

**KEEP AN OPEN MIND:
SHEDDING LIGHT ON TALENT**



INTRODUCTION

The Recruiters' Club Disability Café titled 'Keep an Open Mind' focused on mental health. Helen Cooke, Director and Founder of the [MyPlus Recruiters' Club](#), reminded delegates of the increasing importance of this subject to employers as the rise in people experiencing poor mental health increases; mental health conditions include, but are not limited, anxiety, depression, bi-polar disorder, OCD and epilepsy.

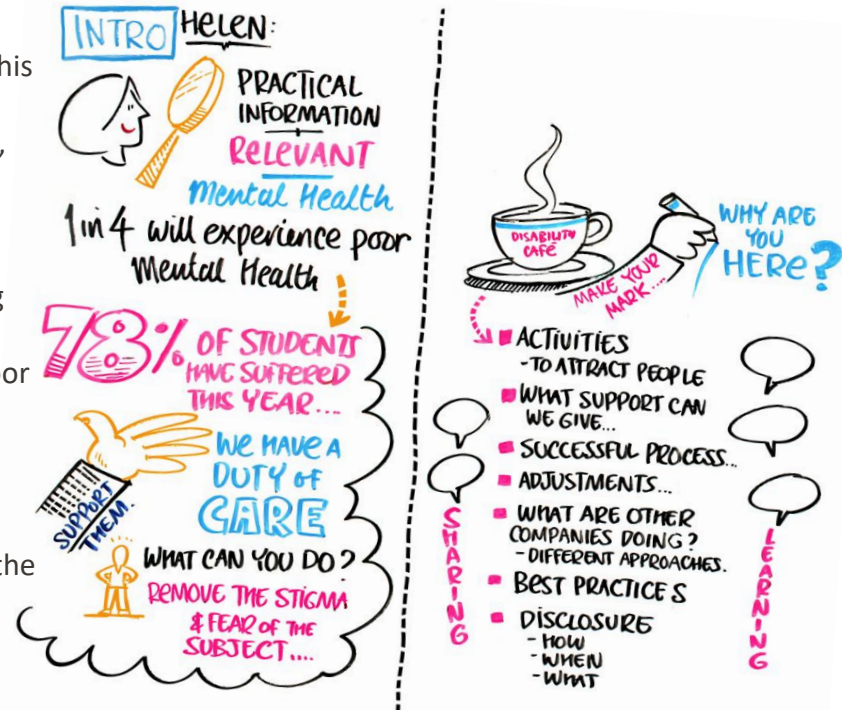
Statistics concerning mental health include:

- 1 in 4 of us will experience poor mental health at some point during our life and
- 1 in 6 of the current working age population will be experiencing poor mental health

Looking at the subject in relation to students and undergraduates a recent survey found that

- 78% students have reported experiencing poor mental health over the last year and
- 33% had experienced suicidal thoughts.

Helen emphasised the importance of employers being able to support their employees in their careers, as well as to attract new employees to the firm. Not to do so is not only a lack of care for individuals, but it will also leave employers wanting in terms of the talent that they need to continue to be productive.



WHY ARE YOU HERE?

Delegates were asked what they wanted to get out of the Café; what where their objectives? These included:

- Understanding more about the subject of mental health
- Knowing how to support individuals in the workplace
- Understanding the concerns of applicants in order that these can be addressed



ANDY GIBSON – MIND APPLES



Andy Gibson, founder of Mindapples, was our first guest speaker and started by providing some context to the subject of mental health: what are we actually talking about?

Andy reminded us that mental health is something that we all have, in the same way that we all have physical health however, many of us only think about our mental health when there is something wrong.

There has been a lot of encouragement to think about our '5 a day' for our physical health and Andy stressed the importance for us to do the same for our mental health. When asked what they would include in their 5 a day for their mental health, delegate's responses included: time with friends, meditation, a gratitude journal, drinking wine and eating chocolate!

Andy also talked about employers creating a culture where talking about mental health is both expected and accepted, and for employees being able to easily access the support they require.





Justine Thompson, Senior Inclusion and Diversity Manager at Baker McKenzie, shared the journey that Baker McKenzie had been on to create a culture where employees were able to talk openly about their mental health and access the support they required.

Baker McKenzie ran their first This is Me campaign in May 2016. They reached out to staff to come forward and share their own personal experience of mental health. 15 individuals came forward and shared a broad range of experiences from panic attacks, clinical depression, post natal depression and suicide. The posters, blogs and information on the intranet site made it the most impactful diversity campaign Baker McKenzie had ever run.

JAMES MARTIN – ENTERPRISE HOLDINGS



James Martin, a Bid Manager at Enterprise Holdings, spoke about his own experiences of poor mental health and his absolute passion to make a positive difference to others by being open and helping to educate. James experienced poor mental health for almost 20 years before he was properly diagnosed and received appropriate support both personally and in the workplace. Since his 'proper' diagnoses James shared that he had not had a single day off work demonstrating not just how important it was to seek the support he required but also emphasising the message that poor mental health does not equate with poor performance and absence. James spoke of how important it was for line managers to be knowledgeable about mental health issues and the critical role they have in opening up the conversation and providing the support required to enable employees to continue to be effective in the workplace.

The panel discussion that followed provided the delegates with the opportunity to find out more about the areas that particularly interested them.

Questions included:

- How applicants can explain time out due to poor mental health on their CV?
- Whether the choice of job / career affects a person's health
- How you approach people to share their 'story' for an awareness campaign such as 'This is Me'.



PANEL DISCUSSION

Q: EXPLAINING MENTAL HEALTH - TIME OUT?

- EMPLOYERS HAVE BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HANDLING DISCLOSURE...
- EMPLOYERS ARE BECOMING MORE OPEN TO THE ISSUES...
- ITS UP TO EACH INDIVIDUAL TO FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH DISCLOSING.
- EMPLOYERS ARE GETTING BETTER WITH INFO ON MENTAL HEALTH & HOW THEY DEAL WITH IT IN THE COMPANY.
- CREATE AN 'OPENESS STATEMENT' [GREAT RESOURCE ON MYPLUS WEBSITE]
- THE STIGMA THAT MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES HISTORICALLY HAVE.. IT'S ABOUT WHAT YOU NEED NOW!

Q: CHOICE OF TYPE OF JOB'S EFFECT ON THE PERSON'S HEALTH?

- ITS DIFFICULT TO KNOW AT THAT AGE.
- STRESS IS NECESSARY [TO A DEGREE]
- BUILD THE TOOLS/SKILLS TO MANAGE YOURSELF.

Q: HOW DO YOU APPROACH PEOPLE TO BE OPEN?

- GET A COMFORT LEVEL WITH THEM. [DON'T PUT PRESSURE ON THEM]..
- BE OPEN YOURSELF - DEVELOP TRUST

Q: WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO EDUCATE A LINE MANAGER TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

- GET LINE MANAGER TRAINING
- ENGAGE AT ALL LEVELS OF ORGANIZATION
- DEVELOP 'EASY' CONVERSATIONS - CREATE CURIOSITY.
- MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID ORG'S.

GRADUATE SPEAKERS



After the break, the focus turned to undergraduates and graduates. Adam Dempsey, a law graduate who has accepted a training contract with Baker McKenzie talked about how he feared being honest about the true state of his mental health for fear that it would act against him with employers. However he began to realise that being honest and open is the right thing to do since, if people / employers react negatively, they are not right / healthy for him in the long term. Adam passionately believes that employers need to talk about mental health if they are to attract applicants who have poor mental health to apply. He talked about firms needing to be visual and vocal about how they support their employees and to ensure that including information about this is a cornerstone of their recruitment strategy.

GRADUATES EXPERIENCES.



GRADUATE SPEAKERS



GRADUATES EXPERIENCES.

ADAM DEMPSEY
 POLITICS IN DURHAM } A CAREER IN LAW } CONCERNS ABOUT HISTORY OF DEPRESSION
 I GOT HELP. I WAS DIAGNOSED BY A G.P. NOW... DO I DISCLOSE OR NOT?
 I FEEL ABLE TO BE OPEN & HONEST
 BAKERS OFFERED ME A 'LEVEL PLAYING FIELD' I COULD SEE I WOULD FIT IN!
 PORTRAY YOUR COMPANY AS BEING OPEN BE VISUAL & VOCAL
 SHOW YOU CAN SEE BEYOND THE STIGMA... PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES.
 HOW WILL PEOPLE SEE ME? YOU ARE AN ASSET...

JACK FELLOWS
 IT'S OKAY TO BE VULNERABLE
 IN THE PAST I COULDN'T SPEAK UP!
 I HAD A PANIC ATTACK BUT I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!
 OPEN
 HONEST
 ENABLE individuals
 WHAT DO I WANT TO ACHIEVE? what's my PURPOSE?
 I GOT HELP!
 RECRUITERS NEED TO CREATE A SAFE PLACE...
 ASK WHY?
 HAVE AN ONLINE PLATFORM WHICH REFLECTS YOUR VALUE
 A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN BE THEMSELVES

MARK ROBINS
 DO YOU KNOW EVERYTHING THAT YOUR COMPANY HAS AVAILABLE TO HELP THOSE WITH MENTAL ILL-HEALTH
 NO!!
 STUDIED AT DURHAM
 HAD SEIZURES
 DIAGNOSED EPILEPTIC
 LOTS OF MEDICINE - SIDE EFFECTS
 I DIDN'T GET THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS IN MY FIRST JOB...
 THEY DIDN'T TRUST ME
 I WENT TO ACCENTURE WHO WERE VERY SUPPORTIVE
 MENTAL HEALTH ALLIE
 KNOW EVERYTHING THAT'S AVAILABLE
 GOOD SCALING MEDS - SHARE SUCCESSSES.
 - 5 THOSE ANXIETY W/ HOW DO YOU FEEL YOU?

Jack Fellows, a 3rd year student at Loughborough University, also shared his own experiences of poor mental health before going on to talk about the importance of employers in enabling their staff to be open and honest. Only by enabling this, can employees be the very best they can.

Our final speaker was Mark Robins who joined Accenture in 2014. Mark started by asking the delegates what the knew about the support their own firm provided to those with poor mental health. On being met with stony silence, Mark emphasised how important it was to be aware not least that this will be key when trying to engage with potential applicants.

Mark also talked about the key role that Mental Health Allies has played at Accenture in providing support to those who needed it.

Adam, Jack and Mark then took questions from the delegates who were interested to find out more about what they had spoken about.

Questions focused on:

- Their experiences of occupational health referrals
- Finding out more about the Mental Health Allies
- What had prompted them to be open about their own situation, and
- What they saw as the role of Line Managers in providing support

PANEL DISCUSSION

- **YOUR EXPERIENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL.**
 - A CLEAR EXPLANATION OF WHY YOU ARE BEING REFERRED
- **MENTAL HEALTH ALLIE SCHEME**
 - SPECIALIST TRAINING
 - SHARING EXPERIENCES.
 - TALK TO PEOPLE - YOU'RE THERE FOR ADVICE.
- **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BE OPEN?**
 - STAYING QUIET DOESN'T HELP ME.. IT ALSO HELPS OTHERS WHEN YOU ARE OPEN.
- **WHAT CAN LINE MANAGERS DO TO HELP?**
 - THEY ASKED WHAT THEY COULD DO TO HELP ME - WHAT DO YOU NEED?
 - HELPING WITH BALANCE OF ACTIVITIES
 - APPOINTED A BUDDY
 - WEEKLY CATCH-UPS.
 - UNDERSTAND THE EMPLOYEES CONDITION & NEEDS. BEING PRE-EMPTIVE
 - FLEXIBLE WORKING
 - MANAGE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS
 - BEING ABLE TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS
 - BEING SUPPORTIVE.
 - WHAT WOULD HELP THE EMPLOYEE.

CAFÉ
CONVERSATION



DISCUSSION

HAVING HEARD WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD TODAY, WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE PROACTIVELY ENGAGING WITH, AND SUPPORTING, APPLICANTS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH POOR MENTAL HEALTH?

- EDUCATE THE LINE MANAGERS
- SO THEY KNOW HOW TO PROVIDE SUPPORT
- MAKING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT VISIBLE - ON YOUR WEBSITE, LITERATURE etc.
BE CLEAR ON WHAT YOU DO TO HELP..
- CASE STUDIES
- HAVING THE CONVERSATION & GIVE PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK...
- THE ROLE OF THE DISABILITY PASSPORT..



REVIEW OF THE DAY

Before asking the delegates what key learnings they would take away, and what actions they intended to implement, Helen took the delegates through the graphic recording of all of the conversations that had taken place – from the 'welcome' through to all of the speakers and panels.

Helen reminded everyone of how serious employers need to take the subject of mental health and the implications of not doing so - not just in terms of the impact on a person's well being but also the talent they would miss out on.





The next Recruiters' Clubs events are as follows:

Unlock the key issues:

An introduction to Disability & Recruitment
3rd October; 9.00am – 12.00pm; Egham

Strike the right note:

Doing the right thing
15th November; 9.00am – 12.00pm; Canary Wharf

For more information visit:

<http://www.myplusconsulting.com/events/>

To register for you place please email

lise@myplusconsulting.com

To showcase yourself as a 'disability confident' employer, we encourage you to use our 'in partnership logos'.

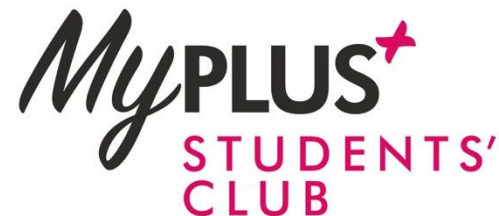
For copies of these please email

lise@myplusconsulting.com

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CONTACT DETAILS



Helen Cooke
Director
MyPlus Consulting

Tel: 01753 360018
Mobile: 07740 986758
Email: helen@myplusconsulting.com
www.myplusconsulting.com

Graphic Recorder:
Douglas Cameron

Tel: 07766 945902
Email: doug@grasshopperdesign.co.uk



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