

Case Study: Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS

Campaigning to challenge mental health stigma

As part of our ongoing efforts to promote an open culture around mental health within our service, we joined more than 180 organisations across the region to take part in the Check-In mental health and suicide prevention campaign. This was led by West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership, and launched on Time to Talk Day (4 February 2021).

The campaign, co-produced with people who have direct experience of suicide ideation, was created by staff from NHS services, councils, Healthwatch and community groups, including the Samaritans and Platform 1 in Huddersfield.

The campaign toolkit is split into three phases with sample material which can be individually branded and adapted according to each organisation's particular needs. The campaign is supported with a [website](#) packed with wellbeing resources. This collaboration has been invaluable as it has enabled us to tailor existing resources for our own purposes.

As part of our campaign, we asked everyone in our organisation to complete the Zero Suicide Alliance 30-minute training. This has helped to educate staff on the signs to look out for and the skills needed to approach someone who is struggling.

To help break down stereotypes, challenge stigma and further encourage open conversations within our service, we gathered a range of [personal stories from staff](#) around their lived experiences of mental health. We made these available in written form and as audio files, promoted them across internal and external communication channels, and hosted on YouTube. We hope that when hearing these stories, more staff will feel empowered to speak out and seek support.

One colleague said: "I know that so many other staff need to have these types of conversations. Historically it's always felt like a taboo, and we should just be able to deal with anything and get on with it. Seeing the posters around the buildings is the first time I felt able to start to talk about this with others. Once you start talking you realise how many others feel the same and you can then start to support each other."

The campaign material is also being shared with staff when our health and wellbeing vehicle carries out its welfare visits across Yorkshire. This encompasses the ethos of our new post-incident care process which aims to support and empower staff to reach out for help after a traumatic incident.

"This campaign is so important to us. We know from research that ambulance service staff are at a 70% higher risk of completing or attempting suicide. Our staff give so much of themselves to others and it's essential to us that we provide the best wrap-around support to ensure they can live a life with a healthy mind.

The best place to start that support is to check-in with each other. This campaign has provided us with that essential cultural platform to help to start to build a safe space where everyone can check-in, regardless of position or length of service."

Martin Ingham
Head of Health and Wellbeing

The poster is dark-themed with white and light blue text. At the top right, it features the NHS Yorkshire Ambulance Service logo. The central quote is in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the quote, there is a smaller line of text and a list of support options. At the bottom right, there is a stylized graphic of a hand holding another hand, with the 'CHECK-IN.' logo and a tagline below it.

“
WE JUST SEEM TO HIDE BEHIND
THE UNIFORM, AS IF BY WEARING
IT WE CAN'T BE TOUCHED BY
WHAT WE SEE. WE MAY BE SEEN AS
SUPERHEROES, BUT WE'RE NOT,
WE'RE JUST THE SAME AS
EVERYONE ELSE.”
”

We need to look after each other and speak up if we are not okay.

For confidential support call
- HELP 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme 0800 0116 738
- Samaritans 116 123
Or visit
- Pulse > Campaigns > Check-In
- staffcheck-in.co.uk

CHECK-IN.
Looking after each other to talk about
mental wellbeing and prevent staff suicide