

Victoria Callaghan

Since moving into OH nursing in 2006, I have worked in both pharmaceutical and snack manufacturing environments. In 2015, I was both personally and professionally challenged after the suicide of an employee. I wasn't happy with the way in which the suicide and mental ill-health in general was swept under the carpet. This led me to take action, with my objective always being to prevent any further suicides and improve mental wellness for our employees and their families. I set out on my own personal objective to plan, implement and deliver a 3 year mental health strategy which included line management training, counselling and other help services for employees, wellbeing days and the introduction of Mental Health Ambassadors (over 100) across every area of the business – all specially trained to help people struggling with mental ill health. The OH team also received training, something I believe should be a requirement for all OH professionals.

I faced multiple challenges at the start, mainly due to people not being interested in mental health or maybe just because they didn't understand it. During this time I also completed my BSc Hons in OH practice. I based my final year dissertation on my mental health project and was awarded a 1st class Honours. I was awarded the JCI Scotland Top Outstanding Young Person award 2019 for Moral Leadership and I am a finalist at this years RCNi Nurse Awards for mental health nursing (OH based). I strongly believe OH professionals are uniquely placed in healthcare and must be trained, educated and supported to optimise this position so that health and well-being of populations can be improved upon. For me it's not a job, it's about being a human being simply wanting to make a difference. I couldn't change what happened but I could help prevent it happening again.

