

We're all in this together, being kind can help reduce the mental health taboo

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Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Railways says now, more than ever, it is important that as an industry we encourage members of the public and rail staff to look after our mental health.

Ian Prosser has written a blog post on the Office of Rail and Road website saying it is also vital we understand how to spot the signs of people who may be in a vulnerable state as we start to see passenger numbers slowly increase.

He writes: "Mental health is of particular concern in the rail industry, where the rate of suicide in the workforce is 1.6 times higher than the UK average, and 60% of workers have experienced mental health issues.

"By talking about it more we can reduce the taboo, change our culture and ensure that people know and accept that many of us have mental health issues.

"There's no doubt that the coronavirus outbreak has led to many people becoming isolated, and it will take time to adjust but we are all in this together and can all play a role in supporting one another.

“The theme for Mental Health Awareness Week this year is kindness, and if you think there is someone who is in a vulnerable state of mind, a simple intervention such as ‘hello’ or a ‘how are you’ can help spark a conversation.

“In recent years the rail industry has made significant strides with its partners in preventing suicides on the railway. Despite an increase in suicides, we have also seen an increase in successful interventions, with rail employees, British Transport Police and public intervening in more than 2,200 suicide attempts on the railway in 2018/19, an increase of 33 per cent since 2017/18.

“That’s a sobering thought. It means those individuals have gone on to live their lives, and that our staff and passengers have been spared the trauma of being involved in potentially tragic events.

“It is obviously very important to focus on your mental wellbeing, and with many people having been isolated from the outside world – it is important to keep communicating so people don’t feel lonely and to keep an active community going – it is very important that’s done with railway staff but also the people we know and love.

“Last year I helped to set up the [Million Hour Challenge](#) – a five-year project which is encouraging staff to donate their time, energy and skills to help the Samaritans in their vital work. Volunteering can benefit the mental health of all of us by encouraging us to talk with each other, and the wider community, about the issues involved.

“Our hope is that as more and more colleagues get involved in volunteering this attitude will fade away and we will come to terms with the idea that mental health is as important as physical health.”

Click [here](#) for more details.

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