**16 May 2016**

**Virgin Trains pledges to donate at least £100,000 to The Mental Health Foundation**

* *First initiative unveiled to kick off donations towards goal*
* *Support for the ‘Tea & Talk’ campaign on board Virgin Trains*

Virgin Trains on the West Coast has today announced an initiative that will see 10p of every Hot Drink & Cake deal sold on-board donated to The Mental Health Foundation, the train operator’s official charity partner. These donations will serve as the first step in a commitment to contribute £100,000 over the next two years.

Following the announcement of the partnership in March, this first initiative launches as part of Mental Health Awareness Week (May 16-22) #MHAW16, and will see donations to the charity made through the on-board shop for the rest of the year. This will support The MHF ‘Tea & Talk’ campaign, encouraging people to get chatting and de-stress over a cup of tea with a friend. As well as reaping the benefits of engaging in their own ‘Tea & Talk’ on board, passengers will also be contributing to the charity, which focusses on emotional wellbeing and supporting positive mental health.

Jo Buckley, Responsible Community Manager at Virgin Trains, said:

“Over the course of the two year partnership, we wish to increase people’s awareness of mental health, reduce the stigma associated with it, and raise funds for The Mental Health Foundation. This first initiative is just the start and a major first step towards a £100k fundraising target for the charity which provides information, carries out research, and campaigns to improve services for people affected by mental health problems.”

Amanda Smit, Head of Catering at Virgin Trains, said: “The Hot Drink & Cake donation is a great first step and provides the perfect opportunity for us to showcase the company-wide commitment to the partnership with The Mental Health Foundation. By supporting the ‘Tea & Talk’ campaign, we are excited to be getting involved in encouraging people to talk things through whilst enjoying ‘time out’ when travelling to unwind and de-stress.”

The partnership was launched as part of the responsible business agenda, allowing the operator to increase awareness of mental health and wellbeing amongst its customers and 3,400 West Coast employees. The Mental Health Foundation was selected following a vote from the train operator’s staff.

Mark Rowland, Director at The Mental Health Foundation, said: “We’re delighted to be partnering with Virgin Trains to take the Mental Health Awareness Week message on a journey across the UK. Travelling by rail is an important part of so many relationships, connecting us with the ones we love. This Mental Health Awareness Week we have a singular and vital message: we should never underestimate the importance of good relationships to our physical and mental health and wellbeing.”

ENDS

For further information contact:

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Mental Health Foundation (Cal Strode) on 020 7803 1110 or Cstrode@mentalhealth.org.uk

**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the East Coast and West Coast inter-city routes under the Virgin Trains brand. Together, they are on track to revolutionise rail travel across the UK.

The combined network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, York and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

On the East Coast route, £140m is being invested to create a more personalised travel experience. This includes a major fleet revamp, smarter stations and exciting new routes. From May 2016, there will be 42 additional services (22,000 extra seats) per week between Edinburgh and London. 2018 will see the introduction of completely new Azuma trains being built in the UK by Hitachi.

The West Coast route has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [http://mediaroom.virgintrains.co.uk](http://mediaroom.virgintrains.co.uk/) - for the latest news, images and videos. Subscribe [here](http://www.mynewsdesk.com/follow/47939) for regular news from Virgin Trains.

Press Office: 0845 000 3333.

**The Mental Health Foundation**

Good mental health for all

Our mission is to help people understand, protect and sustain their mental health.

Prevention is at the heart of what we do, because the best way to deal with a crisis is to prevent it from happening in the first place. We inform and influence the development of evidence-based mental health policy at national and local government level. In tandem, we help people to access information about the steps they can take to reduce their mental health risks and increase their resilience. We want to empower people to take action when problems are at an early stage. This work is informed by our long history of working directly with people living with or at risk of developing mental health problems.

The Mental Health Foundation is a UK charity that relies on public donations and grant funding to deliver and campaign for good mental health for all.

Website [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

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