

## Our story

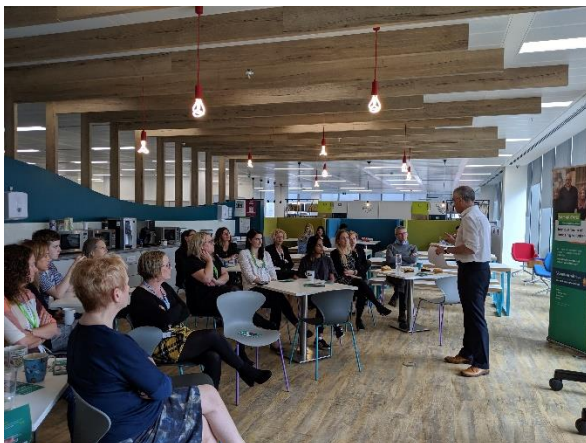
Our journey started in 2018 when we launched our current Diversity & Inclusion strategy, making Disability and Mental Wellbeing a defined, protected strand alongside BAME, Gender and LGBTQ+. Each strand has a senior lead, responsible for driving their area forward and reporting in to the D&I steering group, which is chaired by the Managing Partner.

We trained our first Mental Health First Aiders trained in September 2018 and now have almost 50 qualified MHFAs across the firm in all different role levels, including two Board members. More than 60 of our managers have completed a full day's training to become a Mental Health Champion so they can recognise and deal with any poor mental health within their teams.

With our D&I strategy we shared 'stories' from the strand leads and steering group highlighting why they were passionate about D&I, all of which received great positive feedback. On World Mental Health Day 2018 our Managing Partner issued firm-wide comms regarding the importance of having good mental health and signposting people to the MHFAs and help available, including our employee assistance scheme. We also introduced 'disconnect time' whereby we encouraged people not to send internal emails between 8pm and 7am in the week and during weekends.

Having the Managing Partner involved was important – having that support at a senior level helps to break down the stigma around mental health and shows that we are serious about it.

We identified significant dates throughout the year that we could use to raise awareness – Time to Talk Day in February, Mental Health Awareness week in May, World Suicide Prevention Day in September and World Mental Health Day in October. On those dates there were firm-wide comms and we encouraged each of our offices to host local events and activities to raise awareness. These included mindfulness sessions, yoga, coffee and cake drop ins and quizzes. We also continued to promote our employee assistance programme, with posters in communal areas and regular emails from team leaders.



Other steps we have taken include

- Displaying a list of MHFAs alongside the list of First Aiders in all of our offices.
- Setting up a designated Mental Health page on our intranet directing people to various resources that may be of help.
- Rolling out Resilience training, delivered by an external mind-set coach.
- Delivering Menopause Awareness sessions.
- Where people don't have a standard working pattern, encouraging them to put their hours and days of work on their 'out of office' message so that others know when they are available.
- In May 2019 signed the Mindful Business Charter.

Before the true impact of the coronavirus was known, we had already introduced agile working to the majority of our offices, providing tech equipment and funding for office furniture, as well as policies to ensure people were able to stay in touch with colleagues easily. Our people worked from home up to three days a week so the transition following lockdown was perhaps easier for us than others. Recognising that remote working brings its own challenges, we have introduced structured daily comms so that people know what to expect on each day including a 'Friday fun' day. Partners have created 'Isolation blogs' which document, in a humorous way, what their daily routine is. We have people teaching yoga, exercise classes and languages via Zoom. We have book clubs and virtual team quizzes. We have also set up a specific 'Wellbeing at Weightmans' email address which is monitored by MHFAs through which people can make suggestions and ideas, as well as arranging to speak to a MHFA.

We are still on the journey and there is a lot more we can do as a profession. We will continue to look for ways to break down the stigma surrounding mental health by raising awareness, training and identify good practice that will help improve the mental health of our people.