

Schools advised to train employees to spot signs of poor mental health whilst working remotely

- *Health company urges schools to offer guidance to colleagues working in social isolation*
- *Champion Health has created bespoke free online training course but urges people to do whatever they can to support mental health wellbeing*

Schools across the UK are being urged to train employees to spot the warning signs of poor mental health and risk whilst working remotely.

Champion Health, a start-up created to change and save lives, is appealing to schools to advise their colleagues on how to recognise signs of increased anxiety, depression and other mental health issues in others, as well as optimise their own mental wellbeing.



The company is offering its online mental health training programme for free and has updated it to specifically relate to the current situation. The training now includes advice and examples related to COVID-19 and social isolation and has been created using current government and NHS guidelines. GPs, health professionals and employment law specialists have also contributed to the creation of the training. The free training has been made possible through TwinklHive, the business accelerator that Champion Health is now part of, which offers investment and mentorship to new businesses.

Over 600,000 organisations have already signed up to use the training course, including 150 that have done so since the UK Government asked people to work from home wherever possible in March.

“With so many people working remotely and in social isolation, it’s inevitable that people’s mental health will be affected,” explained Harry Bliss, CEO and Co-founder of Champion Health.

“What’s very worrying is that signs of poor mental health that may have been seen are now more at risk of going unnoticed.

“We created the online training to support people to spot the signs in person as well as virtually, but we have now made sure the training reflects that most people are only seeing each other via a screen.

“The training is now free as we know it is vitally important that people prioritise their mental health and that of others during these circumstances. But I hope that schools and people just take the time to support and address their mental health wellbeing, however they decide to do it.”

Champion Health was founded in 2018 after Harry lost a friend to suicide following an acute bout of workplace stress. Following this tragedy, Harry galvanized a team to drive positive change. The company offers Online Mental Health Training, Digital Health Assessments and In-Person Services.

It was earlier this year the start-up became part of TwinklHive, the business accelerator launched in Sheffield by the global publisher Twinkl. By providing a range of services and support, TwinklHive brings together startups set to transform people’s lives and make a difference.



Harry added; “The support from TwinklHive has been incredible and has made it possible for us to offer the training course for at least the next three months for free.

“We have had cases where this training has helped people spot warning signs and save lives, so we really urge schools, businesses and any other type of organisation to get their teams trained with the skills they need. During these unprecedented times it is important we all take care of our mental health wellbeing.”

Schools can find out more about Champion Health and sign up their employees for the free training course at <https://championhealth.co.uk/online-mental-health-training/>

Individuals can also complete the course by visiting <https://training.championhealth.co.uk/> and entering the code **championhealth**

For more information about TwinklHive please visit: <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/hive>

Advice from Champion Health:

Feeling tearful, low in mood or self-critical? We might already be familiar with these warning signs of high stress and poor mental health. But spotting these in others when we're working remotely can be difficult. That's why Champion Health's online training explores ways to spot the warning signs of poor mental health and how to support someone who's struggling, especially during these highly unusual times.

As you progress through the training, you will explore the warning signs of stress, anxiety, depression and addiction, and how they influence all aspects of our life (including emotions, cognition, behaviour and physical health). It might be harder to spot these signs whilst working remotely, but there are things to be aware of:

Emotions:

- > In video calls or casual conversations with your colleague, has there been a change in their usual disposition?
- > Do they seem quieter than before or perhaps more irritable? Maybe you've noticed they are worrying quite a bit, looking for reassurance or becoming tearful?

Cognition:

- > Your colleague may seem more indecisive, vacant or occupied by their own thoughts.
- > Is their concentration not quite what it used to be?

Behaviour:

- > Maybe you've noticed they aren't meeting targets or are struggling to be productive.
- > Perhaps they're not responding to your messages or seem reluctant to chat.
- > If they are keeping in touch, have they mentioned doing unhelpful things to cope with the situation (e.g. drinking excessively or putting off work)? Are they finding it difficult to relax without a drink?

Physical:

- > Is your colleague complaining of feeling tired, run down or exhausted?
- > Have they been taking more days off work due to sickness?

If you find yourself answering “yes” to these questions and suspect someone might be struggling, our mental health training takes you through how to support them step-by-step. Developed by our leading academics and health care professionals, we will guide you through using the CLASS system, to Connect, Listen, Assess, Support and Signpost your colleague:

C: Connect with your colleague by showing concern and empathy. Don’t be forceful.

L: Listen carefully and gently facilitate the conversation. Don’t give unsolicited advice.

A: Assess what you can do to help and find a collaborative way forward.

S: Support your colleague during the conversation and follow up with them after.

S: Signpost to their GP, NHS therapies or encourage them to speak to someone they trust.

Any advice provided is general guidance only and is not specific advice to be relied upon as it may not be suitable for your individual circumstances. If you require such advice, please contact your GP or other medical professionals. If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, visit your GP or call The Samaritans on 116 123. If a friend, family member or colleague is experiencing suicidal thoughts, advise them to visit their GP, call The Samaritans (116 123) or phone 999.

For more information please contact media@twinkl.co.uk or call 0114 360 0225