

Best Mental Health in the Workplace Strategy:

SME

Winner

Nature and Nurture, The First Mile

This award recognises a workplace with fewer than 750 employees that has implemented an exceptional mental health strategy, demonstrating how a small organisation can use outside resources to foster wellbeing



Puppy days proved hugely popular

Leading waste and recycling company First Mile set out in 2004 on a mission to revolutionise waste and recycling for businesses. Along the way they've pioneered some clever tech to help deliver a hassle-free, reliable service that is good for customers and the planet too. They've also invested heavily in supporting their people's mental wellbeing, training first aiders and bringing in initiatives to help foster an awareness of mental health in the workplace.

The First Mile was always a fun place to work, with most staff reporting to be generally happy and culture surveys achieving 7/10 on the whole. That said, with a growth rate of 25% year on year, it is also a busy place to work, and investment was



Walking and talking in the country with the CEO

needed if staff were to feel happier as a whole.

The two main components of a new mental health initiative were education and experiences. With education, experts were brought in to hold sessions in recognition of the sensitivity and complexity of the subject matter. For the experiences part, the company looked at several articles to understand what they could and should be doing to help the team reset its awareness of wellbeing.

Four mental health first aiders of varying ethnicity, gender and background received training to provide support to the company. A psychologist held a session with every employee on the subject of mental health,

and also trained every manager on how best to recognise when one of the team was experiencing challenges.

Achievements

First Mile continues to be a fun place to work, with the added bonus of many happy initiatives. Staff can attend walks in the country with the CEO and a slap-up pub lunch, getting them active in nature and giving them the opportunity to talk outside of the work environment. A puppy day allowed employees to book in for 25 minutes of cuddle-time with a pooch – sessions sold out within ten minutes. The company holds monthly walking and talking lunches around a local park, regular crafting sessions, litter-picks in the park, mindful colouring sessions, advice on mood food, and optional sessions held by a psychologist on dealing with anxiety, which are fully booked every time.

Since starting its mental health initiative, The First Mile has seen more than 219 attendances to various sessions, representing an average of more than two sessions per person. Of the 10 measures brought in to help raise general wellbeing in the workplace, seven outcomes are reported as improved, and three remain the same.

The company recognises that a healthy, happy team is a productive and engaged team. Investing in the team's wellbeing has produced amazing results, proving that looking after people is not only the right thing to do, but essential for the business. ■

Judges' comments

Good submission – very impressed with the range of activities you have introduced within your business to improve knowledge of mental health among staff whilst implementing a number of measures which will hopefully reduce the prevalence of mental illness among your staff. Recognition of the role managers play in the mental health of their staff is vital and your work with the psychologist is hugely positive. Hugely impressed with the range of activities introduced to both raise awareness and recognise signs of mental illness, while also promoting preventative measures such as exercise and highlighting benefits of a healthy diet.

It's good to see evidence of the difference your interventions have made. These are impressive results that are measured externally (Glassdoor) as well as internally. You should be proud of the impact on lessening absence.

→ Mental Health Awareness Claims Consortium Group

→ Making a difference 'on the ground' - everyday Grain LNG

→ OMD UK Best Mental Health Strategy OMD UK