

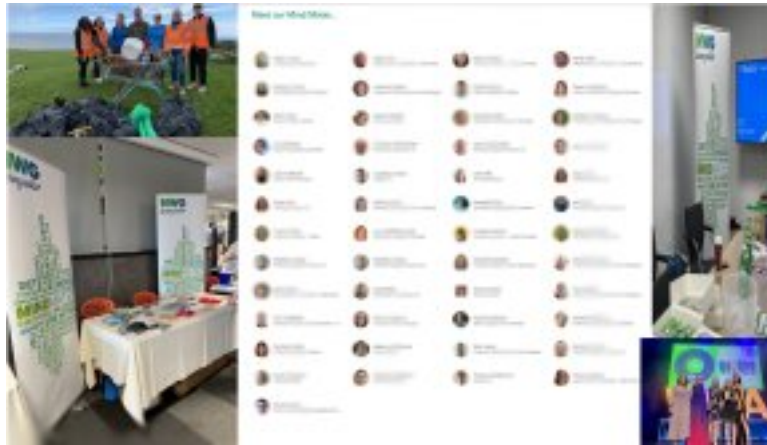


MindMates

Employer: Northumbrian Water

Area: Mental Health First Aiders

Theme: Stress and Mental Health



With an organisation of over 3000 people, we believe we have a responsibility to ensure every member of the team feels supported at work. We began to see a decline in the mental health of our colleagues as well as an increase in our sickness and absence levels, with stress and mental health as the highest % of these absences.

As an initiative to support the mental health of our colleagues, the Mind Mates program was a crucial introduction for employee wellbeing as they serve as a group of compassionate listeners within the workplace. Like a caring friend, they provide immediate and private support, reduce stigma, and create a safe space for open conversations about mental health.

The Mind Mates also act as advocates of a supportive, open, and transparent workplace culture, aiding early intervention and promoting overall employee mental health and resilience.

We decided to create MindMates as a friendlier more relatable approach to our Mental Health First Aiders, often first aid is something that happens post injury, but we like to think of our MindMates as also a prevention tool.

We recently improved the service for our colleagues and MindMates with the release of a new MindMates handbook to increase engagement and support for all of our MindMates, as well as offering 'MindMates allies' this is for MindMates who still want to help but don't have the time commitments to be a MindMates, they can instead support with campaigns, awareness, and signposting.

We have over 50 mind mates, spread over different teams, these are identifiable and ready to



provide support to colleagues on site and over teams/remotely. We also ensure MHFA are monitored to make sure training is up to date, and we offer the opportunity for colleagues to join each year with more undertaking training this month.

"I was offered the chance to be trained in Mental Health First Aid in 2018 whilst being a Wellbeing Champion and thought it would be a really good opportunity to learn some tools and techniques to help others. I had used some of the internal services and had found them really helpful during a difficult time in my life and wanted to make sure other people were aware of them and also to support people to get external help. Being a Mind Mate has been a really rewarding experience, especially when I've been able to provide people with resources that they have found supportive. I've also used the MHFA tools to support my family and friends. The Mind Mates have built up a really supportive network which makes it a great team to be part of. " - K.B MindMate Lead"

Thanks to our MindMates we have ambassadors for mental health across the business. They provide wellbeing calendars, run campaigns, raise awareness, and support their colleagues and each other. People are more open and feel comfortable sharing and discussing mental health and we have created a positive culture of wellbeing, with more conversations carried out in 2023 than ever before, highlighting the impact MindMates have had within the business.

We are confident our MindMates play a key role in reducing stigma in the workplace and continue to encourage open and honest conversations. We also have a tracker which can help us to identify which directorates have high stress levels and poor mental health allowing us to take action to reduce this. Our MindMates were nominated for our ViVa Awards in the ethical category and came runner up. We are proud of the impact our MindMates are having and the brand they have across the business.

