



香港城市精神健康聯盟

City Mental Health Alliance HK

CMHA HK Effective People Management Member Insight & Exchange Session (MIES)

Facilitator



Dr Zoë Fortune
CEO, CMHA HK

The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong (CMHA HK) recently held a Member Insight & Exchange Session (MIES) focused on the topic of **Promoting Effective People Management** - Standard 5 of the [Guide to Thriving at Work](#). This covers two key areas:

1. Ensuring all employees have a regular conversation about their health and wellbeing
2. Managers, supervisors and leaders are trained and supported in effective management practices

Focus on middle managers

Data from the CMHA HK [2020 employee wellbeing survey](#) showed that while employees in senior management positions were most likely to come to work despite mental health problems (97%), it was middle managers who registered the most days per month that they came to work whilst suffering mental health problems (senior staff 4.1 days/month). Most also stated that their effectiveness at work was impacted on these days.

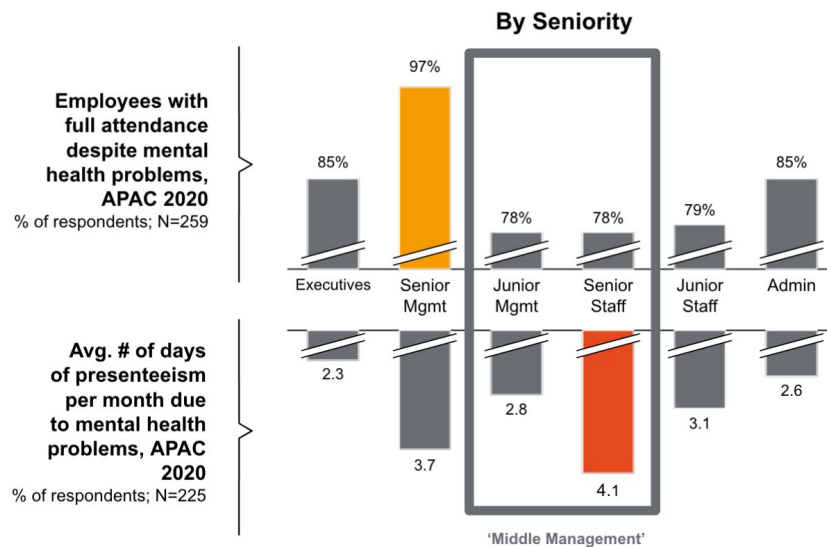
Speakers



Nikki Williams
Associate Director - HR at Allen & Overy & CMHA HK Board Member



Helen Colquhoun
Partner, Head of Employment Hong Kong, DLA Piper



Middle management rates the support provided by their company to be the least helpful, which may have contributed to the higher prevalence of mental health problems among this group.

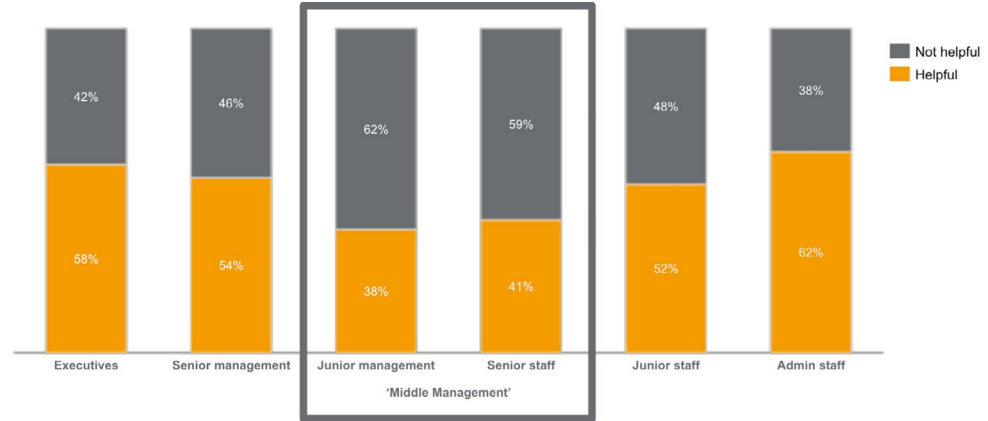


Paul Choi

Group Head of Human Resources, Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing Limited (HKEX)

An important data finding for Wellbeing and HR managers is that the majority of employees in middle management roles rated the support resources provided by their company as “not helpful”, which was not reflected in other groups. While this may contribute to the prevalence of mental health stressors in this group, it also highlights the need to provide support services that are tailored to the needs of middle managers.

% of employees with mental health problems finding support resources helpful¹
APAC 2020; # of respondents; N=255



Jennifer Tam

Partner, Mayer Brown & CMHA HK Board Member

The speakers shared insights on how their organisations have encouraged middle managers to engage in, lead and support open conversations around mental health; and what more needs to be done to create mentally healthy workplaces.

Key highlights

- Supporting HR and Wellbeing Managers so they are equipped to signpost employees to sources of support and confident to conduct conversations. However, managers should not be expected to have all the answers and should also be provided with regular support.
- Managers and Team Leaders should be encouraged to have regular and open discussions about mental health with their direct reports. Making these check-ins part of routine discussions helps to build trust and rapport within teams.
- Implementation of Mental Health Advocate / Ambassador programs will vary between companies but it was agreed that employees in these roles should be well supported.
- Ensuring conversations about mental health are included on the agenda of senior leadership meetings was recognised as important to ensure appropriate funding and resourcing for implementation. Mental health should be considered a mainstream issue and not be restricted to the realm of HR.

Opening up dialogue

Nikki Williams shared that the global pandemic was a good catalyst to foster more dialogue around mental health. The honest sharing of a personal lock-down experience by a senior partner through a blog has been effective in

encouraging staff to open up about their own experiences. Middle managers have also been equipped with coaching-style techniques to handle conversations around the topic. Williams also noted that although HR staff should not feel like

they need to have all the answers, it is crucial to provide appropriate mental health support training to HR managers.

From a middle manager's perspective, **Jennifer Tam** added that it is important to have regular and frank discussions with the team on their wellbeing. These check-ins should be made a habit (especially at times when the team works remotely) in order to build rapport and trust with colleagues over time. Tam shared that Mayer Brown has provided her with tailored development programmes to support her in her new role as a partner of the firm, including coaching on how to build resilience. This has better equipped her to guide and support junior staff.

Mental health campaigns have also been effective, one example of which is the SPEAK campaign at DLA Piper, where staff have been trained to

have helpful conversations about mental health. **Helen Colquhoun** noted that SPEAK Ambassadors have been trained on how to identify the signs of someone struggling with their mental health and wellness, have a conversation confidently, support that person and, importantly, what not to say. Ambassadors have been selected across different departments to ensure that all staff have someone they can speak with openly. Colquhoun also highlighted the importance of supporting the supporters, with the Ambassadors meeting regularly to share and discuss recurring issues, how they have been approached by employees and exchange what they have learned.

Paul Choi shared that mental health conversations need to be “mainstreamed” at a senior level and not categorised as purely an HR issue. Key role models at the top are integral to fostering an environment that is conducive to this conversation.

Building mental health into DNA of organisation

Effective people management in the context of mental health needs to be ingrained in company culture. Allen & Overy (A&O) have introduced mental health advocates across the firm; employees apply based on their personal interests and are selected to champion for mental wellbeing in the workplace. Williams shared that A&O have also introduced quarterly check-in meetings in place of formal appraisals. Apart from providing holistic performance reviews, these meetings are structured more as broader career conversations with a focus also on personal wellness.

On measuring impact, Colquhoun shared that DLA Piper employees have taken part in anonymous surveys on the topics of mental health and wellbeing. Results are analysed to spot any trends - in particular, whether any teams are experiencing higher levels of stress and lower levels of support. These results in turn allow management to provide more targeted support across different departments.

Tam shared that raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing should be built into the DNA of the organisation and that shifting of company culture needs to be implemented from the top, which is the case at Mayer Brown. Choi added that in order for mental health to be on the boardroom agenda, organisations need commitment from senior leadership, appropriate funding for promotion of the cause and purposeful communications.



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Alliance** HK

The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong is a collaborative venture founded by city businesses. Championed by senior leaders, the Alliance is business led and expert guided and aims to create a culture of good mental health for workers in Hong Kong, share best practice and increase mental health understanding.

This document is not and should not be considered as clinical advice or support. Anyone who may have a need for such support should seek professional advice.