

Virgin Media make no bones about the benefits of health at work

Employer: Virgin Media

Area: Stockton

Theme: Anthony Nolan Trust



Virgin Media is a large and very busy call centre based in Stockton with 400 employees on site. As a team they wanted to make sure that the site was 100% committed to being healthy and as stress free as possible, which is why they signed up to the Better Health at Work Award over three years ago. They wanted to make sure that any support friends and colleagues needed was available and that they could recognise some common signs of ill-health.

The 8 Better Health Advocates are passionate about their role and have utilised all advice and support from external sources to

help us get to where they are today. The goal was to achieve the Gold Award and then maintain the excellent standards. So far, it's been a great success and they have run activities and highlighted issues that would have never been possible prior to this.

As they had been so successful helping their own staff, the team decided it was really important to give something back. Whilst they raise money for many charities they decided to take things further by focussing on one in particular, the Anthony Nolan Trust. The idea was to not only raise awareness but to make a practical contribution by encouraging more people to become bone



marrow donors and potentially save the lives of those suffering with blood cancers.

So with some creative thought and innovation, they decided the best way to get people involved was to dedicate a day to this initiative and deliver the message in a fun and engaging way. Halloween provided a perfect opportunity to do both thanks to its association with skeletons and bones to link in with the bone marrow theme. What was even better is that they managed to hold the awareness day on Halloween itself and invited everyone to join in.

To promote the event emails were sent out beforehand to increase awareness and a quiz was created (based on questions about the Anthony Nolan Trust) to get people reading in advance and learning more about it - with spooky Halloween hampers as prizes.

Virgin Media are already lucky enough to have an amazing colleague who has already been through the donation process and so decided to share his story. John wrote his story down from start to finish detailing the reality of donation and this was put on posters around the centre and emailed out. Because John is such a passionate advocate for this cause the Health Advocate team drafted him in to participate in the day, even setting up an "Ask John" stand.

John Atkinson, employee of Virgin Media Said " I originally joined the Anthony Nolan Trust to try and help a friend. After reading up on the trust at the first donation I realised what a worthy cause it was and I am proud to say that I've become a fully fledged donor."

On the day, the communal coffee lounge was transformed into a very effective Halloween grotto full of Anthony Nolan banners, posters and balloons as well as the obligatory skeletons, bones and more traditional decorations! There were information packs and leaflets detailing how the process works as well as a fun stall with Halloween games and free sweets for those taking part.

The day was a great success and at least 10 people have already registered - with many more interested and sending off for the test kits.

Simon Gray, Head of the Stockton Centre said, "It's a great charity and a very heartfelt act by John. I'm very proud of the team here in Teesside and the support they've shown John."

Mandy Coates a Health Advocate at Virgin Media said, "We hope to continue our support for this great cause next year. Ideally, we would like to be able to have a representative on-site from the Anthony Nolan Trust itself to take swab tests there and then, making it even easier for people to make such a valuable difference. The Better Health at Work Award is a brilliant and very practical way to get workers and workplaces not only aware of, but involved in all aspects of improving health and wellbeing."

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