



Thriving at Work Bristol overview November 2019

1. Background

‘Thrive Bristol’ is our city’s ten year programme to improve mental health and wellbeing, with a focus on how different parts of our city – such as our communities, our places of education and work, and our homes, can keep us mentally healthy.

The ‘Thriving at Work Bristol’ initiative focuses on improving mental health and wellbeing across our workplaces. It builds upon the independent review of mental health and employers that was published by Mind CEO Paul Farmer and Lord Stevenson¹ in 2017, and seeks to implement the six mental health core standards set out in their report across local workplaces.

2. Thriving at Work Bristol: what has been achieved so far?

In Bristol our employers described feeling overwhelmed by the information on offer and were often offering one-off interventions that failed to deliver long term improvements in employee mental health and wellbeing. They were interested in developing a more effective and joined up ‘one city’ approach.

In response to this, in 2018 our ‘Thriving at Work’ Bristol Taskgroup was created. Supported by Bristol City Council’s public health team, 25 public, private and voluntary organisations came together to review the recommendations in the Stevenson / Farmer review and consider how this best practice could be implemented at scale across the city. The group was chaired by Bristol Mind and law firm Burges Salmon, and included leads from Deloitte, Rolls Royce, Windmill Hill City Farm, the NHS and unions. It identified good practice in Bristol, and shared ideas on how to improve mental health and wellbeing at scale in our workplaces – captured in the ‘Thriving at Work Bristol’ report, which will be launched at our conference on 4th November.

3. Thriving at Work Bristol: Phase 2


Phase 2 will be formally launched on 4th November. This phase is being led by employers (supported by public health) and will focus on testing, learning, sharing, and scaling up improvement.


Three action groups have been created to improve mental health and wellbeing in workplaces by:


- Implementing the Thriving at Work mental health core standards and testing interventions.
- Measuring the impact and developing evidence, learning and guidance.
- Sharing learning widely, and scaling up ‘what works’ to spread improvement across the region (creating cycles of continuous improvement).
- In parallel, evaluating the impact of multiple organisations across a region / sectors / sizes collaborating to improve mental health and wellbeing across their organisations.

¹ Stevenson D, Farmer P (2017), Thriving at Work The Stevenson /Farmer review of mental health and employers. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/thriving-at-work-a-review-of-mental-health-and-employers

4. Action Groups

	<p>Culture and Behaviour Action Group</p> <p>Chair: Stephen Harris, Trading Director, Ovo Energy</p> <p>Current partner organisations: Department for Work and Pensions, Rolls Royce, St Monica's Trust, Triodos Bank, Unite the Union.</p>
<p>Aims</p>	<p>To improve culture and behaviour in workplaces through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a.) Increasing the number of organisations in the region implementing mental health interventions (as part of a Mental Health Action Plan). b.) Through our testing, the group will the strengthen the evidence for, and understanding of, the interventions which have greatest impact.
<p>Approach</p>	<p>To share with local employers information on mental health and wellbeing interventions and advise on their implementation (via evidence / guidance / partners' experience / expert advice). For each, a 'sponsor' employer will be identified to speak with other employers about its impact and any learning.</p> <p>To test and measure the effectiveness of a number of interventions – testing each in different local workplaces to understand impact. For example, testing mental health training for line managers or Wellness Action Plans.</p> <p>To report findings with employers across the region and scale up the approaches which have had the greatest impact.</p>

	<p>Policy Group</p> <p>Chair: Karen Cooke, Senior HR Business Partner, Hargreaves Lansdown</p> <p>Current partner organisations: Windmill Hill City Farm, Burges Salmon, Ovo Energy</p>
<p>Aims</p>	<p>To support organisations across the region to access and embed policy and guidance to help create mentally healthy workplaces – equipping them to prevent mental ill health, and to provide timely support when people have health difficulties.</p>
<p>Approach</p>	<p>To develop tools based on best practice and the group's experience – such as a template mental health policy and a template mental health action plan.</p> <p>To test these with local organisations (SMEs – including those without HR support) to assess their impact. The action group will offer coaching to guide the organisations implementing these tools, to aid this approach and gain a better understanding of the support needed.</p>

	<p>Leadership Group</p> <p>Chair: Adam Powell, Senior Tax Partner, Deloitte</p> <p>Current partner organisations: In development – collaborating with the University of the West of England’s Leadership and Change Centre and the NHS Leadership Academy.</p>
<p>Aims</p>	<p>To test approaches to better understand how leaders can be supported to lead mentally healthy and compassionate organisations.</p>
<p>Approach</p>	<p>Senior leaders play a key role in helping to prioritise mental health and wellbeing in a workplace; in supporting positive improvements in culture and practice; and in transforming how mental health is seen and talked about amongst employees if they themselves can be open. Alongside this, senior leaders have a key role in providing transparency and accountability around progress made.</p> <p>This project group aims to better understand how senior leaders can be supported – through other senior leaders – to improve mental health and wellbeing within their organisations. We are currently gaining feedback from partners around our approach, but envision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating an ‘Action Learning Set’ of local senior leaders (likely to be those who are responsible for a workforce of 100+ people). - Creating an ‘Action Learning Set’ of emerging leaders. - Testing this approach and evaluating the impact on the individuals, their organisation and the region, of creating a community of practice of leaders from diverse backgrounds, including those with lived experience of mental ill health, supporting each other to make progress in creating mentally healthy workplaces. - Explore the impact of other interventions; for example, reverse mentoring (possibly between both groups).

To note, these Action Groups are in development and we are still looking for a small number of additional partners from across the region to join them, and many more partners to be involved in testing interventions.

5.) National Thriving at Work alignment

This work is closely aligned with the national Thriving at Work programme, led by Mind, the Department of Work and Pensions and the Department of Health. We are encouraging all participating organisations to sign the ‘Thriving at Work Leadership Council’s ‘Mental Health at Work Commitment’. Bristol was the first to sign as a city and aims for at least 50 Bristol employers to sign up over the year ahead.

This work is testing approaches to embed the ‘Thriving at Work’ 6 core standards, becoming an implementation area for the national Thriving at Work Leadership Council’s programme. This enables our local efforts to be informed by national expertise with learning shared between us.

5) Evaluation

We are beginning to develop an evaluation plan for this work with academic partners. We will need to gather accurate baseline data from participating organisations ahead of interventions being tested, and create a consistent approach to measuring the impact of the interventions we test.

Outcome measurements are being developed through this, but are likely to include some of the following (aligning with the national Thriving at Work indicators):

- % of people describing work having a negative impact on their mental health.
- % of people feeling comfortable talking about their mental health at work.
- % of people feeling comfortable talking to their manager about their mental health at work.
- % of people feeling confident that their manager will take action to support their mental health at work.

We will also be assessing our reach. For example, the number of employees this work covers, and the number of SMEs / larger organisations included. We are also developing measures to determine whether partners collaborating as a system, helps or hinders improvement.

4.) Governance and lead partners

This work is being overseen by the Thrive Bristol Steering Group, which reports to Bristol's Health and Wellbeing Board. The partners on the original Thriving at Work Taskgroup have been invited to join the 'Thriving at Work Stakeholder Group'. This group's role is to inform and shape Phase 2. Public Health will share updates with the Thrive Stakeholder Group, to keep partners informed of progress; share opportunities to be informed; and make requests for support.

This work is being led by city employers, supported by Bristol City Council and Business West. We are working with the West of England Combined Authority and neighbouring local authorities to extend this approach through an emerging 'Thrive West' programme.

5.) Timeframe and opportunities to scale up improvement

This next phase is being launched on 4th November, where wider partners will be invited to get involved in shaping and supporting this work. Between November 2019 and November 2020 our Action Groups will regularly communicate progress – including through regular Stakeholder Group updates.

In November 2020 a conference will be held to report back on what has been achieved; what has been learned; what next steps will be taken to scale up the approaches that have been effective.

We are aware that the National Institute for Health Research is planning to prioritise funding to better understand how to improve mental health and wellbeing in workplaces. We hope that this project will make us well placed to apply for this significant funding to us to scale up improvement.

6.) Contact details

For further information, please contact Bristol Public Health leads:

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