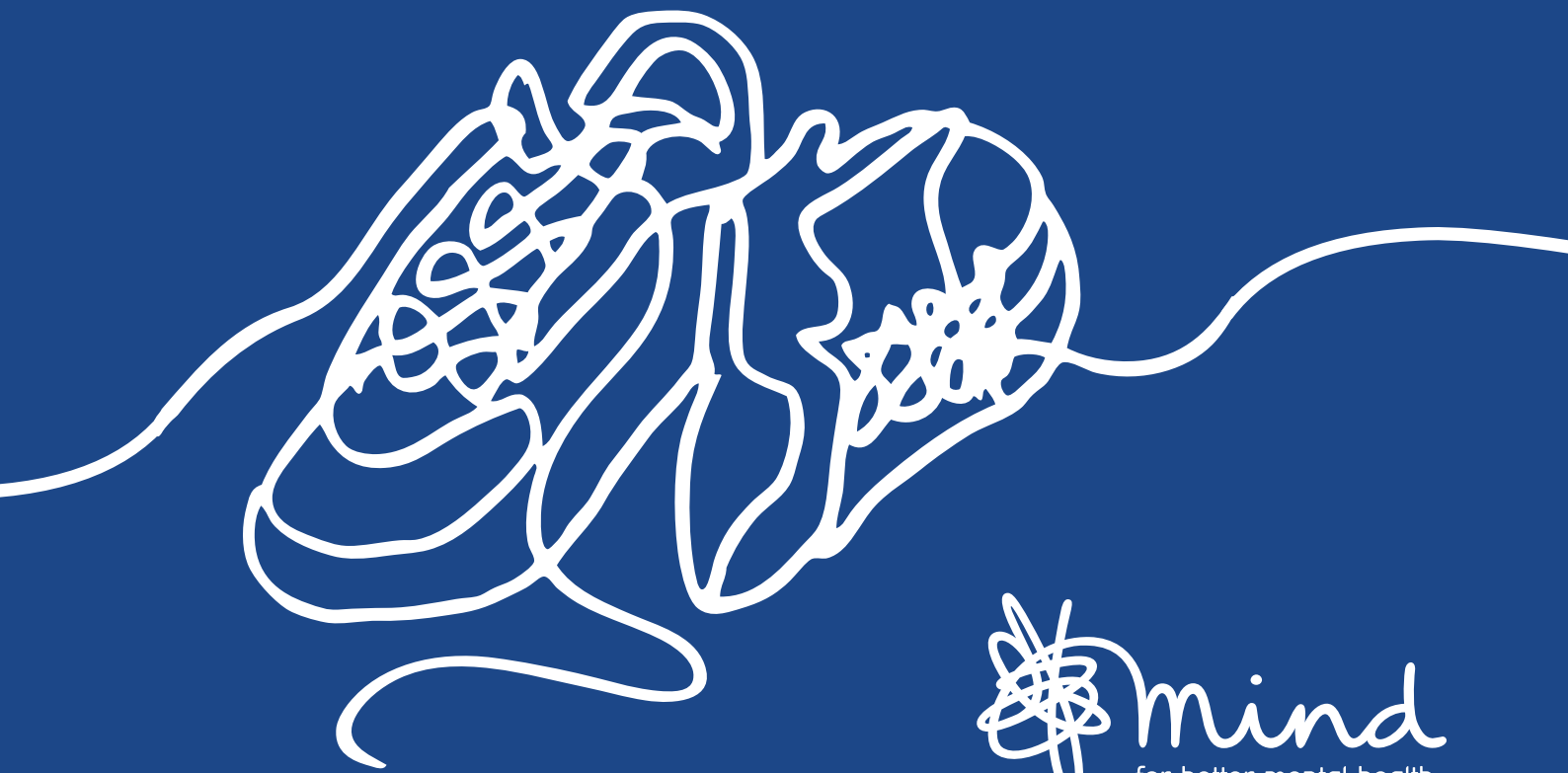




Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

SPORT+
RECREATION
ALLIANCE

A guide to implementing the **Thriving at Work** standards in the sport and physical activity sector



 **mind**
for better mental health

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Foreword by Mims Davies MP, Minister for Sport and Civil Society

Great progress has been made in recent years to break down the stigma and raise awareness of mental health issues in society, including in sport and physical activity. But with 1 in 4 people in the UK experiencing a mental health problem each year it is vital that the right level of support exists to help everyone who is affected. And I believe there is scope to do more.

The Government's sport strategy '[Sporting Future](#)', published in December 2015, not only recognised the positive impact sport can have on physical and mental health, but also highlighted the importance of welfare and wellbeing in sport, recognising the sacrifices athletes make in striving for success.¹

We know that the sport and physical activity sector as a whole has its own unique challenges in relation to mental health in the workplace. This can include the high-pressured nature of sport at an elite level, alongside a high level of public scrutiny, risk of injury, and the impact of transition and working conditions. This includes working hours, seasonality of sport, extensive travel and periods away from home.

In 2018 we published a [Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan](#). One of its actions was to produce and disseminate specific sport-related resources to support the implementation of the *Thriving at Work* recommendations across the sport sector.² These guidelines are the result of that work.

I'd like to thank Mind and everyone who contributed to the development of this guide. I hope it serves as a useful resource for people working in sport and physical activity, and that we continue to improve awareness and raise standards across the sector.



Mims Davies MP,
Minister for Sport and Civil Society



1 (2015). *Sporting Future*. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

2 (2018). *Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan*. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

Foreword by Paul Farmer CBE, Chief Executive of Mind

At Mind, we're proud to be working with the sport and physical activity sector to raise mental health awareness and open up activities to everyone. We achieve this through initiatives like the **Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation**, **Get Set to Go** (a programme to support people living with mental health problems to get active), and our **On Your Side** partnership with the English Football League.

Research shows that being active boosts wellbeing. But for people working in the sector it can be difficult to talk openly about mental health and get support. The sport and physical activity sector is growing fast. It contributes £39billion to our economy each year³ and employs more than 400,000 people.⁴

Money spent to improve employee's mental health has a consistently positive return on investment. So it's in everyone's interest to do more in this area.

Thriving at Work is an independent review that outlines what employers can do to better support all employees – including those with mental health problems to remain in and thrive through work.⁵ This guide has been developed by Mind in collaboration with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Sport and Recreation Alliance, and Sport England to help employers across the sport and physical activity sector to understand and implement the *Thriving at Work* standards. It offers practical support, with relevant examples and tools. We hope you find it useful.



Paul Farmer CBE,
Chief Executive of Mind



3 (2015). Sporting Future. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

4 (July–September 2017). Labour Force Survey. Office for National Statistics.

5 (October 2017). Thriving at Work: An independent review of mental health and employers. Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer.

About this guide

Who is this guide for?

It's aimed at people who shape mental health policy and practices in sports and physical activity organisations. These include senior leaders, HR professionals, safeguarding, welfare and mental health leads.

We know employers come in all shapes and sizes, and the way you work with your people probably includes a range of working relationships, from performance-based contracts through to full-time, permanent employment. We have designed this guide to support employers across the sector – including professional sports clubs, leisure trusts, national governing bodies, charities and small businesses.

How do I use this guide?

After outlining the *Thriving at Work* standards, we'll look at each of them in turn, and provide practical examples of what employers across the sector are doing in these areas, as well as helpful tools.

It's important to see mental health at work as more than just supporting people with mental health problems. We all have mental health and supporting everyone's wellbeing will improve the performance of your organisation as a whole.

Consider how you can most effectively support the mental health of your people across all areas of the organisation. You'll need to use a mix of approaches and channels to engage people in non-office based roles, remote workers and volunteers.

If your organisation is just beginning to take action, use this guide to help you take the first steps and make a long-term commitment to a better way of working. Organisations that are further along can use it to formalise and improve their current approach.

Please bear in mind that we aren't providing legal advice but practical guidance. Employers may also need to get their own legal advice on the right approach to take in any particular case.

General terms and definitions

To make this guide relevant to everyone in the sector we've used some general terms to refer to the many different job roles that exist in the sports sector.

Employee is shorthand for anyone who's part of your workforce, including volunteers, part-time and full-time staff, officials and professional athletes.

Line manager or coach covers anyone whose role includes line management, developing or supervising people at work. For elite sports this includes coaching, welfare and performance staff.



What are the Thriving at Work standards?

Thriving at Work is an independent review of mental health commissioned by Government and led by Lord Dennis Stevenson CBE and Paul Farmer, Mind CEO. It outlines what employers can do to better support all employees – including those with mental health problems – to remain in and to thrive through work.

Thriving at Work sets out six core standards and four enhanced standards.⁶

Six core standards

These standards are for all employers.

1. Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan...

...that promotes good mental health for all employees and outlines the support available for those who may need it.

2. Develop mental health awareness among employees...

...by making information, tools and support accessible.

3. Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling...

...during the recruitment process and at regular intervals throughout employment. Offer appropriate workplace adjustments to employees who require them.

4. Provide employees with good working conditions...

...and ensure a healthy work/life balance and opportunities for development.

5. Promote effective people management...

...to ensure that all employees have a regular conversation about their health and wellbeing with their line manager, coach or organisational leader. Train and support line managers and supervisors in effective management practices.

6. Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing...

...by understanding available data, talking to employees and considering risk factors.

Four enhanced standards

These standards are for employers that can and should go further. They're designed for larger employers and the public sector, but any employer can put them into practice.

1. Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting...

...to include a leadership commitment and an outline of the organisation's approach to mental health.

2. Demonstrate accountability...

...by nominating a health and wellbeing lead at Board or Senior Leadership level, with clear reporting duties and responsibilities.

3. Improve the disclosure process...

...to encourage openness during recruitment and throughout employment. Ensure employees are aware of why information is required and make sure the right support is in place to facilitate a positive employer response following disclosure.

4. Ensure provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help...

...including digital support, employer-purchased Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programmes, or NHS services, among other sources of support.



6 (October 2017). Thriving at Work: An independent review of mental health and employers, Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer.

Spotlight on mental health in elite sport

It's a rollercoaster emotionally. The threat of leaving the game is constant – will I get to the next stage? Will I be dropped? Will I get a contract or be released? What happens if I get injured? What happens when I retire?

– Elite Athlete

Professional sportspeople face a unique set of pressures – from scoring goals and winning trophies to facing media scrutiny and meeting fans' high expectations. This all makes for an extraordinary workplace, but it's still work. Line managers, coaches, clubs, governing bodies and players' unions all play a role to help sports professionals manage their mental health at work.

After some suicides with lots of media coverage and more sportspeople speaking out about mental health, Mind commissioned [dedicated research on mental health in elite sport](#).⁷ It explores how sport's governing bodies and players' organisations currently respond to, manage and prevent mental ill-health among athletes and identifies successful programmes identifies successful, best-practice programmes.

The impact of winning and losing, being promoted and relegated has an impact on everyone working in elite sport, from coaches and managers to performance directors and administration staff.

Find out more about how Government and the sector are taking action to develop mental health support specifically for elite sport, and what more needs to be done in the [Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan and Duty of Care in Sport Review](#).⁸

⁷ www.mind.org.uk/media/1085139/Mental-Health-and-Elite-Sport.pdf

⁸ (April 2017). Duty of Care in Sport Review. Independent report by Baroness Grey-Thompson.

Giving athletes a sporting chance

Colin Bland, Chief Executive Officer, Sporting Chance

Sporting Chance is a charity that helps over 800 professional and former professional sportspeople who are experiencing emotional problems or who are worried about addiction.

“There is an assumption that mental health in sport is different from mental health in the general public,” says Colin.

“Sports professionals are people first. There are different pinch-points, but one bit of research among footballers suggests it’s the same as in wider society.”

What differs are the pressures professional sportspeople face. Colin points out that in team sports, players are lucky if they have contracts that last longer than two or three years. And, to add to the anxiety, the biggest competition can come from members of your own team looking to impress the coach.

“One of the big challenges we face in sport is making it OK to not be OK,” Colin explains.

“If you’re worried about being selected for the team you need a confidential space to talk about that. You might not want your coach to know that you’re struggling.”

Find out more at sportingchanceclinic.com

Workplace mental health: what's happening now?

1 in 6

British workers are
affected by mental health
problems each year.⁹



Poor mental health
costs employers between

**£33billion and
£43billion a year.**

This is made up of absenteeism
(£8billion), presenteeism
(£17–£26billion), and staff
turnover (£8billion).¹⁰

9 (2012). Absence Management Annual Survey Report 2012. CIPD in partnership with Simply Health.

10 (2017). Mental Health and Employers: Supporting the Case for Investment. Deloitte.

Workplace mental health triggers

Typical workplace triggers for stress and mental health problems in the sport and physical activity sector can include:

Uncertainty

- insecure or performance-based contracts
- uncertainty around sustainability of funding
- job insecurity or poorly managed change
- financial worries

Working relationships

- poor managerial support
- poor relationships with line managers or coaches
- poor relationships with colleagues
- bullying

Work pressures

- unmanageable workloads or lack of control over work
- unrealistic expectations or deadlines
- pressure to win/get medals and awareness of impact on all staff if unsuccessful
- overly pressurised work or training environments

Working patterns

- long hours and no breaks
- irregular hours and seven-day contracts
- extensive travel, including overseas working
- inability to use annual leave

Working environment

- a poor physical working environment
- lone working
- poor internal communication

Core standard one

Produce, implement and communicate
a mental health at work plan

“ Mental health is such a huge topic. Broaching it in a club can be really difficult – either there’s an assumption that you have a severe mental illness and therefore can’t work, or that it’s so common everyone in a club environment is stressed and feeling anxious, due to the 24/7 nature of the sport. So, it’s not taken seriously. ”

– Sports Administrator at a professional sports club



People who work in sport and physical activity can sometimes find it hard to talk openly about mental health and get the support they need.

Developing a mental health at work plan is a great way to take a structured approach to supporting your workforce.

If your organisation has signed the [Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation](#), you’ll already be making progress in this area, but if not then it’s a great place to start.¹¹

¹¹ www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/pages/mental-health-charter-homepage

Take the first step: sign the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation

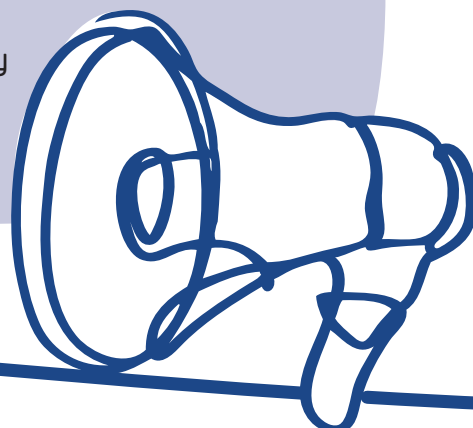
The Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation sets out how sports and recreation organisations can adopt good mental health practice to make activities inclusive, positive and open to everyone. It was created by the Sport and Recreation Alliance, the Professional Players Federation and Mind.

By signing the Charter, you're committing to help create a culture shift that tackles stigma around mental health. You'll be asked to commit to three actions of your choice. So far over 350 organisations have signed the Charter.

> Find out more and sign the Charter

Giving people the right tools

Greenwich Leisure Limited have signed the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation. They've committed to equipping staff with the tools they need to provide a service and a workplace that supports good mental health. This includes embedding mental health awareness training both as part of core training and within relevant training such as Safeguarding, training, providing staff benefit schemes and offering Health Assured – an employee assistance programme that offers counselling support for their 14,000 employees across leisure centres, community centres and libraries.



What to include in your mental health at work plan

Your mental health at work plan should focus on how you'll support the mental health of all your people, including employees, volunteers and athletes. It should detail how you will:

- promote wellbeing for all your people
- tackle the work-related causes of mental health problems and routinely monitor the wellbeing of your people
- support people experiencing poor mental health, whether it's caused by problems inside or outside of work
- equip and support your line managers and coaches
- signpost to relevant sources of information and support – both inside and outside your organisation
- establish clear objectives or targets which are shaped around your organisation's vision
- take into account that mental health may be classified as a disability, with reference to the Equality Act 2010.



Setting squad goals

Ben Jessup, Policy Advisor,
Sport and Recreation Alliance



“You could say that we’re finding ways to keep developing a positive ‘dressing room’ approach to mental health,” says Ben.

“It’s like with any sports team: we’re building an office environment where everybody always feels that their colleagues have got their back.” Setting up an official mental health working group, with an action plan to get initiatives up and running, has helped supercharge this process. “It’s definitely not just a ‘top-down’ strategy,” explains Ben.

“Managers are part of the working group, but there’s junior staff in there, too. It’s important that ideas come from across our organisation.”

To monitor progress there’s a simple, anonymous questionnaire hosted through Survey Monkey. The survey offers staff a sliding scale to report how they’re feeling, and whether they have access to support.

“We’re already seeing initial trends across the year,” says Ben.

“That means we can help staff to manage their workload and encourage them to prioritise their wellbeing. The response has been really good overall.”

Ask your people

Design your plan with input from people across your organisation. This boosts buy-in and gives you a clearer idea of the support people need. It's also an opportunity to bring people in different areas together around a common goal.

You could draw on the knowledge and experience of colleagues already interested in mental health, or Mental Health Champions or trained Mental Health First Aiders if you already have them in place. If your organisation is quite large, set up a small group for initial consultations and another to feedback on the finished plan.

Could you use existing workforce surveys or create a simple online poll to collect wider views? For example:

Q1 How could [our organisation] better promote the wellbeing of all our people? You can provide up to three ideas.

Q2 "I feel comfortable talking about my mental health at work."

0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐

Strongly disagree Neutral Strongly agree

When you ask people about their mental health, it's vital to keep information confidential. Create strict policies to ensure this and emphasise that surveys are anonymous, so that feedback is honest.

Make sure you consider ongoing communication with your people as part of your mental health at work plan. Keep asking people what works, and tweak your support in response. Consider asking other organisations in your sector for best practice ideas.

Volunteers matter

“ Volunteers are the lifeblood of sport and physical activity in England. Every year 6.3 million people give time and expertise that helps to make sport happen for people in communities across the country in a huge range of roles. They are effectively part of the sports workforce – and most sport and physical activity couldn’t take place without them. ”

– Jenny Betteridge, Strategic Lead Volunteering, Sport England

Volunteering has a positive impact on wellbeing. But like everyone in your workforce, you need to consider volunteers in your mental health at work plan. And you should ask for their views when developing it.

Volunteers don’t get protection from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. However, many organisations try to follow the same procedures as paid staff when supporting volunteers with their mental health.

Support for volunteers

England Athletics supports volunteers through induction and training, including an online Mental Health Awareness course and a network of mentors. They promote networking opportunities both face to face and online. It signposts to helplines including a welfare helpline and mental health support.

Who's responsible?

Everyone in your organisation plays their part in creating and sustaining a mentally healthy workplace. But different roles carry different responsibilities.

Human resources (HR)

Human resources should take responsibility for providing advice and support to line managers, coaches and employees. They should also lead on reviewing employee mental health and on monitoring sickness absence. If you're a smaller organisation with no HR team, you may need to split responsibility between different people, with the owner or leader of the organisation ultimately accountable.

Senior leaders

Senior leaders should play a key role in creating change by ensuring reliable processes, checks and action plans are in place which are regularly monitored. Senior leaders can have a powerful impact by speaking out about mental health, sharing their own experiences where they feel able to do so, and leading by example. Your organisation could also formalise its approach and nominate a health and wellbeing lead ([see enhanced standard one, page 64](#)) and including a leadership commitment to progress on mental health in internal and external reporting ([see enhanced standard two, page 66](#)).

“

There is a role for activity and engagement at every level of an organisation to make a real difference. As a leader I know I can promote and support the importance of mental wellbeing. Part of that is also the way that senior leaders can role model the behaviour they hope to see from others. At the Alliance we were very keen to ensure that staff at every level had a chance to input into our plan and activity – and that is the way that real change will be delivered.

We've supported the development of the *Thriving at Work* resources for the sport and physical activity sector because we believe they will help senior leaders turn their interest in this area into action. I urge you to use them.”

– Emma Boggis, CEO, Sport and Recreation Alliance

”

Line managers and coaches

Line managers and coaches should take responsibility for taking stock of their people's mental health and providing appropriate support. They can do this through regular team meetings, [mental health audits \(see page 61\)](#) and one-to-ones. They should seek feedback on the support they provide and act on it to adjust their approach.

Everyone

Everyone is responsible for taking steps to manage their own mental health. But it's important to acknowledge that this is something we may all need support with at times.

Wider organisational policies

In addition to developing your mental health at work plan, check that mental wellbeing is considered in all related policies.

Mental health needs to be at the heart of all policies that focus specifically on employee wellbeing, such as:

- wellbeing or mental health
- health and safety
- sickness absence
- return to work.

Additionally, consider the impact that policies which focus on employee performance and people management can have on employees' mental wellbeing. This may include policies relating to:

- working time
- recruitment
- performance management
- professional development
- disciplinary action
- change management
- redundancy.

Policies on performance management and disciplinary action should also recognise that an employee's performance or behaviour may be affected if they are experiencing a mental health problem. Appropriate support and adjustments should be explored before proceeding with formal action.

Finally, it is also helpful to make sure you reference mental health in policies that relate to workplace culture. This may include policies relating to:

- equal opportunities
- diversity and inclusion
- bullying and harassment
- employee engagement
- safeguarding and welfare

Employer tool

Develop your own mental health at work plan, or adapt our editable template to make sure your organisation is taking action to meet each of the six core *Thriving at Work* standards.

Core standard two

Develop mental health awareness
among employees



In many workplaces mental health is still a taboo subject. Too often, people are scared to talk to their line manager or coach and problems can spiral. Developing mental health awareness is the best way to create an open and positive culture where people feel able to talk about their mental health.

Mental health wins in horseracing

Lizzie Harris, Regional Welfare Manager, Racing Welfare

“Horseracing is no different to any other industry where people can find it difficult to talk about their mental health – but that’s changing,” says Lizzie.

“We look after people who work behind the scenes on the racecourse, yards and breeding operations around the country. They are susceptible to the same mental health problems that you would see across the rest of society.”

Racing Welfare supports people in a variety of ways – through information, advice, guidance and counselling services, a frontline welfare officer team and financial assistance. They also offer a Racing Welfare Support Line – a 24-hour digital and telephone service where people can get in touch.

One of the biggest barriers to better mental health is encouraging people to open up in the first place. So, to challenge the status quo, Racing Welfare launched a major new campaign around Mental Health Awareness Week.

“We got every racecourse to show a special video featuring one of our beneficiaries talking about his mental health on the big screen. We filmed it in the yard with horses, so it was relatable to everybody,” says Lizzie.

“Our welfare officers attended every meeting and were interviewed in the paddock about what we do, and about mental health in general. We also asked people to wear green ribbons to raise awareness. Everybody wanted to wear one – we even ran out by the end of the week.”

Most importantly, people were inspired to get in touch with Racing Welfare. Their website was viewed 50 per cent more often than usual, and 16 per cent more people used the helpline compared to the previous month.

“It had a massive impact for us,” says Lizzie.

“It gave people the courage to stand up and say ‘Yes, I’ve been struggling’.”

“You just need somebody to get the ball rolling and then everybody starts to engage. It’s another step towards getting rid of the stigma around mental health.”

Six ways to raise mental health awareness in your organisation

1 Provide your people with reliable information

Mind's website is a great place to start. We have a wide range of general workplace resources, plus resources tailored for the sport and physical activity sector.

2 Embed mental health in your induction and training

Give people information on how best to manage their own mental health and how to support colleagues. Set out what support is available.

3 Invite an external speaker on mental health to your workplace

This could be part of broader diversity, disability or mental health awareness activities and happen on significant calendar dates like World Mental Health Day.

4 Make the most of internal communications

Raise awareness through blogs, factsheets, tips for line managers and coaches, useful web links and FAQs. You can use posters, noticeboards, staff newsletters, magazines and intranet and internet pages to get the message out. Update content regularly and make sure you represent diverse perspectives and experiences.

5 Recruit Mental Health Champions

Champions may have their own personal experience of mental ill health or may have supported someone else with mental health problems. The role is open to everyone. Bringing together people with different perspectives and experiences is really important to challenge the stigma around mental health.

6 Share your experience

If you have a story to share you can help improve people's understanding and change their attitudes. People follow their leaders' behaviour, so lead by example. Create opportunities for others to do the same.

How are employers taking action?

The National Exercise Referral Scheme for Wales teamed up with Newport Mind to deliver mental health awareness for sport and physical activity training. They delivered it to personal trainers and instructors across Wales to help them support themselves and their clients.

“This year we have offered specific training in dealing with sensitive calls, self-care and confidentiality. All these are aimed at keeping our staff safe and well in their roles. Many staff have also accessed individual support.”

Michael Bennett, Head of Welfare, Professional Footballers' Association

UK Athletics arranged a lunchtime seminar for all staff with guest speakers including athletes, performance staff and Mind.

The Professional Cricketers' Association arranged for a former player to attend every ground to share his experience of mental health problems and addiction with players and coaching staff.

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA) is developing a network of Mental Health Champions to offer support to people who might be struggling at work.

“Sometimes volunteers have experiences of family members with mental health problems – others are simply interested in people's welfare,” says Matt Mancini, the BHA's Welfare Development Manager.

“We have a mental health forum on Workplace [a version of Facebook for work]. People can come forward and share information or ask for help and support from our Champions.”

The mental health calendar

Raising awareness of mental health is something that you should build into your ongoing activities as an organisation as part of your mental health at work plan. You can also use significant dates in the [mental health calendar](#)¹² to plan bursts of additional awareness campaigns. These include Time to Talk Day in February and World Mental Health Day on 10 October.

Useful resources

Mental health awareness training

Mental health awareness in sport and physical activity¹³ is an introductory course aimed at providers, coaches, sports administrators, front of house staff and volunteers. It was developed with support from UK Coaching and from Sport England. The course is written and delivered by people with mental health problems.

Mental health at work elearning

Our **Mental health at work module** can be used to support conversations about mental health within your workplace, to inspire your own colleague-led workshops or activities focused on mental health, or to form part of your induction programme for all new employees. It can also act as a refresher for people who have undergone mental health training previously.¹⁴

Sport and Mental Health Network

The network is aimed at local and community organisations that are helping people with mental health problems access the benefits of sport and physical activity. The group meets twice a year to share good practice and learning from across projects, to network and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Email sport@mind.org.uk to join the network.

Mental Health at Work gateway

Mental Health at Work¹⁵ is a new online gateway to resources, training and information. We developed to help employers of all shapes and sizes find what they need.

For useful information on mental health problems visit: mind.org.uk/a-z

12 www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/tackle-stigma-workplace/make-impact-your-workplace/mental-health-calendar

13 www.mind.org.uk/sport

14 www.mind.org.uk/workplace/training-consultancy/e-learning

15 www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/

Knowing the score on mental health

Faye Nixon, Head of Marketing,
Derby County Football Club

“Last year our Chair spoke about how, as well as hitting work targets, he wanted us to get better at looking after people and their wellbeing,” says Faye. “We have an open and honest approach to everything – and that goes for speaking out if there’s a work issue, but also speaking out if you’re struggling. Now the ambition is to score ‘10/10’ on both work and wellbeing.”



To achieve this ambition, Derby County Football Club introduced a new Health and Wellbeing team. Faye says that the first meetings were “filled with ideas” which the team cut down to a shortlist.

After discussion, they decided the most effective approach was to explore different topics at work each month – from mental health to cancer awareness. The strategy kicked off with a fitness event that highlighted the link between exercise and wellbeing.

“On the day people rocked up to find a card on their desk telling them about our health and wellbeing vision, and a link to a special website featuring signposting to relevant services,” says Faye.

“We followed it up by sending out a link to an online survey, just to see where people felt they stood on health and wellbeing.”

Faye says that a big part of the initiative is about being non-prescriptive, and letting staff have their say about future ideas.

“Through our community trust we’ve got involved in Time to Talk – which encourages people to open up about their mental health,” adds Faye. “That’s led by one of our staff who has his own experience of mental health problems and is now a mentor on the programme to help others.”



Core standard three

Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling

Open conversations about mental health and offers of support should happen at every stage of a person's journey with your organisation, whether they're an employee, volunteer or elite athlete.

Offering the right support at different stages

Stage one – recruitment or selection

- Triggers for of work-related stress and poor mental health can include a mismatch between the person and the role, their needs and values versus the work environment, or their skills and abilities and the organisation's demands on them. Under the Equality Act 2010, candidates are not required to disclose their mental health condition to their potential employer. It's unlawful for employers to ask candidates questions about health during recruitment, except in certain circumstances. However, there are ways to let people disclose lawfully. This ensures that people with a mental health condition have equal access to job opportunities, are offered any support they need to take up a post, and are not discriminated against during the recruitment process.
- For further information, see the [People Managers' Guide to Mental Health](#), developed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in collaboration with Mind.¹⁶



¹⁶ (September 2018). People Managers' Guide to Mental Health. Chartered Institute of Professional Development and Mind. Page 11.

Stage two – induction

- Starting a new role can feel unsettling, and if people aren't given the right guidance it can negatively impact on their mental health or trigger existing mental health problems. As part of an effective induction, provide information about the support available for people to look after their mental health.
- Line managers or coaches could use the induction period for a proactive conversation about what helps the new team member to stay well. Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) are a useful framework for this ([see page 37](#)).

Promoting wellbeing from induction

UK Sport and the English Institute of Sport provide inductions to athletes and performance staff that outline how to promote good mental wellbeing in the high performance system. The workshops are part of UK Sport's strategy on mental health for the High Performance System.

Stage three – supporting people through times of change and stress

- Changing roles, time out because of illness, injury, approaching retirement, redundancy or de-selection can all have a big impact on people's wellbeing and may trigger existing mental health problems. Events outside of work can also have an impact.
- Experiences like whistleblowing, disciplinary action and active performance management are often stressful and can trigger mental health problems. It's vital that employers are mindful of times of change and stress and that they signpost to the support available both inside and outside of the organisation at these times.

Stage four – responding to disclosure and appropriate signposting

- If at any stage in their career one of your people discloses that they have a mental health problem, it's important you have an early conversation about the person's needs. See [page 56](#) for ten top tips for conversations about mental health.

Stage five – supporting an employee when they are unwell and off sick

- Sometimes a person may need time off to recover from a mental health problem. The same duty of care should apply as for someone taking time off for a physical illness or injury. Remember, physical and mental health problems can be connected.
- How well you manage sickness absence is key in shaping how well and how quickly people return to work. See [page 39](#) for top tips on supporting an employee who is off work.

Stage six – supporting people to return to work

- When someone returns to work after a period of absence for any reason an effective return-to-work interview with their line manager or coach is key. Additionally, it can provide the opportunity to identify any mental health support needs at an early stage.
- Tell people what to expect in advance. Make it clear that it's a supportive way to help them make a successful and lasting return to work and to address any ongoing health needs. The interview can help you identify any reasonable adjustments that could be put in place to help the person stay well and thrive at work. See [page 40](#) for some suggestions.
- Remember, once they are aware that something about work is causing a problem for someone with a disability, employers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Five ways to improve your recruitment and selection processes

- 1 Communicate your organisation's commitment to equal opportunities during the selection process, including in any job adverts, trials or pre-appointment communications.
- 2 Provide guidelines and, where possible, training for people involved in recruitment and selection to ensure that candidates are not discriminated against at any stage.
- 3 Make it clear that you value people's mental health. It sends a signal that disclosure won't lead to discrimination. For example, include a statement in adverts or interviews such as: "As an employer we're committed to promoting and protecting the physical and mental health of all our people."
- 4 State clearly that reasonable adjustments are available – for the selection process and the role itself – so that applicants understand why disclosure might benefit them.
- 5 Ensure people can disclose confidentially and that any information about health or disability is kept separate from the application form, so the recruitment or appointment panel doesn't see it.

Wellness Action Plans

I am quite prone to stress at work. And if I'm feeling down this makes it worse. But I can keep a handle on this with a little bit of support. And this support is probably less onerous than many employers would think. Very simple, small things can make a big difference.

– An employee

Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) are an easy, practical way of helping you to support your own mental health at work. If you are a line manager or coach, they can help you support the mental health of your team.

WAPs are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not. They help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should we experience one. They also open up a dialogue with your line manager, supervisor or coach, in order for them to better understand your needs and experiences and ultimately better support your mental health. This in turn leads to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

We have two guides available, both with a WAP template:

> Get your Guide for line managers

> Get your Guide for employees



Spotlight on officials

The Referees Association

The Referees Association are supporting football officials by signposting through regular communications to members and by providing mental health workshops.

Organisations can better support officials if they include a strategy to engage and support this group in their organisation-wide mental health at work plan. This could include:

- involving officials in the development of the mental health at work plan, through methods such as surveys and focus groups
- offering training on mental health awareness, emotional intelligence and on building resilience
- developing networking and peer support opportunities – face to face and online
- promoting a good work/life balance and providing opportunities for development
- making sure that any signposting to support services is visible to officials
- working with the wider industry to tackle harassment and abuse of officials, following the example of the FA Respect campaign
- involving officials in activities that take stock of wellbeing at the organisational level.

Ten tips for supporting an employee who is off sick with a mental health problem

1

Send a get well soon card as you would with a physical health problem.

2

Make it clear that your organisation will support the employee during their absence, and reassure them their job will still be there when they return.

3

Maintain regular, open and meaningful communication with the employee. Agree how often this should take place early on and confirm in writing.

4

Ask the person how they want to communicate – whether by phone, email, text or face to face. Reassure them that they can change this at any time.

5

Have an open-door policy so the employee can approach managers with any concerns.

6

Ask how they are doing and focus conversations on their wellbeing.

7

Make it clear the person should not rush back to work or push themselves too much.

8

Consider visiting the employee at home, but only with their consent.

10

Keep the employee in the loop about important work developments, so they feel connected.

9

Agree what information they would like shared with colleagues.

Core standard three: employer tool

Suggested adjustments for people with mental health problems

Below you'll find adjustments that could help support employees, volunteers and athletes to manage their own mental health at work. What works for each person will vary, but this can be used as a prompt for line managers or coaches to explore symptoms and support needs together with the employee, volunteer or athlete.

- flexible working or changes to start and finish times
- mentor or buddy systems (formal or informal)
- change of workspace – quieter, less busy, dividing screens
- quiet rooms (a dedicated, work-free, quiet space for people)
- changes to role (temporary or permanent)
- phased return to work/training after time off – reduced hours gradually building back up
- equal amount of break time, but in shorter, more frequent chunks
- moving to a more suitable role
- extra training or coaching (during work hours)
- relaxing absence rules for those with disability-related sickness absence
- increased supervision or support with managing workload
- temporary reallocation of some tasks
- more time working or training outside, using a lightbox or providing a seat with more natural light
- time off for appointments, at short notice if needed
- mediation if there are difficulties between colleagues
- working or training from home or remotely.



Core standard four

Provide your employees with good working conditions

Providing good working conditions for all employees, volunteers and athletes can help to prevent new mental health problems and support everyone with an existing condition to get on in work and thrive.

Promote work/life balance

Over time, constant pressure and a poor work/life balance can lead to stress and burnout, reducing people's productivity, performance and morale. Seven-day contracts and lots of time away from home can be core features of many roles, but particularly in elite sport. That's why it's especially important for people to work with their line managers and coaches to create an effective work/life balance. This means spending time on interests outside of the sport including breaks during the season for time off.

Line managers and coaches should encourage and help their people to:

- work sensible hours
- take full lunch breaks
- rest and recuperate after busy periods, for example competing and testing periods
- avoid working outside agreed hours
- take their full annual leave entitlement
- see their career as part of their life, not their whole life.



Offer flexible working

Giving people some control over where, when and how they work can help everyone be more healthy and productive. For example, you could help someone manage stress by allowing a later start time twice a week so they can do the school run.

An athlete's mental health may be improved by having regular training time in their own space, away from the elite environment, and by being encouraged to use their rest time to recover effectively.

You can achieve this by creating a flexible working policy. Flexible working can also help people who've been absent return to work gradually. Senior leaders, line managers and coaches should be role models for healthier work habits and encourage people by example.

Provide opportunities to develop

Encourage line managers and coaches to give people opportunities for development. You can do this in a cost-effective way by using skills and knowledge within the organisation. For example, providing opportunities such as project management, public speaking or chairing a group to colleagues who have identified these development needs. Offer shadowing days to teach them about another role or part of the organisation, or arrange for coaching with a line manager from a different department.

Understand the impact of insecure and unstable work

Many people who work in sport and physical activity don't have stability or security in their careers, so they may struggle to plan for the future. For example, elite sport offers a unique and exciting work environment – but it's rarely stable. A bad performance by an elite athlete may mean that they are suddenly dropped. For support staff, a relegation or funding cut can often follow.

Despite this, employers, line managers and coaches can and must take action to support athletes' mental health throughout their careers. During periods of change it's important to check in with people regularly and to signpost to support both inside and outside the organisation.

Prepare athletes for life beyond sport

Research by the Professional Players Federation found that only 29 per cent of players were able to choose when they stopped playing professional sport. For the rest, retirement was due to injuries, general wear and tear or inability to get a contract. Only 50 per cent of the players surveyed felt in control of their lives within two years of finishing their playing careers.¹⁷

Your self-esteem is shot down; you don't know who you are as you've spent all your life pleasing others: managers, coaches, fans – you're by yourself, no one wants a photo or autograph anymore.

– Retired professional athlete

We should recognise that a career as a professional athlete is a huge achievement and an exciting opportunity that is likely to be central to a person's sense of identity. However, it's important for employers to start early in preparing athletes for a transition to life beyond sport – whenever that transition eventually happens.

Performance directors and people who run sports talent programmes should encourage athletes to use player associations and **performance lifestyle services**.¹⁸

¹⁷ www.thepfa.com/news/2018/2/5/ppf-initial-career-transition-research-findings

¹⁸ www.eis2win.co.uk/expertise/performance-lifestyle/

Growing a supportive and inclusive workplace culture

Liz Burkinshaw,
Development Lead Officer,
UK Coaching



“Coaching isn’t just about the technical side of sport – it’s the social and mental side too,” explains Liz.

“Coaches are positive towards the mental health of the people they coach, whether that’s an elite performer or someone doing a Couch to 5k. “So one of the reasons we focus on wellbeing internally is to live by what we say.”

As coaching experts, you might expect their wellbeing programme to focus on the benefits of exercise. However, Liz has been careful to promote activities that suit everyone.

“Not everyone at our organisation is sporty,” she says. “Plus, our industry is inundated with ideas like going for a walk every Wednesday – we almost get a bit fed up of it. So it’s about asking: ‘What else could we do?’”

One of the first initiatives was putting together a wellbeing pack for staff to open up the dialogue about mental health. This included information on the Five Ways to Wellbeing, along with feel-good items like tea bags and hot chocolate.

Another low-cost initiative Liz launched this year was Project Sunflower. This involved giving people sunflower seeds to grow at home (or another green space) as a way to connect people.

“We had 50 people sign up, and the response has been really positive. So, you go into the finance department and you’ve got something to talk about that’s not work. Building relationships is important in coaching, and important for mental health as well.”

Creating a mentally healthy organisation

Zoe Tootle, Head of HR, English Football League (EFL)

“People work here because they love sport, and football can be very demanding,” says Zoe.

“We invest in people’s wellbeing because it means they stay fit and healthy and perform really well in their jobs. But there’s an important moral perspective too. We want to support them – whether that means having discussions about mental health, providing time off for appointments, or just trying different ways of working that suit the employee.”

Modern football is a 24/7 sport and that’s why the EFL offers flexible working to help people strike the right work/life balance. There’s also a peaceful Tranquillity Room where staff can go and de-stress during a busy day.

One new initiative that Zoe is introducing offers the services of a Sports Chaplain in the office.

“They’re not focused on religion, but can definitely offer a friendly ear and support to anyone, whether that’s because they have a problem to discuss or more generally for an impartial ear on any matter that may be on their mind,” says Zoe.

“It’s someone that comes from outside the EFL that people can go and have a quiet coffee with. Because I think sometimes you don’t necessarily want to speak to your manager or your colleague. You want someone that’s independent of all that.”

To ensure mental health stays high on the agenda, Zoe is also organising a series of Doing Days where EFL staff can attend workshops on a variety of topics from wellbeing to healthy eating.

“It’s about providing initiatives that people actually want to do and will enjoy,” says Zoe.

“That way they feel part of what’s happening and can choose what they want to focus on and what will benefit them most.”

Creating a culture where it's OK not to be OK

Dr Hannah MacLeod,
GB Hockey Olympic gold medallist.

GB Hockey has worked hard to create a culture where mental health is talked about more openly and encourages people to support one another.

Staff check in on wellbeing and support needs at regular one-to-one catch ups and as teams. The organisation also raises awareness about the specialist support available, which includes access to sports psychologists. It enables players to take time off for mental health days, just as they would for a physical illness. This means people understand it's OK not to be OK.

“For our team to be successful, we had to ensure that we'd created an environment where it felt safe to be authentic. It's about allowing people to say they're not feeling great today,” says Dr Hannah MacLeod, GB Hockey Olympic gold medallist.





Core standard five

Promote effective people
management

Why good people management matters for mental health

Line managers and coaches play a crucial role in workplace wellbeing. Research shows that good line management is linked with good health, wellbeing and improved performance. Meanwhile, poor quality leadership has been linked with stress, burnout and depression.

I can't speak highly enough of the support I have received from my line manager regarding my mental health problems. He has always sought to understand how he can best help me on both a professional and personal level, and thanks to him I've never felt under additional pressure from work when I have been struggling. He doesn't judge me, he values my contribution and he trusts me to do what I need to do to manage my mental health. His support has made a big difference to me.

– Regional Manager, National Governing Body of Sport

Investing in good people management doesn't have to be complex or expensive. At its heart it is about considering all employees, volunteers and athletes as people, not resources or a set of performance statistics. Developing a management style that's open, approachable and self-aware goes a long way to improving team members' wellbeing and performance.

“ We ask managers to always put wellbeing on the agenda in one-to-ones. It doesn't need to be formalised, but it's ensuring managers feel empowered to have what can be fairly candid conversations. ”

– Ben Jessup, Policy Advisor,
Sport and Recreation Alliance

Equipping line managers and coaches

The way you manage and support people experiencing a mental health problem can be key in shaping how they cope and recover. Your organisation should:

- provide training on mental health and stress management – including how to spot the signs and how to have supportive conversations
- have clear guidelines for line managers and coaches on how to support people with mental health problems
- encourage and enable positive line manager and coach behaviours.

“ [The training] has had a significant effect on how we consider the impact of mental health. It’s been conducted in a sensitive, relevant and engaging manner and had a really positive impact on those involved. Often the most difficult part is starting a conversation about mental health. But taking the stigma out of this for colleagues is really important and we are now much more aware of the warning signs and what we can do to support colleagues. A big thank you to Mind for the work they have done in supporting our organisation on this vital part of our learning journey. ”

– Damian Stevenson, Insight and Partnerships
Director, Swim England

Useful resources

Managing mental health at work training

This training course will upskill anyone whose role includes line managing, supervising, coaching or developing people at work. Participants learn how to recognise when a team member is struggling and how to support them professionally. You can sign up to publicly available courses or contact our training team about in-house delivery in your workplace.

People managers' guide to mental health

This guide for managers was jointly developed by Mind and the CIPD to improve support for those experiencing stress and mental health problems. It sets out the practical steps that employers can take to create a mentally healthy workplace and to help prevent poor wellbeing in the first place. It is designed to support anyone involved in managing people. We also hope it will be a useful professional resource for HR and occupational health teams.¹⁹

Questions from line managers

Our expert panel answers the most commonly asked questions from line managers²⁰ about supporting employees with a mental health problem.

Support for coaches and physical activity providers

Watch three short films with advice and support for inclusive coaching²¹.

The Mind Infoline

As well as supporting people living with mental health problems, we can provide advice on managing and supporting mental health at work. Call 0300 123 3393, email info@mind.org.uk or text 86463.

¹⁹ www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/mental-health-support-report

²⁰ www.mind.org.uk/media/43330/line_manager_Webinar_FAQs_final.pdf

²¹ www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/sport-physical-activity-and-mental-health/coaches-page/

Core Standard five: employer tools

Checklist for line managers and coaches

1 Build your confidence on mental health

Familiarise yourself with your organisation's mental health policies and practices and the ways people can seek confidential advice and support.

2 Normalise mental health

Touch base regularly with your people to check how they're getting on and think about what might be causing them stress. Create space for them to ask questions and raise issues, and give them permission to talk about home as well as work issues if they wish.

3 Take stock of mental health

Include an agenda item at team meetings to give people the opportunity to discuss their wellbeing, and what factors are affecting it, if they would like to. This helps create a space where mental health is normalised, but it's important not to force disclosure. Everyone should have the option to share or not to share.

4 Come together as a team

A team planning session can look at any issues in detail and develop a joint action plan to address them. If you run a people survey, this could form the basis of the discussion.

5 Celebrate individual and team successes

Create space at team meetings to give positive feedback and recognise achievements.

6 Encourage employee engagement

Promote a culture of open dialogue and involve employees in decisions about how the team is run and how they do their job. Make sure employees understand their role in the bigger picture and make it clear how they contribute to the organisation's vision and aims.



Talking to people about their mental health: ten tips for line managers and coaches

1 Choose an appropriate place

Ideally somewhere private and quiet where the person feels comfortable and equal.

2 Encourage people to talk

Ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions and let people explain in their own words how their mental health problem manifests, what triggers it, how it affects their work and what support they need.

3 Don't make assumptions

Many people can manage their mental health and perform to a high standard but may need support during difficult periods.

4 Listen to people and respond flexibly

Adapt your support to suit the individual. Involve people as much as possible in finding solutions to any difficulties they have.

5 Be honest and clear

If there are specific concerns, like high absence levels or reduced performance, it's important to address them early.

6 Ensure confidentiality

Sensitive information should be shared with as few people as possible. Discuss what information they would like shared and with whom. Develop policies for line managers and coaches to follow.

7

Develop an action plan

Work with your employee to develop an individual action plan which identifies the signs of their mental health problem, triggers for stress, the possible impact on their work, who to contact in a crisis and what support they need. Learn about Wellbeing Action Plans on [page 36](#).

8

Encourage people to seek advice and support

You're not expected to be an employee's only source of mental health support. People should speak to their GP to access help from the NHS such as talking therapy. If your organisation has an Employee Assistance Programme it may be able to arrange counselling.

9

Seek advice and support yourself

Our [Mind Infolines](#) and network of [local Minds](#) can provide information to employers, too. Occupational Health (if you have it) can provide tailored advice to support both employers and employees. If relationships have become strained or confrontational mediation can help – some local Minds run mediation services, as does the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service ([ACAS](#)). Small businesses can access the free [Health for Work Advice Line](#) service provided by NHS occupational health services.

10

Reassure people

They may not always be ready to talk straight away. So it's important that you explain the support that is available. Tell them your door is always open and let them know you'll make sure they get the help they need.

Core standard six

Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing

At the organisational level

People surveys

Do you know how many of your people have a mental health problem? Or how many people feel able to talk to their line manager or coach about their mental health? A question in a people survey can be a good way of capturing this data. For example, a sample statement could read:

59 Core standard six

Team mental health audits

It's important that line managers and coaches regularly take stock of the mental health of their teams to find out what helps people to stay well, the types of pressures they're under and how to alleviate them. You could carry out a regular mental health audit which allows people to share what is working well, what their challenges are, and then work together to identify solutions. See [page 51](#) for guidance on the types of questions to include in a team mental health audit. This includes suggestions on how to run the process with your people.

HR and performance data

Internal data can be an important source of information on wellbeing – think performance data, absenteeism data on, staff turnover and exit interviews.

How often people take sickness absence, and the reasons they give for it, can give you useful insights about the mental health of your workforce. However, this data needs to be treated with caution and you shouldn't make any assumptions. Be particularly careful if you're still in the process of building a more positive and open culture around mental health. Just because people don't give mental health problems as the reason for their absence doesn't mean they don't exist. Perhaps people don't feel comfortable sharing problems because they're afraid of the reaction they might get.

Core standard six: employer tool

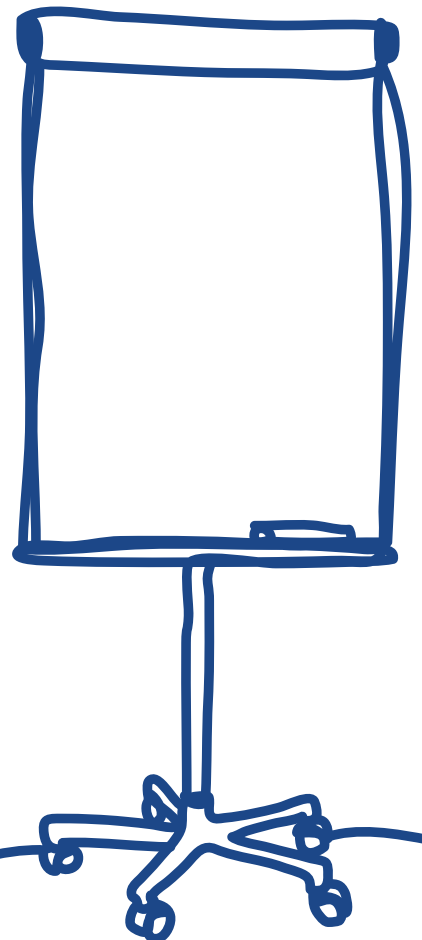
How to take stock of wellbeing at a team level: mental health audits

You could ask your team:

- what they think a mentally healthy team looks like
- what the organisation or team already does well to promote good mental health, and how you can build on this together
- if anything is having a negative impact on the team's mental wellbeing.

You could ask team members to group these issues under the following headings.

- What do we have control over? Include these in your action plan.
- What can we influence? Include these in your action plan.
- What issues are beyond our control or influence?
Acknowledge these now – they could be addressed in the future.



Want to go further?

We strongly recommend that all employers implement the six core *Thriving at Work* standards.

In the following pages we look at the four enhanced *Thriving at Work* standards for employers that can and should go further.

They're designed for larger employers and the public sector, including national governing bodies, large membership organisations and large leisure providers. However, smaller employers can also put the enhanced standards into practice.

Getting mental health on track

Matt Mancini, Welfare Development Manager,
British Horseracing Authority (BHA)

“As a sport we have quite an extensive wellbeing offer – but we know we can always do more for our workforce and our participants,” says Matt.

To put mental health firmly on the agenda the BHA offers mental health awareness training and mental health in the workplace training to staff. Matt says the response has been very positive.

Plus, the BHA is also developing a network of Mental Health Champions to offer support to people who might be struggling at work.

“We have a mental health forum on Workplace [a version of Facebook for work]. People can come forward and share information or ask for help and support from our Champions.”

Along with its partners, the BHA is also looking at the wider sport, so it can focus on what support its workers need.

“We’re undertaking research around mental health so we can understand the landscape for ourselves and what might be causing those issues,” he says.

Influencing supply chains

Larger employers have an important role to play embedding mental health within the sector and helping create a culture shift in wider society that removes the stigma around mental health. We recommend that they use their influence over their supply chains and customers to encourage and support smaller employers to implement the *Thriving at Work* core standards. For example, you could share resources, knowledge and training courses.

Enhanced standard one

Increase transparency and
accountability through internal and
external reporting

You can use the data you collect to monitor your workforce's mental health and wellbeing (see core standard six, page 58) to produce an annual report. You can share it internally with your people and externally with key stakeholders. Including a leadership commitment to make progress on the support you offer for mental health at work sends a powerful message.

Industry umbrella bodies could also run surveys and report at a sector level. This would enable organisations to benchmark their performance against others and help employers to learn from each other.

Your report could include:

- a statement on your commitment to the *Thriving at Work* standards
 - initiatives currently in place and priorities for the future
 - evidence of the impact of your initiatives, through case studies and data such as people survey results, reduced sickness absence and increased engagement in mental health activities.
-

Employer tool

Workplace Wellbeing Index

Our [Workplace Wellbeing Index](#) is a benchmark for best policy and practice. It will help you find out where you are doing well and where you could improve. It can also help you gain public recognition for what you're doing and find out where you benchmark in comparison to peers and other participating organisations.

Sport and physical activity employers are taking part in the Index for the first time in 2018/19. We hope this will inspire further engagement across the sector.

Enhanced standard two

Demonstrate accountability

Appointing a Board-level lead helps ensure that mental health is taken seriously. In large organisations this role could be part of the senior leadership in HR or Health and Safety teams. It's important that the lead has clear accountability for protecting and supporting mental health throughout your organisation, and that they seek opportunities to increase collaboration.

Appointing a lead

"We want to develop parity between mental and physical health, and this is reflected in recent appointments of a Head of Mental Health, and a Mental Health Manager who will drive implementation of the Mental Health Strategy for the High Performance System," explains Craig Ranson, Director of Athlete Health at the English Institute of Sport (EIS).

"The post-holders will work with a newly formed Mental Health Expert panel, UK Sport, Home Country Sport Institutes and World Class Programmes as part of our commitment to ensuring we're at the forefront of mental health provision and having a robust system in place to support athletes and all who work in the High Performance System.

"Dr James Bell, a performance psychologist with experience across a range of sports, is the new Head of Mental Health and will lead on implementing the Mental Health Strategy for the High Performance System.

"An Expert Mental Health panel has additionally been appointed to advise the system, adding experience and expertise to ensure collaboration and the sharing of good practice is at the heart of an enhanced, system-wide mental health support."

Consider including employees' mental health as part of senior leaders' performance objectives and making them accountable for adopting the mental health core and enhanced standards. For example, their performance review could include measurements like sickness absence, people survey results, take-up of Employee Assistance Programmes or Occupational Health Services and disclosure rates.

If you're a smaller organisation, consider nominating an appropriate lead to demonstrate accountability, or share the role with a group of senior staff members.

Enhanced standard three

Improve the disclosure process
to encourage openness during
recruitment

Someone who applies for a position with your organisation – or an athlete going through a selection process – may worry about sharing information about their mental health. So it's important that you offer a fair and unbiased recruitment and selection process. See page 71 for our top tips on how to create this.

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#) job candidates are not required to disclose whether they have a mental health condition to their prospective employer. It's also unlawful for employers to ask candidates questions about their health during recruitment, except in certain circumstances.

Exceptions to the ban on pre-employment health questions²²

You can ask questions about health and disability before a job offer only when they're necessary and fall under these narrow criteria:

- to find out if an applicant can take part in any assessment that tests their ability to do the job, or to find out if reasonable adjustments are needed for the recruitment process, including assessments or interviews
- to find out whether a job applicant will be able to carry out a function intrinsic (or absolutely fundamental) to that job. These 'intrinsic' requirements are narrowly defined and must be objectively justifiable. The Equality and Human Rights Commission advises: "In practice, even if a function is intrinsic to the job, you should ask a question about a disabled person's ability to do the job with reasonable adjustments in place. There will therefore be very few situations where a question about a person's health or disability needs to be asked."
- to find out whether a job applicant has a particular disability, because having that disability is a genuine occupational requirement of the job
- to monitor the diversity of job applicants
- to take positive action in relation to disabled people – for example, to decide if job applicants qualify for measures the employer takes to improve disabled people's employment rates, such as a guaranteed interview scheme.

²² Extracted from: (2018). The People Managers' Guide to Mental Health. CIPD in collaboration with Mind.

As far as possible, when you ask questions for any of these purposes, keep them detached and separate from the application form, so any health information is not seen by the selection panel. Where one person handles all aspects of the recruitment process, for example in a small organisation, they must take every step to disregard this information in shortlisting and selection to comply with the law.

Recruitment decisions should be based on whether candidates have the necessary qualifications and competence for the job. Athletes should be selected on the basis of whether they reach the required performance standard.

If you have concerns about whether health or disability will affect their ability to perform in the role, you must assess these within your legal duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Employer tool

Examples of appropriate and lawful health enquiries before the job offer²³

Application form or equal opportunities form

“Please contact us if you need the application form in an alternative format or if you require any reasonable adjustments to the selection process, including the interview (for example, physical access, communication support, personal support).”

Assessment

“Some of our roles require applicants to complete an online test. Please provide details below of any reasonable adjustments you would need to complete this (for example, extra time, online access, communication requirements).”

Invitation to interview

“Please respond to confirm your availability to attend at the allocated time and to indicate any reasonable adjustments you may need for the interview.”

Monitoring

“We are an equal opportunities employer. The following information will be treated confidentially and will help us monitor our equal opportunities policy. Your application will not be affected by the information provided in this section, which will not be seen by the selection panel. Do you consider yourself to be disabled? (Yes/No).”

Occupational requirements

“An essential criterion for this post is knowledge of mental health, including specific mental health problems. This is an occupational requirement, so you will be asked about your mental health history during the recruitment process.”

23 (2018). The People Managers' Guide to Mental Health. CIPD in collaboration with Mind.

Enhanced standard four

Ensure provision of tailored
in-house mental health support and
signposting to clinical help

Explain what internal and external mental to health and wellbeing support is available your people as part of your organisation's mental health at work plan. Make all new employees, volunteers and athletes aware of this as part of their induction process. We recommend that all new line managers and coaches receive training on this information, so that they can signpost to it as part of effective people management.

Examples of types of support to include:

- internal wellbeing or mental health network where people can share experiences and tips on how to manage mental health and wellbeing at work
- peer support groups
- formal or informal buddy systems to give people the opportunity to talk to someone other than their line manager or coach
- Mental Health First Aiders or Mental Health Champions for employees to talk to if they are struggling
- signposting to local voluntary sector providers, such as local peer support groups and online peer support
- signposting to clinical help, such as NHS services or another healthcare provider.

Examples of additional support some employers could buy in or offer in-house:

- free or subsidised private medical insurance
- access to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (including digital platforms)
- access to counselling at work
- Occupational Health
- Employee Assistance Programmes and other tailored mental health and wellbeing support.

“ We have a health scheme with a company called How it Feels, so we can signpost to their website. That gives us professionals to utilise in areas where we're not experts.
– Faye Nixon, Head of Global Engagement,
Derby County Football Club ”

Some employers extend support to organisations in their supply chain – particularly to smaller employers – to help them improve the mental health of their employees.

Employer tool

External sources of mental health support you can share with your people:

Mind Infoline

The Mind Infoline can help you to find out what services are available in your area.

You can call us on **0300 123 3393**, email info@mind.org.uk or text **86463**. We're open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Or find out if there is a local Mind near you here: mind.org.uk/information-support/local-minds/

Elefriends

Elefriends is a supportive online community where you can be yourself. We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes, but now there's a safe place to listen, share and be heard. Whether you're feeling good right now, or really low, it's a safe place to share experiences and listen to others.

Sign up at: elefriends.org.uk/

Samaritans

Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal. Call Samaritans free any time, from any phone on **116 123**. They are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Find out more at: samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you

Rethink Mental Illness

Founded 40 years ago through voluntary groups for people affected by mental illness, Rethink Mental Illness have over 100 groups in England. Call them on **0300 5000 927**. They are open 9.30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

Find our more at: rethink.org/about-us/our-mental-health-advice

Elite level support

At an elite level, player associations, national governing bodies and the English Institute for Sport offer tailored support for athletes provided by the following specialist organisations.

The Professional Players Federation (PPF)

A list of mental health support provided by player associations across the UK can be found here: ppf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Mental-Health-Support-May-2017.pdf

The English Institute of Sport (EIS) Mental Health Referral Programme

The Mental Health Referral Programme provides specialist primary and secondary care services to elite athletes that are struggling with a wide range of mental health issues, including depression, stress, anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders and addictions. It is available to all athletes on World Class Performance Programmes.

Find out more at:

<https://www.eis2win.co.uk/2017/10/10/mental-health-referral-programme/>

Getting a fresh perspective

Gold medal-winning hockey player Helen Richardson-Walsh is one well-known athlete who has benefited from the EIS Mental Health Referral Programme.

“Through the programme I was referred to the Priory Hospital in Roehampton as an outpatient for a series of appointments over the space of six months or so. I’m grateful for that support from the EIS. It took me a few months to start to get back to feeling myself again,” says Helen.

“The specialists I saw were away from the hockey world and my daily life and that was critical. They brought a fresh perspective to my issues, allowing me to gradually see the light at the end of the tunnel. Slowly but surely I started to feel like my old self. Everyone knows the success that eventually followed in Rio for myself as part of the GB hockey team. I think what I’d gone through made it even more satisfying.”

Read more about Helen’s experience and see her talking about the programme in a video interview on the EIS website.

Sporting Chance

Sporting Chance is a charity that helps over 800 professional and former professional sportspeople who are experiencing emotional problems or worried about addiction each year.

Call them on [0870 220 0714](tel:08702200714) or email: info@sportingchanceclinic.com

Find out more at: sportingchanceclinic.com/

Other commercial providers

Further tailored services, including support from psychologists, psychiatrists and therapists specialising in elite sport, can be accessed from commercial providers such as Cognacity and the Priory Group.



How Mind can help you

Mind are the leading voice on mental health in the workplace. We're here to support you to improve your organisation's approach to mental health. We offer a range of workplace wellbeing resources and cost-effective training and consultancy. Plus, our Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index can help you find out where you are doing well and what you can do better.

Employer Journey

Our one-page [Employer Journey](#) connects you with key Mind resources that you may find helpful on each stage of your journey to implement the *Thriving at Work* standards in your organisation.

Contact work@mind.org.uk to find out more.

Supporting the sport and physical activity sector

We're delighted to partner with Sport England and the National Lottery on phase two of [Get Set to Go](#) (between 2018 and 2021) to enable the sport and physical activity sector:

- help people with mental health problems to access their activities
- better support their employees with mental health problems improve their policies and practice around mental health.

To find out more about the support available please visit mind.org.uk/sport or contact sport@mind.org.uk

Partner with us

There are lots of different ways to partner with us to achieve both your organisational objectives, including corporate responsibility goals, and your wider business needs. Our experienced team will suggest innovative ways to tailor our partnership and engage your workforce.



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

**SPORT+
RECREATION
ALLIANCE**

We're Mind, the mental health charity.
We want to support a million people
to stay well and have good mental
health at work by 2021.

Be part of our movement for change in workplace
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