

Best Targeted Mental Health Initiative

Winner

The Wright 5* Legacy, Riders Minds

This category recognises a special incentive brought about for a group of employees working in a specific industry, or a specialist initiative to solve a particular challenge

Statement from Victoria Wright

“Matthew took his own life in February, which has been such a difficult time over the last few months for myself, my whole family and the whole team. We want to make Riders Minds Matt’s legacy – the work that he wanted to do, the help and support that he wanted to give to so many other people, we want to continue with that and we will continue with that. So to have the work that we’re doing recognised is a dream come true.

Matthew often said that mental health is a war, one that nobody

knows you’re fighting, and you either die trying or win. We want to win that war for so many people struggling in the equestrian world. We will provide them with the army and ammunition they need through the Riders Minds platform.

A real stigma for me is the word ‘suicide’. One day, I will have to explain to my children why Daddy has the word ‘suicide’ written on his death certificate, but they will understand because I will be honest and open with them and give them a good understanding of the importance of good mental

health. Perhaps if this word was replaced with ‘mental illness’ for future families losing loved ones to the same silent killer that nobody can see, more people will see it as an illness, no different to any other. But most importantly, an illness that you can recover from because, like with all illnesses, many people can get better.

For anybody contemplating suicide, wanting to take that pain away; no matter how bad any situation may be, you will be loved, you will be missed, and it’s okay to not be okay.”



Riders Minds is one of three bespoke, groundbreaking mental health initiatives for the equestrian industry. The scheme is the personal brainchild of 5 star event rider Matt Wright and his wife Victoria, Director of Caunton Manor Stud.

Matt had openly shared his mental ill health struggles, regularly blogging about his experiences to raise mental health awareness and understanding. His courageous openness encouraged other riders to come forward. Victoria and Matt recognised the need for a resource that could offer mental health and well-being support for all riders. They teamed up with Lucy Katan, CEO of The British Grooms Association and Equestrian

Employers Association, who had launched Grooms Minds and Employers Minds. Riders Minds brought together three loud voices to address the challenges of mental health in the sector. It aimed to build understanding and confidence among all equestrians, and encourage a more compassionate industry with a healthier culture. The founders also hoped people beyond equestrianism could benefit from the ripple effect.

The equestrian industry is beset by high rates of depression and suicide. Some riders have fallen victim to pressures within the equestrian industry. Others use riding as an escape from struggles in their personal life. A key goal of Riders

Highly Commended

Minds was to reduce suicide rates within the industry.

Riders Minds was founded in 2019 and launched in May 2020 Mental Health Awareness Week to great acclaim throughout the industry. It was signed up to the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation. A comprehensive mental health resource was created, including a self-help zone, mental health checker, case studies, inspirational stories and 'top tips'. The Riders Minds logo was created from Matt's description of 'my messy mind'. A Facebook page was established, offering opportunities to connect with others. People can offer support and share stories, hints and tips.

Achievements

Riders Minds is still in its infancy, but is already getting traction in the sector. It has been acclaimed by industry bodies such as British Eventing, British Dressage and the British Equestrian Federation and garners regular media coverage.

The equestrian community is increasingly talking about mental health, as evidenced by activity on the Riders Minds social media channels. The Facebook page has 5,429 followers and February's reach was 84.6k people. The new Instagram account has 1,016 followers already and is growing rapidly. Riders Minds was initially financed by the founders, but has since secured sponsorship from equestrian industry corporates. A GoFundMe page has to date secured 30% of its target.

Victoria says: "The important part for Matthew was to have a helpline available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and even if only one person called it, it would still have been worth it. We achieved that. I am fervently determined to make Riders Minds Matt's legacy." ■

Judges' comments



Loved the cultural change ambition across the entire industry and the scale of reach.



This feels like an industry which may not have been addressed before and a gap that needed to be filled with support. Fantastic strategy, well thought out, very inclusive.

Health Toolkits
The Walt Disney
Company

Shortlisted

→ MH initiative
Bloomberg LP

→ Fertility in the
workplace training
Fertility Network UK

→ EPIC - Encouraging
Positive Improvements
Continuously
Reward Gateway

