



FA REFEREEING MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPION SCHEME

Role Description

About the Role

The FA Refereeing Department is committed to supporting the mental health of referees and everyone involved in refereeing. Whilst many people are comfortable talking about their physical health, we know talking about and seeking support for our mental health can be a challenge. We all have mental health, just as we have physical health. As our bodies become unwell so too can our minds, with one in four adults and one in eight young people experiencing mental health problems each year. Sadly, the cost of not talking about mental health can be devastating with almost 4,000 people taking their own lives each year.

As a founder signatory of the Mental Health Charter for the Sport and Recreation and the Heads Up Mentally Healthy Football declaration we have worked with Mind to co-design a mental health champion role to help tackle the stigma within refereeing. Ultimately, we want to create an open environment so that referees and everyone involved in the refereeing community can talk openly and be supported.

Aim of the Mental Health Champion Role:

- To help the FA Refereeing Department to create a culture that promotes positive mental health.
- To encourage referees and those involved in refereeing to talk about mental health and to tackle mental health stigma.
- To support referees with, or with the potential to have, mental health problems.
- To signpost people to sources of professional mental health support.
- To encourage and support people back into refereeing.
- To be part of a champion network that supports each other and works together to develop the champion scheme.

Definition of a Mental Health Champion:

“A mental health champion is someone who takes action to raise awareness of mental health and challenge stigma.

In some cases, where trained appropriately, champions can help those who are experiencing mental health problems by signposting them to appropriate support services”

How can Champions Support People?

Reactive Aspects of the Role:

- Be a point of contact for referees (and other match officials) to talk to, via mutually agreed communication channels.
- Listen non-judgementally.
- Empower and encourage people to seek help and support.
- Identify resources and activities that can support positive mental health; for example, the five ways to wellbeing and other resources listed in the champion handbook.
- Signpost to professional mental health support; for example, GP, A&E, mental health charities.

Proactive Aspects of the Role:

- Champion mental health everyday including talking about mental health with colleagues from within the refereeing community, practice self-care and to identify when you may need to take a break from the role.
- Share lived experience stories which could be your own, from the media or from people who've given permission to share their stories to help break mental health stigma.

- Proactively promote mental health key moments such as World Mental Health Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, Time to Talk Day on social media or through working with your County Football Association (CFA).

Required Skills, Experience and Attributes:

- A good understanding of refereeing, appreciating the challenges of the role and with personal experience of managing stress.
- An interest in mental health and promoting positive mental health.
- The ability to champion mental health everyday including the ability to reflect, to practice self-care and to identify when they may need to take a break from the role.
- Non-judgemental and empathetic.
- Good communication skills, including active listening skills.
- Approachable and encouraging.
- Enthusiastic and proactive in undertaking the role.
- Trustworthy
- Understands and respects confidentiality and boundaries.
- Has confidence in the role and topic.
- Knowledge and/or direct or indirect personal experience of mental health is desirable.

Additional Training will be Provided on:

- Understanding of mental health awareness including active listening skills.
- Understanding policies, procedures and resources including confidentiality and when it is appropriate to break it.

Commitments:

- This is a voluntary role which will require approximately 2 hours commitment each week.
- There will be champions' working group meetings (approx. 3 per year).
- Attendance at online and face-to-face mandatory role related training.

Benefits:

- Being part of a movement to create positive change.
- Training including mental health awareness and champion role training.
- Networking with like-minded people.
- Development of skills and learning from peers.
- Increased self-confidence and empowerment in taking up challenges.