Serco Leisure to introduce Mental Health First Aid training at its national centre contracts

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Serco Leisure is supporting mental health awareness by for the first time introducing ‘Mental Health First Aid’ training for managers across its three National Centre contracts – Lilleshall National Sports and Conferencing Centre and Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre, which it operates on behalf of Sport England, and the National Water Sports Centre in Nottingham, which it operates on behalf of Holme Pierrepont Leisure Trust and Nottinghamshire County Council.

Using well-established training provider Mental Health First Aid England (MHFA), Serco Leisure will be offering the organisation’s ‘First Responder’ and ‘Champions’ courses to duty, operations, general and team managers, as well as safeguarding leads at each of the three elite athlete training centres.

The Mental Health First Aid courses are designed to arm participants with the skills and knowledge required to deal with key mental health issues in the workplace, aiming to:

- Give a deeper understanding of common issues that impact on people’s mental health
- Teach practical skills that can be used every day, including being able to spot signs and symptoms, and guide people towards appropriate support
- Reduce stigma around the issue and boost confidence in dealing with the subject
- Encourage people to start a conversation with a person who may be experiencing a mental health issue
- Promote early intervention, which in turn enables recovery

Steve Nelson, Serco Partnership Director for the National Centres, said:

“As a society, we’re definitely getting better at talking about mental health, but there is still a long way to go, so we wanted to build our people’s skills and understanding in this important area. As part of our ongoing work with Sport England, we are committed to supporting them in their key objective to promote mental wellbeing, and this is just one of the steps we are taking to embed this into our culture to support our employees and the athletes that train at the centres. There should never be a stigma around mental health, and our aim is to make talking about it as natural as discussing any common physical health issue.”

Jaan Madan, Head of the Client Experience Team, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England, said:

“It goes without saying that leisure operators like Serco Leisure recognise the importance of physical health. By providing Mental Health First Aid training and advocating for others to do the same, they are now underlining
their commitment to supporting mental health as well. The training we deliver empowers individuals not only to support their own mental health but also to recognise signs and symptoms of mental ill health in others and guide them to further support, be that self-help or professional services. The sporting world is increasingly engaging with the mental health agenda, and it’s wonderful to see organisations like Serco leading the way in this sector.”

Charles Johnston, Property Director for Sport England, said:

“Sport England are delighted that Serco have teamed up with Mental Health First Aid to champion raising awareness and support for people at the National Sports Centres who may have mental health issues. Mental wellbeing is a key area of work for Sport England and we are proud that our centres are leading the way in giving people the tools to keep themselves and their colleagues healthy.”

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Notes to editors:

About Serco
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About Sport England
Sport England is a public body and invests more than £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport. It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That’s why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.

About Mental Health First Aid England
To find out more about Mental Health First Aid England visit www.mhfaengland.org.uk