

Real-life story - Jennifer McGahey

Jen worked as a nurse in the NHS before taking up a post with Nestlé in employee screening. Having undertaken the Global Healthy Workforce Certificate (University of Arizona) she moved away from clinical nursing to promote employee wellness and public health.

Jennifer McGahey Employee wellness nurse

Employer or university Nestlé UK and Ireland (based at Nestlé House, York)

Salary range £20k-£30k

How I got into the role

After qualifying as a nurse, I worked for over 12 years in NHS day surgeries, first in York, and later in Shetland. Returning to York, I applied for a role at Nestlé as an occupational health nurse. It was a role that didn't require a formal public health qualification and is equivalent to Agenda for Change [1] Band 5 in the NHS. Once in post, I developed an interest in employee wellness and how being at work can have a positive influence on health and wellbeing choices.

What I do

My role has changed hugely since I joined Nestlé. For the past two years I have been working with the head of employee wellness to evolve and deliver our wellbeing strategy across the whole of Nestlé's UK & Ireland business.

My role is diverse, fast moving and interesting. I oversee the wellness champions who are a group of employees, based at various sites, who have a passion for wellbeing. We want our health promotion messages to be relevant and targeted to each site. Engagement is vital and we look to see which issues affect each of our employee groups.

I spend time each week meeting with our champions. We continue to recruit new team members and I like to spend time with them talking about our strategy and how, as a champion, they can influence the choices that employees make to improve their wellbeing.

In collaboration with the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) and Nuffield Health, I plan the training programme for wellness champions. All of our champions are invited to attend and work towards the RSPH Level 1 in Understanding Health Improvement. This also provides them with an opportunity to understand how our partnership with Nuffield Health works.

In February 2014 we launched the wellness pages on our intranet. I regularly update the pages about physical health and mental wellbeing to reflect what our business is doing and to provide information on current health issues.

I support the delivery of our resilience toolkits and of our Understanding Personal Resilience session across the whole of the organisation.

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The best bits and challenges

I particularly enjoy working with the wellness champions. Over the past two years we have delivered some amazing projects at our sites, including 'SHE' days, which are roadshow-style events demonstrating the link between safety, health and environment. The event in 2016 focused on physical resilience and mental wellbeing and the Nestlé safety team invited St John Ambulance to demonstrate the automated external defibrillators we've placed in factories and offices.

Other project themes have included: Healthy Eating Week, Wellness Week, yoga taster sessions, Move More in the Office, Lunchtime Energiser, The Gatwick Mile, Time to Talk day, Movember, Love Yourself (mental wellbeing) and How Much Do You (Really) Drink?

My personal learning and development has increased greatly in this role. I have a new confidence for delivering and presenting about wellness to the whole organisation and learning about the importance of emotional wellbeing has been key. Mental wellbeing and mental health problems have had a major impact on my family, and understanding how my experiences have shaped me has helped me to deliver this part of our strategy with meaning and honesty.

Life outside work

Away from work, I have three big passions. My first is spending time with my family. My kids are at university, so time with them is valuable and precious. My husband also works in healthcare, and when we have time off, we enjoy time away from our professional roles.

I have been a York City FC supporter since the 1980s and we are a small and proud club that has had more than a few highs and lows! I try to get to as many games throughout the season as I can. My dad and son are also keen fans, and we like to go along together.

And volunteering for Oxfam has been one of my favourite pastimes for over four years. I volunteer on a Saturday morning at a local Oxfam where I sort stock or work on the till. I love working with both the volunteers and the customers and joining the Oxfam team was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Career plans and top tips for others

My next step is to look at moving into a wellbeing manager role. I am particularly interested in supporting students who are working in manufacturing placements as part of their higher education.

My big tip is to be passionate and honest. Roles that promote wellbeing in the workplace are very much on the increase and you need to believe that you can implement a programme that others will also believe in. Keep up to date with current UK health issues and how they impact on the population. And follow the work of the RSPH and look at the training they offer.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/occupational-health-nurse/real-life-story-jennifer-mcgahey>

Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Agenda_for_Change