

MTMS pledges to help staff share the load as it appoints its first mental health first-aider

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UK rail depot maintenance firm MTMS has underlined its commitment to promoting wellbeing in the industry by appointing its first mental health first-aider.

The company, based in Swadlincote, Derbyshire, has appointed Nicky Johnson to the role, the first of three mental health first-aider posts it intends to create this year.

Nicky underwent her training for the role to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Week, while the company has also signed up the Railway Mental Health Charter, which was set up to promote, manage and support workforce mental wellbeing.

The issue has special relevance in the rail industry where, according to figures released two years ago, employees experience one-and-a-half times higher rates of anxiety than the general population.

The COVID pandemic was at its full height at the time the survey was conducted, but other research has found the rate of suicide in the workforce is 1.6 times the UK average, and 60% of workers have experienced mental health issues.

And, as an industry which employs a high proportion of men – women make up around just 16 per cent of the workforce – its workforce will be disproportionately affected by the issues which ensure that three out of every suicide victims in the UK is male.

Back at MTMS, where she works as a cost accountant, Nicky has been trained to act as a listening ear to anyone who wants to take the first step to getting help with mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, which all-too-often remain hidden by people who feel they have no-one to talk to.

The company employs 32 people, many of whom work remotely maintaining the depots and rolling stock on behalf of train operators across the UK, and all have been informed about her new role and encouraged to contact her if they feel they have any mental health issues.

She said: “I’m usually the kind of person who gets on with things, so the training was a real eye-opener about how things that we might expect people to be able to brush off can have a significant effect on them.

“My role isn’t there to offer advice, what I do is listen and show them understanding before signposting them to services which might be able to help them further.

“None of us know what other people are going through and so having mental health first-aiders on hand could be a real lifeline to somebody. I’m already a trained medical first aider so this gives my role more scope and I hope that I can be of help in the future.”

Matt Forst, managing director of MTMS, said: “Mental health is a huge issue for everybody, because none of us are immune from anxiety or depression, and many people we wouldn’t expect may be facing problems we may be unaware of.

“As employers, it’s our duty to ensure that our staff are able to seek the help they need. As a male I’m aware that men don’t always reach out for help, not even to their mates, so our pledge to support the Railway Mental Health Charter and Nicky’s appointment will show everyone that help is just a phone call away.”

MTMS services and maintains rolling stock and specialist equipment at more than one third of rail depots across the UK, serving such familiar names in mainline rail as Hitachi, First MTR South-Western Railway, Arriva and Siemens, and is the proud owner of an excellent safety record.

For more information visit www.mtms.co.uk

Photo credit: MTMS