



Maria Andersson, Operational Manager at Sodexo: "Probably saved the lives of four children"

Sodexo has collaborated with Change Collective for three years on employee health and safety. Here Sodexo's HR Manager, Eva-Kristin Andersson and Operational Manager, Maria Andersson, discuss the vital partnership.

Sodexo came in contact with Change Collective seven years ago and deepened the partnership a few years later. A crucial initiative for employee health and Sodexo's ability to take greater social responsibility as an employer.

The collaboration with Change Collective helps us handle a complex issue like domestic violence, says Maria Andersson, Operational Manager at Sodexo.

The support from Change Collective was decisive

The partnership with Change Collective has provided Sodexo with a broad range of support materials, available to both managers and colleagues. These are intended to assist employees suffering at home and strengthen the social work environment for everyone at the workplace. Maria recounts a particular situation where the support from Change Collective played a vital role for an employee.

- Less than a year ago, one of our employees was involved in an acute situation at the workplace. She was working the night shift when her ex-husband entered the workplace with their son. The situation escalated, and the coordinator contacted security guards who called the police, who then took care of the man on site.

Helped her understand her own worth

After the incident, the employee received counseling support several times a week from Change Collective.

- She didn't believe she was worth anything. With the support program from Change Collective, she received help to understand her own value. We also expanded our existing safety routines at workplaces across the country. This also provides security to colleagues, Maria explains.

A subject loaded with shame and guilt

- Domestic violence is a subject that can be loaded with shame and guilt, like drugs and alcohol. In many cases, the victim keeps their problems to themselves, which is a challenge for both managers and colleagues, says Maria Andersson.

To get people to open up, it is important to break the silence culture and encourage employees to speak up if something is not as it should be, both at work and outside. Eva-Kristin Andersson, HR

Manager at Sodexo, also urges managers not to give up if they suspect someone is not doing well.

- If you schedule a meeting with an employee and the person says everything is fine, it is important to follow up and keep in touch. It can take time before the person opens up, but one must not let go. Hopefully, it will resolve, but otherwise, you have done everything you can to help.

“Better wrong than missing someone who needs help”

Change Collective has helped Sodexo develop a checklist to help managers and colleagues identify warning signs that an employee may be suffering.

- Of course, you can have checked everything on the list, but the person in question is not affected. But I would rather be wrong than miss someone who needs help. If someone feels bad for another reason, maybe it will come to the surface instead, says Eva-Kristin.

Became an even safer work environment

The effort to protect employees against domestic violence has benefited Sodexo's work environment in several ways.

- It has created greater security for the employees as we have a whole arsenal available if they ever need help and support, says Maria Andersson.

She continues.

- The support efforts we can offer our employees also help to reduce sickness absence. It makes a difference for the individual's health, as well as for their workgroup.

“You probably saved the lives of four children”

When asked if Sodexo would recommend other companies to start a collaboration with Change Collective, the answer is clear and distinct.

- Yes, indeed! The value of the partnership was put to the test when a counselor at Change Collective told me that I had probably been involved in saving the lives of four children in the situation that escalated at one of our workplaces a year ago. Then you realize how important it is for companies to work with this issue, concludes Maria Andersson.