

Support Circle

Toolkit Overview

A **Life First Then Work** Initiative



LIFE FIRST THEN WORK[®]

**TURNING WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH
INTO A BUSINESS ADVANTAGE**

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Support Circle toolkit – overview section

What this toolkit is

Support Circle is a peer-led mental health culture programme.

It helps workplaces build everyday support into how teams interact, check in and show up for one another – without waiting for crisis or relying on formal interventions.

Support Circle adds visibility, but more importantly, it builds awareness. Because most of the time, we don't know who's struggling. It reminds us to stay human – to notice, to ask and to back each other, even when no wristband is worn.

Most people won't raise their hand when they're struggling – and this reminds us to look out for each other anyway. It's not soft. It's human.

This isn't therapy. It's not a tick-box campaign.

It's practical. It's culture-changing. It's what people actually need.

- Real conversations between colleagues
- A visible and trusted culture of care
- Shared responsibility for wellbeing

Wristbands are a core part of the Support Circle model.

They create visibility, prompt check-ins and offer a simple way to say “I need support” or “I'm here to listen.”

Not everyone will want to wear one – and that's okay.

Business leaders need to provide Peer Supporters with time, space and flexibility to ensure they can be available when someone is struggling.

It is no different from fire wardens or mental health first aiders.

The goal is to build a culture where support is visible and encouraged, even for those who prefer not to show they may be struggling.

When we lead with empathy, compassion and visibility, everyone benefits.

Designed for self-delivery or train-the-trainer models, this toolkit includes:

- Peer Supporter resources (Level 1)
- Posters, email templates and comms materials
- Manager guidance and conversation prompts
- Launch plan and follow-up steps
- Feedback and check-in tools
- Optional support to embed at scale, including workshops, leadership sessions and culture pulse checks

Why Support Circle exists

Many workplaces are trying to improve mental health support, but despite good intentions, much of it still misses the mark. Awareness days, EAPs, Mental Health First Aiders and initiatives can help, but they often don't address the everyday reality. People need someone to talk to, that they trust and who listens without judgment.

One in four people will experience a mental health issue each year. Yet most don't reach out, not because support doesn't exist, but because they worry about stigma, being a burden, distrust of internal support or simply not knowing where to start.

As someone who has struggled and supported others who have struggled, I know that real change needs more than reactive support. Support Circle creates multiple touchpoints, proactive noticing and a feedback loop that helps workplaces continually improve, not just react when things go wrong.

Support Circle bridges that gap. It takes what organisations already offer and makes it more visible, more accessible and more human through proactive, everyday peer support, not just formal systems or crisis points.

It brings support into the heart of workplace culture through visible, simple actions that make support normal, not exceptional.

The culture cost

Poor mental health costs UK businesses £56 billion a year¹ through:

- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism (*employees coming to work while sick or otherwise unwell, leading to reduced productivity and potentially impacting the health of both the individual and their colleagues*)
- Turnover of staff
- Poor engagement

But the real damage is cultural:

- Disengaged teams
- Silence around stress and burnout
- Toxic resilience ("just get on with it")

Support Circle helps reverse this

It doesn't just raise awareness — it gives people a role in changing the culture from within.

Ignore culture and you bleed cash. Improve it and everyone wins — your people, your reputation, your bottom line.

What This Toolkit Delivers

Awareness – Staff understand what peer support is (and isn't)

Connection – Conversations happen where silence used to

Visibility – Wristbands, posters and check-ins make support part of the everyday

Sustainability – 6-month refresh and reflection tools included

Accessibility – Clear pathways to HR, EAP and internal support

Scalability – Built for easy rollout across teams, sites or regions.

Optional support is available if your organisation needs guidance embedding it at scale.

Got questions or need support rolling this out?

If you have any questions or feedback, please reach out to your Support Circle lead.

They can pass anything on to Life First Then Work –we're always happy to help.

¹ Deloitte (2022). *Mental Health and Employers: The Case for Investment – Pandemic and Beyond*.
<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/consulting/articles/mental-health-and-employers.html>