

Barclays: bringing mental health out of the shadows

The mental-health and wellbeing campaign **This Is Me**, which is now in its third year, aims to increase awareness of mental health in the workplace; provide access to information and support; and break the cultural silence that surrounds the subject of mental health.

This Is Me was designed by employees with personal experience of mental health issues, whose stories are told through video, photography, articles and posters. The campaign has grown rapidly from nine to more than 160 stories, which have been shared on a dedicated online platform. This portal has received more than 60,000 visits since its launch.

As part of the campaign, Barclays has also run awareness sessions and stress/resilience workshops, as well as reviewing HR policies in, among others, workplace adjustments and recruitment.

Increasing disability confidence is a key aim and this was reflected in the session, "Living in our Colleagues' World", and through line manager training. The latter was designed to increase line manager confidence in managing team

members who experience mental health issues. Other sessions were held with specialist charities in the field such as Mind and Rethink Mental Illness.

Barclays argues that "as well as improving practical access to information and enhancing HR policy and practice, colleagues are now more able to manage their own wellbeing thanks to the different cultural tone now in place".

It adds: "At the start of the campaign the nine colleagues who shared their experience were frequently called 'brave'. As the project grew, more people have come forward to share their story as the campaign has helped to 'normalise' mental-health. Stigma and silence have been replaced by understanding and acceptance."

Following This Is Me's success in the UK, the campaign is now being launched across South Africa and the US, as well as becoming a flagship campaign for the Lord Mayor of London called "This is Me in the City", which is being adopted by organisations within the City.

What Barclays learned from **This Is Me**:

- Storytelling – and therefore learning directly from the experiences of employees with disability – is a powerful way to engage people
- Employee-led storytelling brings inclusion. It may seem daunting at the beginning, but people become more confident talking about their experiences
- Community partners are invaluable
- Support from the top of the organisation is needed
- Change won't happen within the 12-month timeframe of the project – but it will happen over time

Learning directly from disabled people: A toolkit for global business

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