



Fellows Broadsheet

The Institute of Hospitality Fellows Broadsheet is a thought-leadership article written by a member of our esteemed College of Fellows. Celebrating the wealth of professionalism, knowledge and expertise within our diverse, worldwide hospitality family. The Fellows Broadsheet is published exclusively for members.

Boosting mental health in hospitality

Robert Bird CertIoD FIH FISP has been a member of the Institute of Hospitality since 2018.

As an active IoH Fellow and as Director of Sales at HIT Training Ltd, he is committed to promoting the sector and raising its profile as part of his role.

In this month's Fellows Broadsheet and to start 2023, Robert explores the crucial topic of 'Boosting mental health in hospitality', looking at mental health statistics within the industry and ways to help workers boost their mental wellbeing:

And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Research carried out by Nestle Professional discovered that eight in ten UK chefs working in professional kitchens, experience mental health issues. With a massive 81% experiencing signs of stress and 48% believing that not enough is being done about it.

Top factors contributing to stress include staff shortages 58%, lack of daylight 41%, lack of light 43% and limited budget 42%. Most significantly, 73% admitted to calling in sick due to stress.

All about the stats

When it comes to mental health in hospitality, the statistics say it all.

According to The Royal Society for Public Health :

- One in five hospitality workers suffer from work-related severe mental health issues
- A staggering 62% - two thirds of workers - do not think the hospitality industry takes care of its employees
- Almost a quarter, 24% of hospitality workers need medical or psychological support
- Only 10% receive access to mental health first aiders, mentoring or training to support health and wellbeing.





How do we change the stats?

Firstly, we need to recognise that ensuring the wellbeing of our industry and its long-term growth needs urgent attention. And changing culture must come from the top down.

Most of us, at some point in our lives, have struggled with mental wellbeing. Yet, despite one in four people experiencing mental health struggles, there still remains a stigma around seeking help.

We work in an industry where we spend more time at work than at home. We form friendships at work and yet, when asked how we are, we say: 'Fine.'

But 'Fine' is not fine.

Sometimes we need to take a step back. Take time to listen to our staff and really connect with them. Especially now that increasing cost of living pressures makes it harder than ever to achieve a work-life balance.

We must do better at understanding what our body and minds are telling us, and that mental health is the same as physical health.

Five Steps to Wellbeing

1. Connect with people. Share how you are feeling to gain emotional support and build a rapport and sense of wellbeing
2. Be active. This is not always joining a gym, it can be going for a walk. Having a goal such as exercise will help change your mood
3. Learn a new skill. This could be at work or out of work. This can boost your confidence; give you purpose and may involve connecting with peers.
4. Give to others. This does not have to cost, it could be making someone a cup of tea or helping with a task. Helping a member of staff who may be struggling.
5. Pay attention to the moment - mindfulness. We often spend time living in the past, or the future, and forget to stop and live in the moment, or take time to relax.





The good news

Although the stats don't paint a positive picture, there are lots of amazing people and organisations that are taking action to provide a much-needed lifeline for those working in the industry.

Online training platform iHASCO reports businesses are recognising the challenges and introducing measures to promote a happier working environment, such as paid overtime and opportunities to openly discuss mental health.

One notable campaign was launched by chef director Andrew Clarke, who suffered a period of depression while working in hospitality. He started the Pilot Light campaign with fellow chef, Doug Sanham, to encourage others from the hospitality industry to talk about their mental health.

The Burnt Chef Project also conducted research on 750 hospitality professionals which reflected positively on the industry when it came to friendships.

Highlights included:

- Three-quarters (76.8%) of UK hospitality workers have a best friend at work. This trend is almost universal across the industry; from servers (70.9%) to directors (93.3%), from hotels (86%) to cafeterias (92.9%), and from teens (72.2%) to the over 60s (85%)
- 73.9% say it's easier to make friends in the hospitality industry than in other industries, attributing this to the people-centric, fun environment of hospitality, as well as bonding over difficult customers
- Over three-quarters agree that work is the ideal place to meet a new best friend
- Friendships in hospitality support good mental health by reducing stress (62.2%), reducing anxiety (49.7%) and boosting general wellbeing (45.5%).

Robert Bird FIH competing in 'The Funnel' Iron Man event



About the author

Robert Bird is Director of Sales at HIT Training Ltd, a national training provider of hospitality apprenticeships based in the UK.

His first job as a kitchen porter aged 15 sparked a love of hospitality from an early age. He trained as a chef in Michelin star restaurants before travelling the world learning his trade in France, Spain, Thailand and Australia.

In 2006, Robert was one of the original team to start up HIT, joining as an area manager. He set up the Dorset, Devon and Cornwall team and won the company's 'Best Team of the Year' award.

His passion for apprenticeships comes from the heart.

"Apprenticeships really do give people the chance to improve themselves and gain a new perspective on life," says Robert.

In his spare time, Robert competes in triathlons and Iron Man events. He also practises the painstaking art of stone balancing which allows him to switch off from the world.



Robert Bird FIH FISP





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Further Information

- The charity Hospitality Action has set up a number of initiatives for staff health and wellbeing, such as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), an Advice Hub and a 24/7 hospitality helpline 0808 802 0282
- The Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) has a longstanding commitment to preventing suicide and an accessible campaign hub. Further support can be sought from MIND, the mental health charity, and Hospitality Health
- The Pilot Light campaign
- Unite conducted a survey of professional chefs in London and found that those surveyed were working 48-60 hours per week, with 78% reporting injuries and near misses related to fatigue. Unite's survey also revealed that more than a quarter of chefs were using alcohol to get through their shift and 56% were taking painkillers.
- For more information, read The Staff Canteen
- Mental health and mental wellbeing are fundamental to the human, social and economical quality of life of individuals, families and communities and should therefore be considered as an intrinsic and vital part of public policy such as human rights, social care, education and employment. (World Health Organisation (WHO) European Declaration on Mental Health 2005)
- The HSE statistics in Great Britain 2022 reports 914,000 workers are suffering from work related stress, depression or anxiety (longstanding or new) and that 17.0 million working days were lost due to work related stress, depression or anxiety in 2021/22 (Labour Force Survey LFS)

Further reading

- You don't always have to be on cloud nine - Article: The Morning Advertiser
- Is the hospitality industry doing enough for employees' mental wellbeing - Newfoodmagazine
- Tackling mental health and wellbeing in the hospitality industry - Psdgroup
- Be Kind to your Mind - NHS quiz to explore your own mental wellbeing
- Five steps to wellbeing
- Guides for wellbeing
- The employment crisis in hospitality
- Friendships can be the key to good mental health - The Perfect Pairing report by BRITA Professional and The Burnt Chef Project

References

1. RSPH
2. Nestle Professional
3. NHS
4. The Burnt Chef Project