

SPOTLIGHT ON

An Interview with Alex Traies, Mental Health Ally

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EWAN KILLEEN - MEDIA EXECUTIVE 13 SEP 2018

Tell us a little bit about what the Mental Health Ally scheme aims to do?

- MediaCom launched the MHA scheme earlier in 2018: We are here to Listen, Signpost and Keep employee's safe.

How did you get involved in the scheme?

- Nancy Lengthorn (Head of Diversity, Inclusion, and Future Talent at MediaCom) sent an email around to the agency in 2017 informing everyone that MediaCom were looking at setting up a MHA scheme – I put my name down straight away. Mental Health is something that is important to me and I've seen personally the huge effects it has on family,

friends, and work colleagues when someone is suffering from a mental health illness.

What training do the MHA undergo?

- Each Ally attended a 2-day training course. Topics Included;
 - Increasing knowledge and understanding of Mental Health
 - Define what the roles and expectations of being a MHA
 - Address the stigma around mental health and mental illness

How have you helped your colleagues through the scheme so far?

Just being there for colleagues to speak openly about how they're feeling. Whether its work pressures or something in their personal life. My commitment to Mental Health here at MediaCom is to be there for anyone who wants to talk.

What has been your biggest challenge as a MHA?

Removing the stigma around Mental health and its effects. Generally, people aren't used to talking about their feelings, especially at work so where appropriate we want to, and must change that.

How can we all help and be more mindful of each other's mental health?

We can all try to educate ourselves – with the view to seeing mental health concerns like depression and anxiety as an illness, not a weakness. And as an issue, not an identity. All too often, we avoid talking about our adversities – we need to be celebrating overcoming them instead. My family and I have had to learn the hard way just how vital it is to be honest and upfront about thoughts and feelings, however dark and however painful. We've had to learn the language of mental health and that's something I hope I can share with others.

CULTURE INCLUSION OPINION