

Credit Matters

Insights from Lowell and the credit industry



We want our colleagues to Thrive

Thrive is the name of our colleague wellbeing initiative at Lowell in the UK. As an Employee Relations manager I have a personal interest in wellbeing at work as it links so closely to job satisfaction, performance and motivation.



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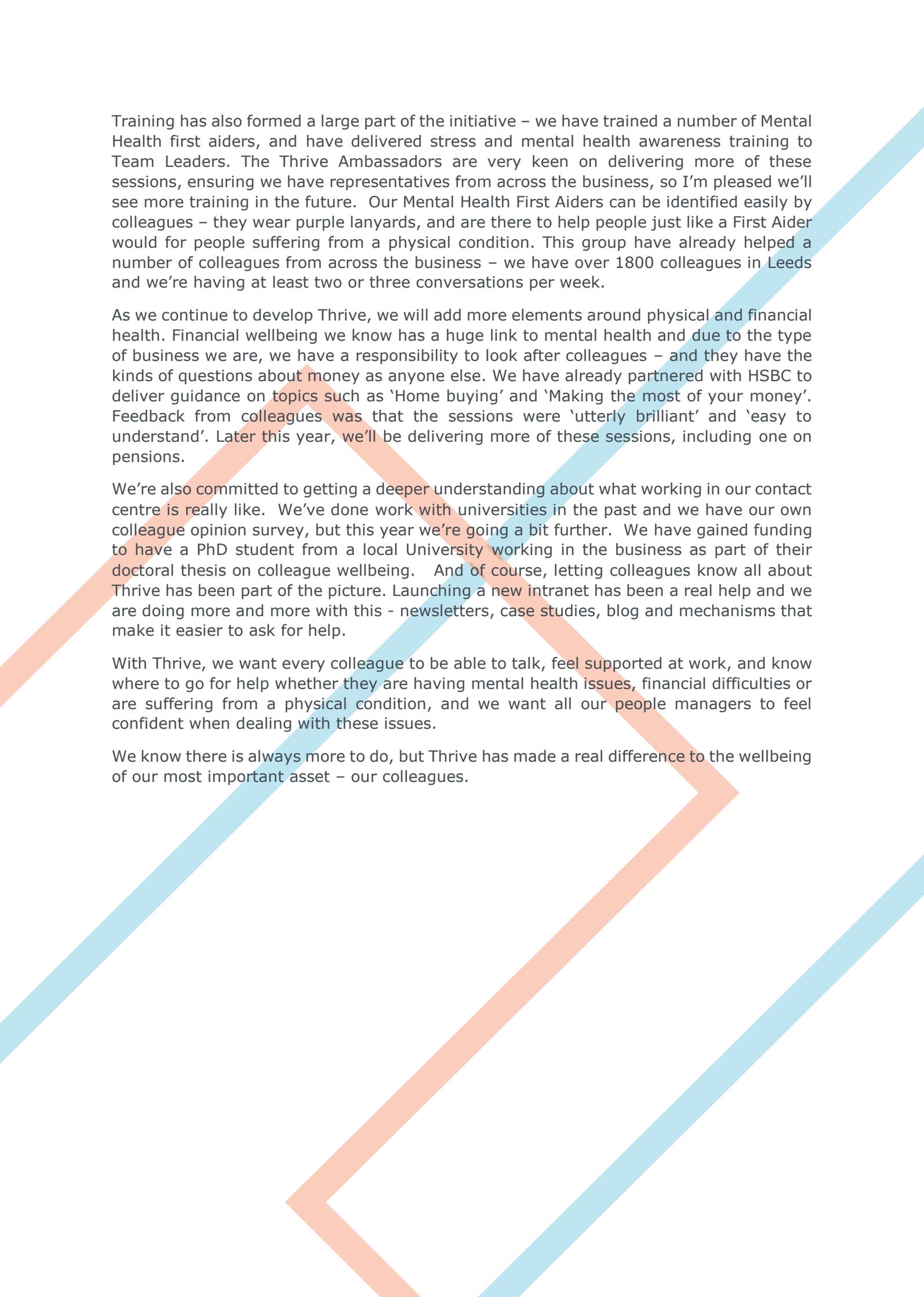
THRIVE

Thrive came about in 2017 and has developed significantly over the past few years. As a responsible employer, we listen to colleagues and as part of that became increasingly aware of their mental health concerns. This willingness to open up about mental health is something we were seeing more of in society generally, but given the nature of some of the calls many of our colleagues take, we wanted to ensure we were supporting them effectively from a Team Leader and 'HR' perspective. We already had a number of wellbeing initiatives in place at Lowell, such as wellbeing rooms, an occupational health service, employee assistance programme (CIC), free fresh fruit deliveries and an on-site gym; the kinds of things you might expect.

We wanted to go further, and since then we have introduced some great initiatives – there are lots that I could talk about but I will choose the pertinent ones. Our one-to-one counselling service has received really positive feedback from both colleagues and Line Managers: colleagues can benefit from five 45 minute therapy sessions with our external provider, Chakra. This is for available to all colleagues who are struggling with issues in their personal life or at work – managers, the HR Team or the colleague themselves can request this. Chakra uses a number of different therapeutic techniques depending on the colleague, the issues they are facing and how they are feeling.

We also offer group counselling on topics such as Managing Anxious Feelings and Low Mood, Men's Health, Bereavement, Dealing with Difficult People and Self-esteem. The feedback from these has been really positive with colleagues saying they 'would highly recommend,' that it was 'really helpful,' and that the sessions are a 'safe space' to talk. Following the sessions, some groups established their own support networks too, which is fantastic!

To drive a lot of these initiatives, we have a group of Thrive ambassadors – these are representatives across the business who are our wellbeing ambassadors. They contribute to the wider Thrive project plan and can direct colleagues to the correct source of support. I lead these meetings on regular basis and the group has some great ideas going forward!



Training has also formed a large part of the initiative – we have trained a number of Mental Health first aiders, and have delivered stress and mental health awareness training to Team Leaders. The Thrive Ambassadors are very keen on delivering more of these sessions, ensuring we have representatives from across the business, so I'm pleased we'll see more training in the future. Our Mental Health First Aiders can be identified easily by colleagues – they wear purple lanyards, and are there to help people just like a First Aider would for people suffering from a physical condition. This group have already helped a number of colleagues from across the business – we have over 1800 colleagues in Leeds and we're having at least two or three conversations per week.

As we continue to develop Thrive, we will add more elements around physical and financial health. Financial wellbeing we know has a huge link to mental health and due to the type of business we are, we have a responsibility to look after colleagues – and they have the kinds of questions about money as anyone else. We have already partnered with HSBC to deliver guidance on topics such as 'Home buying' and 'Making the most of your money'. Feedback from colleagues was that the sessions were 'utterly brilliant' and 'easy to understand'. Later this year, we'll be delivering more of these sessions, including one on pensions.

We're also committed to getting a deeper understanding about what working in our contact centre is really like. We've done work with universities in the past and we have our own colleague opinion survey, but this year we're going a bit further. We have gained funding to have a PhD student from a local University working in the business as part of their doctoral thesis on colleague wellbeing. And of course, letting colleagues know all about Thrive has been part of the picture. Launching a new intranet has been a real help and we are doing more and more with this - newsletters, case studies, blog and mechanisms that make it easier to ask for help.

With Thrive, we want every colleague to be able to talk, feel supported at work, and know where to go for help whether they are having mental health issues, financial difficulties or are suffering from a physical condition, and we want all our people managers to feel confident when dealing with these issues.

We know there is always more to do, but Thrive has made a real difference to the wellbeing of our most important asset – our colleagues.