



# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

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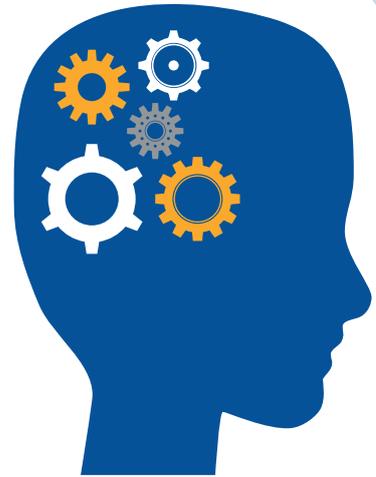
## Mental Health & Wellbeing

No-one is immune to mental health problems. We're all at risk. Did you know that one in four people will experience mental health problems in any given year?

In 2018 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that poor mental health was the most common cause of long-term sickness absence in the UK.

According to Mind, 60% of employees say they'd feel more motivated and more likely to recommend their organisation as a good place to work if their employer took action to support mental wellbeing.

With the demands of modern living ever growing it's likely that these statistics will continue to rise if employers don't take positive action to support their employees. Everyone's experience of mental health is unique; if two people have the same condition they may have different symptoms and find their own coping mechanisms. It's important for all employers to recognise that they must work with every employee on an individual basis.



### Here's what we'll cover:

- Work related stress
- The Equality Act 2010
- Managing stress in the workplace
- Identifying the early signs
- Talking about mental health and wellbeing
- Promoting wellbeing
- Mental health first aiders
- Learning and development
- Positive relationships and social activities
- Wellness Action Plan
- Policies and procedures
- Cost of poor mental wellbeing at work

### Work Related Stress

An individual may experience work related stress during times of excessive pressure. This overwhelming feeling is linked to high levels of absence, increased staff turnover, reduced productivity and will negatively affect the employee's clarity of mind and their relationship with others. Should an employee feel like this for a substantial period of time they may experience complete burn out, depression, anxiety or another more severe mental health problem.

These pressures may not be as a direct result of their work. Mental health problems can be a result of experiences in both our personal and working lives. It's in the employer's best interest to actively support any individual who is feeling pressure no matter what the cause is.



### The Equality Act 2010

Under the health and safety legislation all employers have a duty to assess the risk of stress-related poor mental health arising from work activities and to take measures to control that risk through carrying out stress risk assessments.

For companies with fewer than five employees nothing has to be written down, but we recommend doing so as good practice. For organisations with more than five employees they are required by law to write the risk assessment down.



Equality Act 2010

## Managing Stress In The Workplace

Excellent communication and people management skills are key to help promote good mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Research from the CIPD revealed that management style is the second main cause of work related stress and can directly impact an employee's mental wellbeing.

A positive management culture must start from the top to instil a culture based on openness and mutual respect. The behaviour of the leadership is very impactful, even something simple as encouraging colleagues to take breaks and their full lunch hour supports their commitment to mental health and wellbeing.

The CIPD together with the Health & Safety Executive and Investors in People have created tools allowing a manager to assess whether they possess behaviours to effectively support employees' mental health and wellbeing. These emphasise the importance of managers:

- Creating realistic deadlines
- Clearly communicating job objectives
- Dealing with problems as soon as they arise
- Giving employees the right level of job responsibility
- Encouraging participation from the whole team
- Regularly asking team members 'how are you?'
- Acting as a mediator in conflict situations
- Holding regular effective one to one meetings



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24	25
DEADLINE	



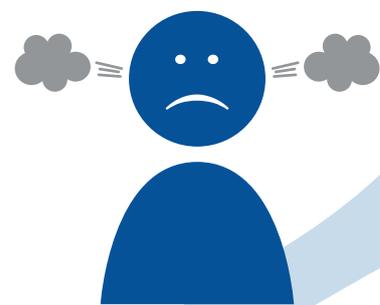
## Identifying The Early Signs

Managers should always look to prevent work related stress, but even the most well-managed individuals can experience poor mental health. In these cases, nipping these signs of stress in the bud will have the best outcome.

Here's what to keep a look out for:

- Individuals working longer hours than usual
- Individuals not taking breaks
- Someone is quieter than they usually are
- A usually relaxed individual is becoming 'snappy' with colleagues and appears irritable
- Someone who appears tearful
- A person making uncharacteristic errors
- Individuals becoming easily distracted or forgetful
- Periods of sickness absence
- Any change in a person's mood

LONG



This could be due to a number of factors including those outside of the workplace. Managers who take a keen interest in an employee's life outside of work will find it easier to talk to them, identify the trigger and offer support.

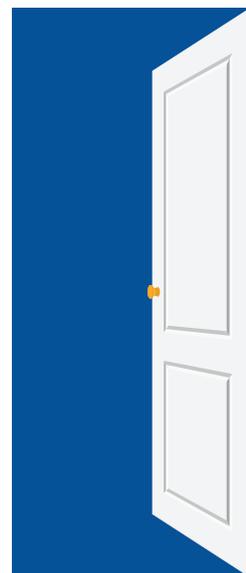
No matter what the root cause of the stress is, it's guaranteed that any additional stress at work will be contributing to poor mental health. When speaking to the individual it's essential to identify if any of these factors are the main issue or a part of the issue:

- Unrealistic expectations or deadlines
- High-pressure environment
- Unmanageable workloads or lack of control over work
- Inconsistent workload levels within a team
- Little communication
- A poor physical working environment
- A feeling that the workplace is unsupportive
- Little or no opportunity to speak or meet with line management regularly
- Job insecurity
- Working alone

## Talking About Health & Wellbeing

If you have noticed a change in an individual's mood or character you must have a conversation with them as soon as possible to allow you to evaluate the situation and introduce appropriate support and/or make necessary adjustments.

- Choose an appropriate place to hold the discussion. Somewhere comfortable and quiet making sure there will be no interruptions
- Never make assumptions and use open questions such as 'I've noticed you've been arriving late lately and wondered if you were okay?'
- Embed confidentiality and reassure the individual that the content of the discussion will only be disclosed to another person with their agreement
- Adapt the appropriate support to suit the individual
- Remain honest and clear
- Develop an action plan that both parties agree on
- Encourage the individual to seek support from their GP
- Reassure the individual that your door is always open, and that you are there to provide the support they need
- Thank them for being so honest
- Ask for advice to provide the best help. This may be from a HR professional or from an expert organisation



But there will be occasions where an individual does not want to speak to a manager. It could simply be a case that the individual feels more comfortable speaking to a colleague. Companies must respect the employee's decision and put in place a peer support or buddy system.

## Promoting Wellbeing

Adjustments to your employee engagement and workplace culture will boost mental health and wellbeing. Here's our top tips:

- Managers to lead by example
- Raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and promote discussions
- Embed mental health in induction and training
- Make the most out of your internal communications and invite individuals to share their stories to normalise mental health
- Managers must remain approachable and open to talk to employees treating everyone as an individual
- Encourage mental health campaigns and bust the myth that it is a barrier to career development
- Create opportunities for coaching, learning and development
- Carry out staff surveys and hold focus groups
- Organise away days



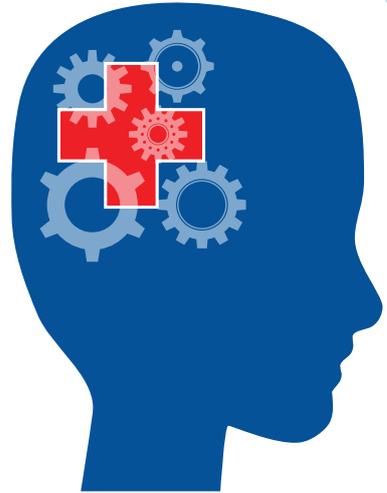
## Mental Health First Aiders

The main political parties held a debate on legislative change concerning mental health first aid in the workplace in January 2019. There was overwhelming support as the majority of MPs agreed that First Aid regulations need to change to ensure that mental health is treated equally to physical health. MPs, campaigners, charities and businesses alike recommend that a qualified mental health first aider be available at every workplace.

To fully support a workforce, all managers should consider developing the skills needed to look after their own wellbeing and that of their employees. Professional training will provide the tools needed to proactively support colleagues and minimise the impact of mental ill health.

Managers who complete Mental Health First Aid training will be equipped to:

- Spot the signs of mental illness
- Have confidence to step in and offer support
- Hold a non-judgmental conversation
- Listen without judgement
- Effectively guide an individual towards the support they need
- Know how to implement the Mental Health First Aid action plan
- Keep employees safe while they carry out their duties
- Better understand what mental health is and the factors that affect an individual's wellbeing
- Understand the resources and treatments available



## Learning & Development

To increase feelings of wellbeing, employees need to feel valued, supported and know that their work is meaningful and ties in with the company's goals.

To maximise the potential for L&D, it is important that managers communicate the objectives of the company to all employees. And for employees to understand where they add value they need to be given objectives to be reviewed during regular meetings. During one to one meetings managers should also discover the ambitions and aspirations of the individual and to offer staff development opportunities whenever possible.



## Positive Relationships & Social Activities

You can achieve a mutually supportive working environment to boost the effectiveness of great working relationships by:

- Encouraging a culture of teamwork, collaboration and information sharing
- Promoting positive behaviours starting from the leadership team
- Avoiding conflict
- Ensuring robust policies on bullying and harassment are in place and enforced if necessary
- Encouraging exercise and regular social events to promote health, teamwork and mental wellbeing.



## Wellness Action Plan

This plan is an evidence-based system to manage mental health. To support a wellbeing strategy at work, managers can encourage their teams to develop their own Wellness Action Plans. All employees have a duty to care for their own wellbeing as well as their employers and this personal tool helps individuals to identify what keeps them well and what support they would like to receive should their wellbeing be affected through work.

These can be drawn up at any time but work most effectively at inductions and return to work interviews after a period of absence. They promote wellbeing in the workplace and show the employees that they are cared for by their employer.



## Policies & Procedures

To strengthen your company's mental health and wellbeing strategy it's essential that you have robust policies and procedures which support mental wellbeing:

- Performance management
- Disciplinary action
- Recruitment
- Change management
- Redundancy
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Bullying and harassment



## Cost Of Poor Mental Health At Work

Smart organisations understand that when their workforce is healthy they are happier, more productive and highly focussed. The relationship between wellbeing, motivation and business performance is known as 'employee engagement'.

Employers who prioritise employee engagement and the health and wellbeing of their workforce experience:

- Enhanced morale
- Low staff turnover
- Loyalty
- Commitment
- Innovation
- Greater productivity
- Optimal profitability



## Contact us

If you would like our advice and support on the issues raised in this eBook please get in touch with our team of HR professionals.

**Call or email us on:**

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