said. “It came at a point where there was a big transfer of staff into our office, after we won a new service contract. It meant that every member of staff got the same training and there were resources to support transition.”

“Training is now compulsory for staff and we’ve got our own Workplace Health Champion who goes on workshops organised by Better Workplace – Better Mental Health and reports back to us.”

Another benefit has been a greater awareness of the kind of mental health issues that clients face, leading to a marked improvement in risk assessments. As a result of the new well-being plans, a much closer watch is being kept on employee stress levels as well.

“It’s working,” said Janine. “It’s helped reduce sickness absence. Since we’ve brought in the well-being plans, it’s not getting to the stage of being unmanageable.”

“The staff are right behind the changes. They can see the positives both for the clients and themselves. The benefits have been huge.”

FACTFILE:

Provided Mental Health First Aid courses for 16 employees. Provided training workshops to improve the skills of a designated Workplace Health Champion.

Helped reduce sickness absence and made the team far more aware of mental well-being issues, both among clients and staff.



WORKPLACE HEALTH CHAMPION

DARTS

FACTFILE:

Provided Mental Health First Aid courses for 2 employees. Provided a Toolkit & Awards Launch Event and issued the ‘Well-being in the Workplace’ toolkit to help darts establish health and well-being procedures for staff.

Provided team members with a greater awareness of the mental health issues faced by clients and staff.

When Doncaster Community Arts (darts) wanted to develop its participatory arts work with some of the town’s most vulnerable adults, Better Workplace – Better Mental Health provided the expertise the organisation needed.

The darts’ team of dance, drama, music, visual, photography and film artists provide access to the arts for a wide user group, including people with mental health issues and their carers.



Arts Development Manager Lucy Robertshaw said that Mental Health First Aid courses and additional resources provided by the project have been useful and practical.

“We’ve been able to implement what we’ve learned in our courses, both in delivering our work and also for managing our own well-being,” she said.

The organisation now works with many adults with mental health issues and raising the team’s awareness has helped provide a welcoming environment for everyone who uses darts services.

The organisation has also benefited from the project’s ‘Well-being in the Workplace’ toolkit, a memory stick which provides templates to help organisations establish health and well-being procedures for their own staff.

“The memory stick guides you on the correct way to go about dealing with issues like stress,” said Lucy. “The project also sent us an improvement plan to help us develop our mental health policy.”

“Being involved with Better Workplace – Better Mental Health has been really useful. It’s made us concentrate more on people. Whether they are users of our services or staff members, we need to check that they are happy. It’s something we’re thinking about all the time.”

“WE’VE BEEN ABLE TO IMPLEMENT WHAT WE’VE LEARNED, BOTH IN OUR WORK AND IN MANAGING OUR OWN WELLBEING”

WORKPLACE HEALTH CHAMPION

“THE NETWORK MEETINGS ARE GREAT. YOU CAN SHARE IDEAS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF PEOPLE”

DRUG INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

FACTFILE:

Provided two Stress Awareness workshops for 25 employees. Provided two Mental Health & Employment Workshops for 19 people, including provision of the ‘Working for Better Mental Health’ vocational support Toolkits. Provided Line Manager Training in Mental Health to two managers, and a ‘Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace’ Toolkit. Provided training and continual development for a designated Workplace Health Champion. Involved the organisation in regular project network meetings and promoted healthy activities, such as Cycle to Work week.

Promoted a greater awareness of the physical and mental well-being of clients and staff. Helped reduce sickness absence.

Rehabilitation of long-term drug users is a challenging role.

Working with vulnerable, often chaotic, people in crisis situations inevitably creates stress even for experienced professionals.

“It can be quite a stressful environment,” said Joanne Pickles, a housing officer and Workplace Health Champion for Doncaster’s Drug Intervention Programme (DIP), a 40-strong team which helps people arrested for drug offences to find decent homes and get treatment.

“You have to be reactive and you often have a heavy caseload to deal with as well.”

Hardly surprising then that DIP’s first contact with the Better Workplace – Better Mental Health project was through its Stress Awareness workshops.

“The Stress Awareness sessions were very good, very interactive,” said Joanne. “They threw up a lot of issues. Our managers listened to the feedback we gave and, as a result, there is now more emphasis on

peer support. So if someone is really struggling with a client, they can go to another member of a team who perhaps has more experience in that area for support.”

Staff then started paying more attention to wider health issues and a free health check provided by Better Workplace-Better Mental Health was particularly welcomed.

“The checks have given us a good overview of health and well-being and flagged up any issues that people might otherwise have ignored,” said Joanne.

“The project was also able to provide resources for stopping smoking and reducing the risk of back injury.”

Another notable success was the team’s involvement in Cycle to Work week. After clocking up more miles than any other organisation in the Better Workplace – Better Mental Health Network, the team won a prize of a Wii-Fit, providing a stress busting outlet for staff. And one employee has chosen to make a permanent switch to

two-wheel transport.

“We have also been passing on all these skills to our clients,” said Joanne.

“Things like tips on healthy eating can be a real aid to recovery in some cases.”

Joanne says being a Workplace Health Champion has given her new insights.

“The network meetings are great,” she said.

“You can share ideas with people from a wide range of workplaces that you otherwise wouldn’t meet and there are always workshops, showcasing new ideas and techniques.

“This has been an important thing to continue. Even with my busy job, I’ll always make time to do it.

“In the past, maybe we didn’t pay enough attention to health because of our heavy case loads. But you have to look after yourselves as well. Like the name says: Better Workplace – Better Mental Health.”



CONTACT

www.bigambitions.org.uk

Jane Jefferson

Strategic Director

07833 470979

jane.jefferson@bigambitions.org.uk

Laura Moody

Managing Director

07707 293149

laura.moody@bigambitions.org.uk

Using evidenced based community engagement approaches and our community health champion model, Altogether Better works with others to unlock the full potential of people, patients and communities to improve their health and wellbeing and that of the people they live and work with.

We work with the NHS, Department of Health and national partners to prototype models which support Foundation Trusts, CCGs and General Practice to engage local people. We have models to support people with the self management of long term conditions, birth and parenting; LifeCheck, local needs assessment, relationship support and Roma health.

Altogether Better Team:

0113 295 2164

altogether.better@yorksandhumber.nhs.uk

<http://twitter.com/altogetherbeter>

www.altogetherbetter.org.uk

