

WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH IN PRACTICE

FOCUS ON: HSBC



The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong (CMHA HK) *Workplace Mental Health in Practice* series is designed to showcase the work of our members to create a culture of good mental health in their organisations, providing information and practical examples of efforts to create change.

This first edition of our series focuses on HSBC, a leading employer in Hong Kong and a founding member of CMHA HK. Tamara Gurajena, Head of HR Consultancy, Asia Pacific and Vincent Chow, Senior HR Consultant, Human Resources, Hong Kong, spoke with us and shared their insights into how HSBC have approached mental health at an organisational level, to support their people to thrive.

Can you tell us a bit about your approach to mental health in the workplace?

For the past four years, we have prioritised mental health at HSBC, recognising that the banking industry is a dynamic, fast-paced environment.

We focus on raising awareness of mental health in the workplace, encouraging employees to have open conversations about health, supporting employees experiencing mental ill health and making sure that the working environment is conducive to wellbeing for all.

What have you done to address the stigma around mental health?

In Asia, the stigma around mental health has presented a challenge to our organisational efforts to prioritise the topic. When we began working in this space in 2016, mental health was not something that many people felt comfortable talking about.

We have worked hard at an organisational level to reduce the stigma around talking about mental health in the workplace. One way we have done this is by getting our leaders to buy into the idea that supporting

the mental health of employees is a priority. It was essential for us to involve our leaders in this journey, as they set the tone for the organisation and signal expectations to others.

What do you do to support employees?

Compared to other cities, Hong Kong has a culture of very long work hours. A lot of our employees are working parents, juggling priorities in the office and at home, which can take a toll on mental and physical wellbeing.

People managers are encouraged look out for the wellbeing of their employees and provide reasonable accommodations when necessary, such as providing flexible working arrangements. Additionally, we have many resources available, both internally and through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) that are available for staff who need support.

Recently, we have set up a new Employee Resource Group called 'Ability'. Its objective is to signpost and connect employees with information and resources related to (dis)ability, the necessary support for people with a disability or a physical or mental health condition, as well as guidance on being a carer.

How do you sustain awareness of the issue?

HSBC regularly organises seminars, panel discussions and other events to keep mental health at the forefront. Every two months, we hold a leader-led wellbeing dialogue, which is a forum for senior leaders to come together with employees to talk about wellbeing issues.

At one of these forums, we had a high-level manager talk about implementing flexible work arrangements. Traditionally in Hong Kong this is a subject that is not openly discussed. Having a leader stand up to

talk about flexible hours and give real life examples about how they can support people to better manage their wellbeing added a lot of weight to the discussion.

Can you share some of your next steps?

Moving forward, we will continue to prioritise mental health at HSBC. One of our next undertakings will be to train every people manager in the organisation globally in mental health and teach them how to identify situations where people may need support. By having this training, our people managers will be better equipped to have regular conversations with their employees to check-in with them and find ways to support their wellbeing.

In the coming months, we will also be piloting onsite EAP counselling services, to provide an additional way for colleagues to access support.



What is your key advice for other organisations who want to prioritise mental health?

Our key advice for other organisations looking to get involved in mental health is to just get started. It is becoming easier to talk about mental health in the workplace and it is rewarding to be able to support your employees to be at their well best. Talk to your staff to understand what their wellbeing needs are, and start with small, achievable steps to address them. There are a lot of external resources available to support this work, so make sure that employees and managers know how to signpost for help and care.