



Lunchroom & Support Wall Launch

Employer: Northern Rights

Area: South Tyneside

Theme: Loneliness & Isolation, Work/Life Balance, Eating Healthier



Following the Health Needs Assessment that was sent to all Northern Rights staff highlighted was the need for a space away from the main offices to take a break and eat lunch (see responses below)

This year we included in the assessment the UCLA Scale of Loneliness questions after hearing some of the data about loneliness - it can be as harmful as smoking and obesity, can lower life expectancy by 15 years.



21% of our assessment respondents stated that they sometimes felt like they had no one to talk to.

"More social seating area for lunch instead of eating at desk. Places away from desks for breaks. Regular breaks away from desk. Breakout room, chill out space, which we have access to at all times. Able to relax and chill. Space to take a break. Rooms away from offices for Lunch breaks/get break throughout the day. A clean, tidy and bright environment with a space to take lunch to prevent eating at work station. Separate break out area to use on a lunchtime. "

Recognising the need for a dedicated space where staff could take a proper break from work, reset for the afternoon, and connect with colleagues, we decided to create a welcoming environment to support wellbeing and reduce isolation.

We identified that opportunities for staff to step away from their desks were limited, and that loneliness and isolation were growing concerns. In addition, we wanted to provide easy access to information and resources for those who might be struggling with personal, financial, or health challenges.

The Step Ahead team at Northern Rights had a medium-sized room used for 1:1 appointments and workshops, with an ideal layout for both individual seating and group interaction. It was decided that this room would be booked out exclusively as a staff lunchroom between 12 noon and 1 pm, coinciding with most lunch breaks.

The room already had excellent facilities, including a fridge, microwave, kettle, crockery, and washing-up area in a small kitchen opposite. These facilities enable staff to bring in home-cooked meals, supporting healthier eating habits and reducing the financial burden of buying food during the week.

To make the space more inviting, we purchased a radio for ambient background music and added two large beanbags for those who prefer a more relaxed seating option. We also provided a selection of board games and crafts, encouraging social interaction and creativity during breaks.

One wall in the room was previously bare, so we transformed it into the Northern Rights Support Wall. This area now features a wide range of leaflets and information on topics including health, finances, family, and community support. The wall benefits both staff and clients, giving everyone easy access to local resources across South Tyneside.

We officially launched the Lunchroom and Support Wall during Loneliness Awareness Week, inviting all staff to attend. Northern Rights provided a balanced lunch, and a variety of board games were set out - retro favourites like Guess Who? proved particularly popular!



Staff were encouraged to explore the Support Wall, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One member of staff, who is also a carer for an elderly parent with dementia, discovered a local support group through the wall and was able to access valuable advice and assistance.

This initiative has created a welcoming, inclusive space where staff can relax, connect, and access support - promoting both mental wellbeing and a stronger sense of community within Northern Rights.

The next steps of this initiative is to find a space that would allow staff to access the space for more time than the one hour lunch break.

"Hi All, I just wanted to thanks for today, what a lovely little spread you put on. Great idea ? V x "

"Thank you Superb amount of support available Regards J ? "

"I asked for this on that questionnaire you sent out, this is great! Thanks"

"I'm going to continue to make time to get away from my desk on a lunch time."



