

# Most Inspiring Leader of the Year

**Winner**  
**Jane Austin, Wave**

This category recognises a worker who has truly led from the front to banish stigma around mental health, and who has actively campaigned to ensure colleagues are appropriately supported by their employer

Wave's Director of HR Jane Austin has spent her career in HR and internal communication roles across various industries, including automotive, education and utilities. Jane is a qualified Insights and Myers-Briggs practitioner and uses both in her role to help employees gain more insight in the way they view the world and the impact they have on others.

Jane was part of the team that set up original retail company NWGB before it entered a joint venture to become Wave. She has led on TUPE, purchased an HR system, written T&Cs, developed HR policies and created a People Strategy with a focus on wellbeing and mental health.

Jane secured leadership team buy-in before launching the wellbeing programme with a series of sessions on breaking down the stigma of mental health. In a start-up company and on a minimal budget, she believed Wave could secure more affordable and tailored mental health interventions, and engaged brokers to help her obtain a full OH service at no additional cost to a group income policy she was purchasing as a safety net for employees.

Jane successfully worked out how to release call centre staff for the sessions while maintaining phone coverage, and how to reassure people they wouldn't be



Jane Austin ensures Wave leads in wellbeing



The Leadership Team's presentation of employee survey stressed the value of a healthy working environment

# Shortlisted

## Presented by:



judged if they attended. In doing so she ensured that every single employee had the opportunity to attend.

Driven by personal beliefs, knowledge and career experiences, Jane has created a healthy place to work, an organisation where employees feel able to talk about mental health issues and gain swift access to support services. She has been successful in securing leading HR services on a limited budget, such as the acquisition of a health referral service where employees benefit from a mental health assessment by a qualified psychiatric nurse within 48 hours of voicing concerns.

## Achievements

Wave now leads the way in the wellbeing space. The HR team use the occupational health element to refer employees with mental health issues to an early intervention scheme, sending a qualified psychiatric nurse to an employee's home or work address, followed by counselling. There is now a cashback and treatment plan for all employees, and an employee assistance line.

The HR team has supported staff with extreme cases such as stalking, harassment and abuse, and Jane has ensured her team knows when to listen and when to refer to professional agencies. Jane is a speaker at summits and conferences and is also working with a psychologist, with a view to helping line managers deal with employees facing severe mental health issues. ■

## Judges' comments

Extremely impressive how Jane has thought creatively and innovatively on how best to implement a mental wellbeing culture within her organisation given limited budget. It's clear she has demonstrated thought leadership and impact across her workplace

Really impressive person and set of achievements. Obviously inspiring all of those around her. I feel like I want to meet her and find out more, which is exactly what I am looking for

Phenomenal impact with minimal resource! This is precisely what will motivate more companies to follow suit. I am hugely impressed with how you gained leader buy-in to ultimately develop solutions for quicker easier access for the people who need it most. Very well done!

→ Barbara Harvey  
**Accenture**

→ Karen Baxter  
**Lewis Silkin LLP**

→ Nancy Lengthorn  
**MediaCom**