

## ***TIPS ON HAVING A CONVERSATION ABOUT SOMEONE'S MENTAL HEALTH***

If you are supporting a referee, here are some general tips on the above subject:

### **If you are concerned about a referee's mental health and want to talk to them about it but are unsure what to say you could try:**

- Asking them to have a chat over a cup of tea about how they are doing.
- Talking to them about how the activity of refereeing can positively affect their wellbeing.

### **Other ideas to get the conversation started include:**

- Finding out what the referee does to unwind on a tough day.
- Thank the referee for something they've done for you or the team/club.
- Simply saying how you're feeling today and something that's made you smile.

When the conversation starts, actively listen to the referee by giving them your undivided attention. Try to leave any questions or comments you may have until they have finished so you don't interrupt them.

Once they know they are being given the space and time to talk, they are more likely to open up.

If a referee approaches you wanting to talk, it may not be possible for you to give them the time they need there and then. You should show them you recognise that they have taken a positive step by speaking to you, explain why you cannot talk now and arrange a better time to have the conversation.

If a referee is in urgent need of help you should always signpost them to support. Reflect back actual words they have used, as this can encourage them to open up more.

### **During the conversation**

- Use empathic statements such as: "I appreciate this must be difficult for you...".
- Avoid clichés. Comments like "Pull yourself together" or "You're just having a bad day" are not helpful.
- Remind them that mental health problems are more common than people think and can affect anyone at any time.



- Avoid asking too many questions, especially questions that only require a 'yes' or 'no' answer, or that begin with the word 'why.' Ask open questions to invite a more detailed response, for example:
  - Tell me, how are you feeling?
  - How do you look after yourself?
  - What support do you have in place?
- Reassure them that it is positive they want to talk about their experience, what's happening with them, or that they are looking for support (if this is the case).
- The important thing is to listen, rather than give advice; the individual needs to be able to act for themselves. Signpost the individual to sources of support, rather than telling them what you think is best.

### **CLOSING THE CONVERSATION**

- Sometimes conversations will come to a natural end. However, if this does not happen, give the referee a gentle indication that the conversation needs to come to an end. You could say something like: "It's been good to talk, we've covered a lot and we will have to wrap up soon because I have to start...."
- Summarise your conversation and anything you have both agreed to do. For example: "You have told me that you are going to speak to your GP about how you are feeling."
- Ask practical questions such as "Is there going to be someone there when you get home?" or "Is there a friend you can go and see?"
- Remember offering a 'listening ear' and showing your acceptance, warmth and regard will go a long way to help someone. It may not be possible to get a clear idea of the next steps the referee will take as a result of talking to you. Ending the conversation by inviting them to take some time to reflect on what has been discussed and to consider what they may want to do going forward could be the best way to bring the conversation to a close, especially if you feel there is nothing more you can say at that time.
- Naturally, then keep an eye on the referee and ask them how they're doing next time you see them.