

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 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.

