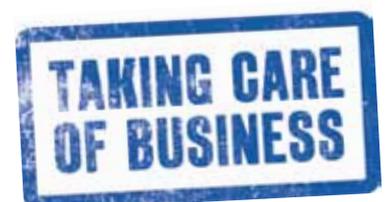


Taking care of business

Employers' guide to mentally healthy workplaces



For better
mental health



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Introduction

We understand that organisations are under constant pressure to reduce costs – now more than ever. This guide suggests ways to help you increase productivity, improve staff performance and save thousands of pounds.

Organisations rely on having a healthy and productive workforce, and it makes no sense for employers to ignore the wellbeing of their staff. Mental health problems like anxiety, depression and unmanageable stress affect one in six British workers each year. They can affect anyone in any industry. Yet mental health is still a taboo subject, with employers and employees feeling scared and confused about confronting the issue.

Work-related mental ill health costs the UK economy up to £26 billion every year through lost working days, staff turnover and lower productivity. Would you know how much mental ill health costs your organisation?

We can show you how inexpensive, simple measures to support staff mental wellbeing can help you save up to 30 per cent of these costs. Smart employers are taking steps now to protect the mental health of their existing workforce. Employers who actively encourage good mental health in their workplace are reaping the rewards, experiencing increased efficiencies, reduced staff turnover and bigger profits.

This guide is an introduction to the issues and gives you pointers for improving the mental wellbeing of your workplace. It is part of a wider, long-running campaign 'Taking care of business', which you can sign up to at www.mind.org.uk/work

What is poor workplace wellbeing?

You announce a new contract or initiative that will bring huge benefits to your organisation. Ten minutes after telling everyone the fantastic news, you accidentally overhear your staff vigorously complaining about the change.

A fifth member of staff, within a six-month period hands in their notice. The only reason given is that they have found a new job.

A member of staff has been off sick. You receive a doctor's note stating that they have been diagnosed with depression. He is a great employee and you want him to come back to work. How do you support him to do so?

These are some possible symptoms of poor mental wellbeing at work. In isolation they may not be too much of a problem. However, when work becomes the cause of mental distress among staff the costs to organisations quickly mount up. Poor mental wellbeing can lead to repeated staff absences and consistent difficulty for individuals to work at their best.

A 2003 study by the Health and Safety Executive found that a million people are so stressed by their jobs they believe it is making them ill and up to five million people feel very or extremely stressed by their work. And yet employer awareness of mental health issues at work in the UK is poor. Most senior managers vastly underestimate the scale of the problem and most think it will never affect their workplaces (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2007; Shaw Trust, 2010).

Other research (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2008) has shown that health and wellbeing programmes increase employee satisfaction, lead to a higher company profile, higher productivity, reduced sickness absence and reduced staff turnover. An investment in staff wellbeing is an investment in your organisation.

What does a mentally healthy workplace look like?

Below are two examples of organisations which have taken up the challenge of tackling mental health in the workplace and seen tangible results.

EDF Energy

EDF Energy is a major electricity provider. A workplace audit showed that the company was losing around £1.4m in productivity each year as a result of mental ill health among its employees. As part of an Employee Support Programme the company offered psychological support (cognitive behavioural therapy) to employees and trained over 1,000 managers to recognise psychological ill health among staff and to minimise its effects. This resulted in an improvement in productivity which saved the organisation approximately £228,000 per year. Job satisfaction rose from 36 to 68 per cent (Business in the Community, 2009).

Expedition Engineering

Expedition is a cutting-edge engineering and design consultancy. Their multi-award winning success is built on a strong commitment to the wellbeing of their 40 members of staff.

Staff are involved in company decision-making, encouraged to manage their own workload, work from home and dream up new ideas for the company in dedicated 'free thinking' space. Staff are offered a menu of benefits to choose from to suit their needs. Options include travelcard loans, bicycle loans, private health insurance and gym membership. They have also introduced a 'Tenth Day' scheme where staff have every tenth working day off. A welfare policy, stress policy and parental policy embed these practical benefits in the business strategy of the company.

The company enjoys minimal staff turnover and strong loyalty from customers who return again and again because they love working with Expedition staff. For Expedition the business benefits of a commitment to staff wellbeing could not be clearer.

Creating mentally healthy workplaces

You have a 'duty of care' under UK law, whether you are a large employer or only have a few staff, to protect the health, safety and welfare of all your employees (Health and Safety at Work Act 1984). You have a duty to assess the risks arising from hazards at work, including work-related mental health problems.

To create a mentally healthy workplace you need to develop a comprehensive strategy that:

- promotes wellbeing for all staff
- tackles work-related mental health problems
- supports staff who are experiencing mental distress.

By doing this, you will create a place your employees want to work in and where they can perform well.

Assessing wellbeing at your workplace

Before developing new policies and practices, it is recommended you take stock of your current systems for ensuring a healthy workplace. A good first step is to commission a survey.

Staff surveys

Many organisations conduct annual staff satisfaction surveys. It is easy to incorporate questions to gauge the mental wellbeing of your workplace. The following questions are provided as an example. Respondents should be asked to elaborate on their Yes/No answers and it is therefore vital that staff understand their responses will be used anonymously. A good way to do this is to use an external company who can carry out the survey and analyse the results for you.

1. Do you think that work has an impact on your mental wellbeing?
2. Do you think that your mental wellbeing has an impact on your ability to do your work?
3. Have you noticed work having an effect on your colleagues' mental wellbeing?
4. Are you affected by your colleagues' mental health?

5. Do you know how your organisation manages workplace mental wellbeing?
6. Are you aware of any support your organisation offers to staff?
7. Would you know where to access mental wellbeing services outside your organisation?
8. Do you feel supported by your manager and colleagues?
9. Are the responsibilities and expectations of your work clearly communicated to you?
10. Is there anything else your organisation could do to improve your mental wellbeing?

Planning

Once you've taken the first step and found out what is happening in your workplace, proper planning can help you make key improvements to the wellbeing of your organisation.

We have identified three areas that need to be considered when planning for the mental wellbeing of your organisation. So you can see how these steps can improve your organisation, each area starts with a scenario. The recommendations that follow are by no means comprehensive but rather an idea of how to apply good mental health practices in your workplace.

1. Promote wellbeing

You announce a new contract or initiative that will bring huge benefit to your organisation. Ten minutes after telling everyone the fantastic news, you accidentally overhear your staff vigorously complaining about the change.

The above scenario may simply mean staff members are having a 'bad day' but if you see it time and time again it might be symptomatic of poor workplace mental wellbeing.

Often good management is the key to unlocking the potential of your staff, reducing uncertainty and preventing unmanageable stress:

- Ensure that your staff have a good work/life balance. In the short term, long hours might seem manageable and boost productivity. However, a lack of sleep and relaxation time can quickly take its toll and lead to irritability, lower productivity and poor performance.
- Engage employees in their work. Staff who know where your organisation is heading and are able to feed back their views will be better motivated and more able to help you meet your objectives.
- Explore introducing a flexible hours scheme. On occasion, we all need time off to visit the key cutters, the opticians or our child's school. If staff are able to fit their lives around their workload, they will repay you with a stronger commitment to the organisation.
- Promote positive working relationships. Bullying, harassment and negativity are detrimental to a successful working environment.
- Communicate staff responsibilities and expectations clearly, this will help them achieve your organisation's goals.
- Encourage exercise and social events. Physical activities boost staff health, team work and mental wellbeing.

2. Tackle the causes of mental ill health

A fifth member of staff within a six-month period hands in their notice. The only reason given is that they have found a new job.

If your work environment and relationships aren't right you'll struggle to recruit and retain good staff. Creating the right environment and supportive relationships between staff will prevent your staff from experiencing work-related mental health problems and help your organisation to thrive.

- Make sure that work environments are suitable for the task. Noise, temperature and light levels can all have a big impact on wellbeing. Could space dividers, quiet spaces or music improve your workplace?
- Manage workloads among your staff. Make sure that no one is expected to deliver more than what they are capable of.
- Train managers to identify risks, recognise mental ill health and support their staff.
- For staff working in isolation, ensure there are clear and regular lines of communication. A monthly team meeting or a regular phone catch-

up will keep you in contact with these members of staff and enable you to prevent problems from occurring.

- Start a mentoring scheme to help new members of staff understand your organisation faster and to support them in their role. Or you could start a buddy system which enables colleagues to support other colleagues outside the official line-management structure.

3. Support staff

A member of staff has been off sick. You receive a doctor's note stating that they have been diagnosed with depression. He is a great employee and you want him to come back to work but how do you support him to do so?

One in four people experiences mental distress in their lifetime. As an organisation you are likely to be affected in some way at some time. If staff have to take time off because of their mental health, the following approach can help them return to work while positively contributing to your organisation:

- If you become aware of a staff member experiencing mental distress the first step is to establish honest, open communication with them.
- Focus on the person not the problem. Ask them if they need adjustments to be made to their workplace conditions. They will often have all the expertise you will need to help them to manage the ups and downs of their condition
- Sometimes staff will need to take periods off sick due to mental ill health. If this happens remember four key things:
 - Their expertise and experience have been and will continue to be valuable to your organisation.
 - Keep in contact, make sure they know 'out of sight' is not 'out of mind'.
 - Explore adjustments that might be required to aid their return to work.
 - Discuss the option of a phased return to work that allows the person to build up slowly and prevent a relapse.

Individuals who experience mental distress can continue to make a valuable contribution to your organisation with the right support. A recovery action plan can help you find out what will work best for them. Working with the individual to develop this will help you to identify together what the early signs of mental distress are, who you

may need to contact and how your staff member would like to be supported. By planning in advance, you will be able to reduce the impact on your organisation and ensure the individual receives the support they need.

Once you have considered the three areas above and how they can be implemented in your organisation, it is important that this knowledge does not get lost. By recording your thoughts and action plans, you will create a process that will ensure your organisation stays on track to become more mentally healthy and more productive.

Mental health in the workplace

Below is a list of policies and practices to promote staff wellbeing taken from *Mental health in the workplace: an employer's guide, no.3* (Mind, 2010)

The job

- workloads that match employees' abilities and experience
- reasonable and agreed deadlines for work completion
- reduction in repetitive duties within workloads
- a suitable working environment (consider noise, office lighting, equipment)
- clearly defined roles
- employee involvement in the planning of their workload
- freedom for employees to express any concerns regarding the compromise of personal or professional standards
- plans for employee training and development.

The organisation

- impartial and supportive supervision structures
- widely publicised and available supervision and support policies
- encouragement and promotion of mental disclosure within the workforce – employees need to feel confident that they can be open about health issues and that they will be taken seriously
- clear guidelines around mental health issues for managers
- detailed records on sickness absence used to analyse causes for absence

- promoted and accessible policies and guidance to challenge inappropriate behaviour such as racism, sexism and bullying.

Relationships in the workplace

- a supportive environment for employees; examples of good productive team work should be encouraged and shared
- inclusion: employees should not be made to feel isolated due to the nature of the work they do or as a result of more personal factors such as cultural or religious beliefs, race, sexuality, disability, age and gender.

Career and personal development

- clear supervisory and appraisal structures involving the employee
- sufficient opportunities for staff to take part in training or apply for promotion
- the views of employees with respect to job satisfaction, career development and training needs.

Personal issues affecting staff

- management awareness of relevant personal issues affecting staff such as illness, bereavement, financial worries or stress-related factors which might be contributing to them struggling to cope in the workplace
- policies in place for dealing with such issues
- training for managers to deal with such issues.

Implementing even some of these practices can make a major impact on staff wellbeing and save you money. If you would like more tailored, hands-on advice please contact Mind to find out about resources, support and our consultancy service, Mind Workplace, at www.mind.org.uk/workplace

This guide is part of our long-term employment campaign, 'Taking care of business', that will help bring much-needed changes to the workplace.

If you are willing to take steps to improve your organisation and the working lives of your staff, Mind is here for you every step of the way.

We believe that by helping employers and employees look after their mental wellbeing, we can significantly improve the working lives of people in England and Wales.

Act today

Reaping extensive benefits from improved employee mental wellbeing will require long-term commitment to the issue. But you can start benefiting from a more mentally healthy management style today.

1. Take a walk around your workplace at lunchtime, how many of your staff are still sat at their desks? Suggest that they take a lunch break every day. By taking a break at midday you can help your brain relax and ensure you are as productive at the end of the day as you are at the start.
2. When you leave work tell your staff it's time to go home – if there is no one to tell, maybe you should consider working shorter hours? Working shorter hours will not only benefit your personal life, it will make sure when you are at work you are rested and ready to perform at your best.
3. Introduce yourself to staff. How many people do you work with that you've never spoken to? Talking regularly to all your employees could give you a better sense of what is happening on the ground.
4. Enjoy some team time with your staff and have some time out of the office. Organise a lunchtime activity such as a softball match, a picnic or just eating out.

Some things are too big to ignore...

One in six workers experiences depression, anxiety or unmanageable stress.

A further one in six experiences symptoms of mental ill health such as sleep problems and fatigue.

Yet mental health is still taboo in the workplace.

Many employees keep quiet about their mental distress, for fear of discrimination from managers or colleagues. This means problems spiral and are often not identified until too late, exacerbating the business and human costs, as well as placing added strain on colleagues.

Sign up to Mind's 'Taking care of business' campaign at www.mind.org.uk/work:

- Increase your profile and show your support by displaying your organisation's logo on our Campaign Supporters' page. Email work@mind.org.uk for more details.
- Your local Mind can help you create a more mentally healthy workplace. To find Mind in your area visit the Mind website at www.mind.org.uk
- Stay up to date with the campaign via e-newsletters with links to blogs, debate, events and resources.



Let's talk about mental health at work.

Local associations

Did you know there is a Mind in your area which can help you create a more mentally healthy, open workplace where employees feel supported enough to discuss a problem? Your local Mind offers bespoke services, including counselling, employment support and mental health awareness training. To find Mind in your area visit the Mind website at www.mind.org.uk under the 'Find us in your area' section.

Mental health infolines

Mind infoline

0300 123 3393
info@mind.org.uk

Mind infoline
PO Box 277
Manchester
M60 3XN

Mind's Legal advice service

0300 466 6463
legal@mind.org.uk

Mind LAS
PO Box 277
Manchester
M60 3XN

We can send out printed information to individuals in unmarked envelopes, or we can help guide you to online information available on our website. Calls are recorded for training purposes only.

Mind helplines are open Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm.

We provide information on a range of topics including types of mental distress, where to get help, drug and alternative treatments and advocacy. We can also signpost you to employment support services in your area.

Information resources

The two Mind publications below can be ordered online at www.mind.org.uk/shop

Mental health in the workplace: an employer's guide (2010)

This comprehensive guide provides employers with practical tips and examples on how to manage and improve mental health in the workplace.

The Mind guide to surviving working life (2010)

This booklet gives practical tips and sources of advice on staying well at work.

Time to Change website

As part of the Time to Change campaign to end mental health discrimination, this website offers support and guidance to help you avoid discrimination in the workplace. Find out about the way mental health problems can affect your staff, and get practical tips to help them stay healthy and happy at work. There are links and case studies that your employees will find useful, and information from Mind's Legal unit about your responsibilities under the new Equality Act.

www.time-to-change.org.uk/need-support/support-workplace

Training and consultancy

Mind Workplace

Mind Workplace provides consultancy and training for large employers on mental health, enhancing productivity by improving business practices. Mind Workplace will help assess how mentally healthy your organisation is for both employees and clients, and support you in making any changes.

www.mind.org.uk/workplace

Other resources and organisations

Department for Work and Pensions

Help and information relating to employment initiatives, such as the Access to Work programmes.

www.dwp.gov.uk

Employee Assistance Professionals Association

The professional body for employee assistance programmes (EAPs), representing the interests of professionals concerned with employee assistance, psychological health and wellbeing.

www.eapa.org.uk

Employers' Forum on Disability

The Forum focuses on disability and how it affects business.

www.efd.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Commission promotes equality and human rights for a fairer Britain, including disability equality.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Health and Safety Executive

The Health and Safety Executive has created management standards for work-related stress.

www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards

Impact on Depression: The Workplace Mental Health Programme

Impact on Depression is a work-based programme that reduces the impact of depression and anxiety minimising the effects on an organisation. It uses a range of training techniques that build knowledge, skills and confidence among managers and staff to recognise and give help to colleagues with depression and anxiety.

www.impactondepression.co.uk

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies

An NHS service set up throughout England to provide additional access to evidence-based talking therapies.

www.iapt.nhs.uk

Mindful Employer

An employer-led initiative to improve organisations by providing easy access to information about mental health at work. It is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and providing support for organisations in recruiting and retaining staff.

www.mindfulemployer.net

Centre for Mental Health

A leading mental health research and campaigning organisation.

www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk

Shaw Trust

A national charity supporting people with disabilities to secure employment.

www.shaw-trust.org.uk

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About Mind

Mind has been speaking out for better mental health for 60 years. We work in partnership with around 170 local Mind associations to directly improve the lives of people with experience of mental distress.

Mental distress affects people from every ethnic background and walk of life – one in four people experiences mental health problems in any one year and a third of all GP visits relate to mental health.

Mind believes everyone is entitled to the care they need in order to live a full life and to play their full part in society. Our vision is of a society that promotes and protects good mental health for all, and that treats people with experience of mental distress fairly, positively and with respect.

Mind is an independent charity supported by your donations. We campaign to influence Government policy and legislation, work closely with the media and are the first source of unbiased, independent mental health information via our publications, website www.mind.org.uk and phone service Mind infoline **0300 123 3393**.

