

Most Inspiring Mental Health Leader of the Year

Winner

**Ruth Pott,
BAM Nuttall**

This category recognises senior leaders within HR / Wellbeing / D&I / OH who have worked to banish stigma around mental health and ensure colleagues are appropriately supported by their employer

Ruth Pott is Head of Workplace Health & Wellbeing at construction and civil engineering company BAM Nuttall. She joined as HR Director in 2011, and in 2016 oversaw a transformation in the way the company supported employees facing mental health issues. The shift from a reactive approach to a continuous programme of promoting mental wellbeing saw the company commit to training all its leaders in mental health. In 2019, Ruth was seconded into a global role leading the expansion of wellbeing support to other companies within the group, before returning to BAM Nuttall at the end of 2020 to take up her current post.

Ruth has shared her personal experiences of overcoming diversity, speaking openly to encourage others, including senior leaders, to do the same. Stories shared through channels including webinars, vlogs and discussion groups have covered suicidal ideologies, childhood abuse, depression and addiction among other topics.

The wellbeing strategy that Ruth introduced as HR Director had an immediate impact, with the supporting interventions benefiting the many staff who had indicated stress and mental health were significant issues for them.



Ruth's efforts have transformed the business in a sector known for mental health challenges

In her next role as Global Director, Mental Health and Wellbeing for the BAM Group, she set up a global wellbeing strategy supported by training programmes, critical incident protocols and EAP or similar across 10 operating companies. From 2020, wellbeing was also a component of the global "Speak Up" safety campaign she instigated within the group. Back at BAM Nuttall, she continues to develop and clarify workplace mental health and wellbeing policies, processes and resources, as well as supporting

Highly Commended

BAM Nuttall HR Business Partners in delivering business and people strategies.

Following the suicide of a sub-contractor in 2019, she undertook a review that put in place a procedure to be enacted in the event of any future suicide. This replaced the wall of silence around such deaths with a requirement to immediately notify the senior leadership team and mobilise critical incident support.

Achievements

Ruth's vision has created a culture within the company where it's okay not to be okay, in the male-dominated and traditionally macho construction sector where suicide rates are double the national average. She has inspired many colleagues to get trained as wellbeing champions, join steering groups and get involved in the movement to enact positive change. The monthly wellbeing programme she created now sees more than 500 attendees at its webinars.

Ruth's efforts have also increased usage of the company's EAP from fewer than 10 employees in 2016 to more than 150 in 2020, and established a network of around 180 trained mental health first aiders, who supported more than 700 people in the business in 2020.

Initiatives instigated by Ruth have been recognised with several awards, including Mind's Index Awards and an Investors in People Health & Wellbeing Award.

Most importantly, the support network Ruth has been instrumental in creating has given a handful of colleagues who were feeling suicidal the confidence to come forward. Three employees have confided they would probably not be here if it weren't for the programmes and training Ruth put in place. ■

Judges' comments



Ruth is clearly and inspirational leader, who by bravely sharing her own experiences will lead the way for individuals to not fear speaking out. She is clearly well regarded by her colleagues, and is at the heart of employee wellbeing for the company.



Ruth's work at BAM Nuttall has resulted in the organisation moving from a reactive and piecemeal approach to workplace wellbeing to one that is not only proactive, but also preventative. The wellbeing programs are holistic in their approach, and are centred around supporting colleagues to thrive.

Nancy Lengthorn
WPP and MediaCom

Shortlisted

- Jane Austin
Wave Utilities
- Kathryn Ward
Guide Dogs