

"TRADEMUTT" HI-VIS PILOT PROGRAM

Unitywater

Unitywater implemented a pilot of the "TradeMutt" hi-vis "conversation starter" shirts in February 2020 with the aim of promoting workplace conversations around mental health.

Background

Approximately half of Unitywater's team are field based employees. With statistics showing this group to be higher risk of suffering the effects of mental illness, Unitywater implemented a pilot program to trial the TradeMutt hi-vis work shirt as a "conversation starter".

The pilot consisted of 25 volunteers from across Unitywater's Field Services team with a mix of field staff and line management. The volunteering aspect was important to ensure only those willing to recognise and take on the responsibility that comes with wearing the shirt participated.

Implementation

The volunteer group underwent training to assist in recognising what is and is not mental illness, identifying team members at risk, how to start a mental health conversation safely and importantly how to refer the team member on for further support and assistance.

TradeMutt resources including written material and podcasts are distributed to the group as support material.

Team "check ins" are held quarterly with the volunteer group to understand how the pilot is progressing, what is working and how people are feeling instigating the conversations. Feedback on this point is mixed, with some very comfortable and others significantly less so. Several team members noted the need to be in "the right frame of mind" themselves and therefore it was a very conscious decision to put the TradeMutt shirt on in the morning over normal PPE.



Benefits and outcomes

The pilot is ongoing, however feedback from the group is generally positive. Benefits of note include:

- Discussions from other branches within Unitywater asking about the shirt and “how do I get involved”.
- A conversation starter in the wider community with members of the public asking about the shirt – an opportunity for Unitywater team members to share how Unitywater is supporting mental health awareness.
- A number of team members asking if the person wearing the shirt is “OK” – recognition that a conversation is two way.

