

Winner // CHRIS NEWMAN – MOTABILITY OPERATIONS

This category recognises those individuals in organisations who deserve the recognition for their hard work, commitment, and support to mental health and wellbeing

Chris is a Team Coach, supporting Motability Operations (MO) customer service employees to give excellent service to 700,000 disabled customers. He provides support on both a professional and emotional level to hundreds of Advisors. During the Covid-19 lockdown, he recorded a video talking about his mental health and the challenges he'd faced, to help others. He became one of MO's first MH Allies, then a Lead, an active member of disability network enABLE, and recently started the men's mental health network, MENTality.

Chris is a Lead Mental Health Ally. He has been fundamental to creating the culture at MO today, where people feel safe to speak up and share stories about difficult topics.

Chris has driven forward the agenda and provided support to others. He does this both in his role as a Team Coach, giving support to Advisors who in turn support MO's disabled customers in what can often be a very challenging but rewarding role, and in his own time.

Passionate, driven and inspiring, Chris continues to go above and beyond to be there for others, in addition to his day job.

Opening up on camera

Chris's story really began in 2020, when he recorded a video for employees, in which he opened up about the challenges he'd faced in relation to mental health, and the tips that had worked for him. He became one of MO's first Mental Health Allies and was critical to shaping the Allies network the company has today. Since becoming an Ally, Chris has had multiple Ally conversations with employees, providing a listening ear and sign-posting on topics including bereavement, financial issues, and family problems.



Chris was critical to shaping the Mental Health Allies network the company has today.



Chris set up a men's mental health group

In 2021, Chris volunteered to become a Lead Ally and has been pivotal in driving the MH agenda forward and creating a supportive and successful network of Allies. In this role, Chris has presented at team meetings, hosted webinars and podcasts, run drop-in sessions to attract new Allies, supported technical/practical elements of the role, given support to Ally colleagues, attended voluntary training such as suicide first aid, co-designed intranet pages on wellbeing and organising events such as MH Awareness Week.

Getting men to talk

In 2022, following a company wellbeing survey, it became clear that men felt less able to speak up in the workplace

about how they were feeling. Following this, Chris gained the support of the CEO, CCO and a number of other passionate employees and started men's mental health group MENTality. The group now has over 100 members, and involves a men's only Teams channel where people can discuss anything that's on their mind.

Chris has also written various comms, and hosted mental health-related podcasts on topics such as: baby loss, becoming a dad for the first time, body image, men's mental health in general,

single parenting and "coming out". Chris has received feedback from many employees that he has helped them with their own struggles and encouraged them to get help or to open up/check in on others.

It is thanks to Chris's drive, determination and passion, that MO has the open and supportive culture it has today – for everyone, but most importantly for men. Chris is without doubt MO's Hero of the Year! ■

Judges' comments

- + The fact that Chris founded an employee network on top of his day job is absolutely amazing!
- + Chris deserves recognition for his hard work. His story was inspiring and it was clear what drives his commitment.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

- Lisa Walker, Betknowmore UK
- Christine Tolaini, Betknowmore UK

SHORTLISTED

- Natalie Degg, Experian
- Don Rainbow, Richmond and Wandsworth Council