SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.



HR Guide to Supporting Mental Wellbeing at Work

Listening with care.

Acting with clarity.

Protecting with integrity.

A practical guide to help organisations create supportive, respectful and mentally healthy workplaces.

Our HR Principle

Every conversation can positively impact mental wellbeing.

COMPASSION | INTEGRITY | INCLUSIVITY | EMPOWERMENT

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Contents

01	Welcome	03
02	The Strategic Role of HR	04
03	Building a Supportive Framework	05
04	Recognising the Signs	06
05	Supportive Conversations	07
06	Reasonable Adjustments	08
07	Confidentiality and Data	09
08	Working with Managers	10
09	Absence and Return to Work	11
10	Signposting and Resources	12
11	Building a Healthier Culture	13
12	Taking Care of Yourself	14
13	Key Takeaways	15
14	Final Thoughts	16



Our HR Principle

Listening with care.
Acting with clarity.
Protecting with integrity.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.



Welcome

Thank you for downloading this Secure Cortex guide.

Mental wellbeing is fundamental to a healthy, productive and successful workplace. HR professionals play a vital role in shaping environments where people feel supported, valued and able to thrive.

This guide has been created to give you practical insights, tools and confidence to support the mental wellbeing of employees across your organisation. It draws on established best practice, real workplace experience and a deep understanding of the human side of work.

What you'll find inside

- **Practical guidance** you can apply with confidence.
- **Tools to support** managers and employees.
- **Clear frameworks** aligned with best practice.
- **Ideas to build** a healthier, more resilient workplace.

> "Workplaces thrive when people feel **supported, respected and able to be their best selves.**"

Whether you are strengthening existing wellbeing initiatives or starting a new journey, we hope this guide provides valuable support for you and your organisation.

COMPASSION | INTEGRITY | INCLUSIVITY | EMPOWERMENT

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

The Strategic Role of HR



HR sits at the heart of organisational culture and employee experience.

You influence policy, shape practice and support leaders to create environments where people can thrive.

By championing mental wellbeing, HR helps to drive engagement, productivity and retention while also reducing absence, presenteeism and the associated costs to the organisation.

HR has a unique opportunity to:

- **Influence culture** by embedding wellbeing into values, behaviours and everyday practice.
- **Enable leaders** to recognise the importance of wellbeing and respond with confidence.
- **Create supportive policies** that are clear, accessible and inclusive.
- **Use data and insight** to understand needs and measure impact.
- **Build trust** by ensuring people feel safe to speak up and seek support.

When HR leads with empathy and evidence, organisations **become stronger, healthier and more resilient.**

Your impact is significant.

Small, consistent actions by HR can lead to lasting change for individuals, teams and the wider organisation.

Our HR Principle

Listening with care. • Acting with clarity. • Protecting with integrity.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Building a Supportive Framework

A supportive framework ensures mental wellbeing is embedded in your people practices, not treated as an afterthought.

Five key pillars create the foundation for meaningful, lasting impact.

1 Clear policies and procedures

Develop and communicate policies that are accessible, inclusive and aligned with best practice and legal requirements.

2 Manager capability and confidence

Equip managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support their teams and signpost to the right help.

3 Early support and intervention

Encourage open conversations and create clear pathways for employees to access support before issues escalate.

4 Confidentiality and trust

Protect privacy, handle information responsibly and build trust so people feel safe to speak up and seek support.

5 Regular review and improvement

Use feedback, data and insight to review what's working, identify gaps and continuously strengthen your approach.

A supportive framework turns good intentions into consistent action.

When these five pillars work together, they create a culture where people feel supported, valued and able to thrive.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Recognising the Signs



Spotting early signs of stress or poor mental wellbeing can make a real difference.

Small changes over time are often more important than one-off incidents.

01 Changes in behaviour and communication

- Withdrawing from colleagues or conversations
- Irritability, frustration or mood swings
- Appearing anxious, overwhelmed or down
- Reduced enthusiasm or motivation

02 Changes in performance and attendance

- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Missing deadlines or increased errors
- Taking more time off or frequent absences
- Avoiding tasks or responsibilities

03 Emotional and physical signs

- Fatigue, low energy or burnout
- Changes in appetite or sleep
- Physical complaints with no clear cause
- Expressions of feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope

Look for change, not a checklist.

Everyone has tough days. It's the pattern over time that matters.

Important reminder

Changes do not always mean someone is struggling, but they may be worth a conversation.

Notice. Be curious. Offer support.

Early recognition creates opportunities to listen, support and prevent challenges from becoming crises.

"People don't need us to have all the answers — they need us to notice and care."

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Supportive Conversations



Thoughtful, supportive conversations help build trust, open the door to support and create positive outcomes.

Use this simple three-step approach to guide conversations with confidence.

01 ASK.

Invite an open conversation at the right time.

- Choose a private, appropriate setting
- Ask how they are and really listen
- Show genuine care and curiosity

02 AGREE.

Agree next steps together and what support is needed.

- Explore what support would help
- Agree clear, practical next steps
- Respect their choices and pace

03 REVIEW.

Review regularly and adjust as needed.

- Check in and see how things are going
- Adjust support if needs change
- Celebrate progress and successes

> **A good conversation can make a real difference.**
>
> It helps people feel heard, valued and supported, not judged or alone.

Important reminder

Listen without judgement. Your role is to support, not to solve.

Small conversations today can prevent bigger challenges tomorrow and create a culture of care and connection.

Support early.
Support well.
Support together.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Reasonable Adjustments



Reasonable adjustments remove barriers and help employees to do their best work and stay well.

They are not one size fits all. What works for one person may not work for another.

01 Flexible working arrangements

Adjust start and finish times, offer hybrid or remote working, or compressed hours to support balance and reduce pressure.

02 Changes to workload or deadlines

Reprioritise tasks, reduce non-essential work, or extend deadlines to create realistic and manageable expectations.

03 Adaptations to the work environment

Consider lighting, noise, space, seating or quiet areas to support comfort, focus and wellbeing.

04 Additional equipment or support

Provide assistive technology, software or tools that help employees to work more effectively.

05 Time for appointments or wellbeing activities

Allow time for medical appointments, counselling, exercise or wellbeing activities that support mental health.

Small changes can make a big difference.

When people feel supported to work in a way that suits them, they are more engaged, more productive and better able to thrive.

Practical reminder

Work with employees to understand what will help. Avoid assumptions, agree adjustments together and review them regularly.

Inclusive workplaces are more resilient workplaces.
Support today creates strength for tomorrow.

Small adjustments.
Stronger teams.
Better outcomes.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Confidentiality and Data



People need to feel confident that their information is treated with respect and handled responsibly. This builds trust and encourages open conversations.

Follow these three principles to protect confidentiality and data.

01 RESPECT.

Respect their confidence and treat personal information with care.

- Listen with empathy and without judgement
- Only collect information that is needed
- Treat every conversation as confidential

02 EXPLAIN.

Be clear about what information will be recorded, how it will be used and who may need access to it.

- Explain why information is being recorded
- Be transparent about how it will be used
- Share information only on a need to know basis

03 PROTECT.

Protect their information and only share it when necessary, appropriate and lawful.

- Store information securely
- Follow data protection and confidentiality policies
- Share only when there is a clear reason to do so

> **Trust is essential. Protecting confidentiality helps people feel safe to speak openly and seek support.**

When people trust that their information is safe, they are more likely to ask for help early and engage in support.

Be honest about the limits of confidentiality.

Never promise absolute confidentiality where there may be a serious safety, safeguarding or legal concern.

Safety
Where someone or others may be at risk of harm.

Safeguarding
Where a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be at risk.

Legal
Where required by law or regulatory obligations.

Explain this clearly at the start and revisit it when needed.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Working with Managers



Managers play a vital role in supporting mental wellbeing. HR can equip and empower them to make a real difference.

Work in partnership to build confidence, skills and a culture of care.

01 Provide guidance and training

Offer training and guidance so managers understand mental health, recognise signs early and know how to respond.

02 Offer practical tools and resources

Equip managers with easy-to-use tools, conversation guides and signposting information to trusted support.

03 Support difficult conversations

Provide guidance and reassurance so managers feel confident to have caring, supportive conversations.

04 Help managers recognise their own boundaries

Encourage managers to know what is within their role and when to refer or escalate for specialist support.

05 Encourage managers to look after their own wellbeing

Support managers to build resilience, manage stress and prioritise their own wellbeing.

> **Strong managers build strong teams. Support them to lead with confidence.**
>
> When managers feel supported, they are better placed to support their teams and create a positive, healthy workplace.

Our Secure Cortex Principle

- **Support**, not solve.
- **Notice**, not diagnose.
- **Guide**, not fix.

HR and managers working together creates a culture where people feel supported, valued and able to thrive.

Invest in your managers.
Invest in your people.
Invest in your future.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Absence and Return to Work



Returning to work after an absence can feel daunting. A supportive, collaborative approach makes all the difference.

Follow these three stages to support a successful and sustainable return.

01 BEFORE RETURN

Stay in touch, with consent.
Agree what support is needed.
Plan together.

- Keep in regular contact with consent
- Discuss any concerns and potential barriers
- Agree adjustments and a return plan

02 AT RETURN

Welcome the person back.
Review adjustments and workload.
Take things one step at a time.

- Offer a warm welcome and reassurance
- Review the return plan and workplace adjustments
- Agree priorities and reasonable workload
- Be flexible and go at their pace

03 AFTER RETURN

Check in regularly.
Review what is working.
Adjust support where needed.

- Have regular check-ins and meaningful conversations
- Celebrate progress and small wins
- Review and adjust support as needed

> **A positive return experience builds confidence and can reduce the risk of further absence.**
>
> With the right support, people are more likely to return well and stay well.

Important reminder for HR

Returning to work is a process, not a single event.

A phased, flexible and individual approach can help someone return well and stay well.

Compassion, communication and flexibility create the best outcomes for everyone.

Communicate openly. | Show understanding. | Support sustainable success.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Signposting and Resources



Knowing where to find the right support can make it easier for people to get the help they need.

Use these trusted routes to guide and connect people to the right support.

01

Employee Assistance Programmes

Confidential support provided through the organisation, offering counselling, advice and practical help on a range of personal and work-related issues.

02

Occupational Health

Professional advice about physical and mental health, fitness for work and workplace adjustments.

03

GP and healthcare professionals

For medical assessment, treatment and ongoing healthcare support. Encourage employees to speak to their GP if they are struggling.

04

Mental health charities and helplines

Trusted organisations providing information, emotional support and specialist guidance (e.g. Mind, Samaritans, NSPCC, CALM).

05

Local support services

Community-based services, talking therapies, support groups and specialist organisations that can provide additional, localised help.

06

Online resources and apps

Credible digital tools, self-help resources and wellbeing apps that can complement other forms of support.

> **You don't have to have all the answers. You just need to know where to guide people next.**
>
> Connecting people to the right support shows you care and can make a real difference to their wellbeing and recovery.

Important reminder

Signposting is not simply handing someone a phone number or website.

- Take time to explain the options.
- Check that the support is appropriate for their needs.
- Where possible, follow up afterwards to see how they are getting on.

Guide, don't diagnose.
Connect, don't abandon.

A small act of signposting today can be the first step towards the right support and a better tomorrow.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Building a Healthier Culture



A positive culture is one where people feel safe, supported and able to do their best work.

Focus on these five foundations to create a workplace where mental wellbeing can thrive.

01 Open conversations

Create an environment where people can speak openly about mental wellbeing without fear of judgement.

- Encourage regular, honest conversations at all levels.

02 Inclusion and respect

Make sure people feel valued, heard and able to be themselves at work.

- Celebrate differences and foster a sense of belonging.

03 Healthy work-life boundaries

Encourage realistic expectations and recognise the importance of rest and recovery.

- Promote balance and support people to disconnect and recharge.

04 Recognition and appreciation

Notice people's contributions and create a culture where good work is genuinely acknowledged.

- Say thank you. Celebrate progress. Recognise impact.

05 Learning and development

Give people and managers the confidence and skills to support wellbeing in everyday working life.

- Invest in training, resources and ongoing development.

> **Healthy cultures don't happen by accident. They are shaped by everyday actions, decisions and leadership.**
>
> When wellbeing is part of how we work, everyone benefits – individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole.

Small actions, done consistently, create lasting change.

You don't need to do everything at once. Start small, keep going and build momentum together.

A healthy culture supports performance, resilience and sustainable success.

- People feel safe and supported.
- Teams are more connected and engaged.
- Organisations are stronger and more resilient.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Taking Care of Yourself



HR professionals support others every day. Protecting your own wellbeing is essential so you can keep showing up, staying resilient and making a difference.

Focus on these six practical ways to look after yourself.

01 Set clear boundaries

Recognise what belongs within your role and what needs specialist support. It's okay to say, "This is outside my role. Let's find the right support."

02 Take regular breaks

Create small moments to pause, reset and step away from constant demands. Even short breaks can help refresh your mind and reduce stress.

03 Stay connected

Talk to trusted colleagues, share experiences and seek support. You don't have to carry difficult situations alone.

04 Use reflective support

Make space to process challenging conversations and emotionally demanding work through supervision, coaching or peer support.

05 Ask for help when you need it

Supporting others does not mean you have to manage everything yourself. Reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness.

06 Do what recharges you

Protect time for the people, activities and routines that help restore your energy and bring you joy.

> **You cannot support everyone from an empty cup.**
> **Looking after yourself helps you show up for others.**
>
> When you look after your wellbeing, you have more energy, empathy and resilience to support others effectively.

Important reminder for HR

Caring deeply about people is a strength.

Carrying everything alone is not a requirement of the role.

Looking after yourself is not selfish. It enables you to lead, support and create positive change that lasts.

Be kind to yourself. | Protect your energy. | You matter too.

SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Key Takeaways



Supporting mental wellbeing at work starts with everyday actions. These six key messages can help you make a lasting difference.

01 Listen with care

Create space for people to speak and feel genuinely heard.

02 Act with clarity

Be open about what you can do, what happens next and where the boundaries lie.

03 Protect with integrity

Handle personal information responsibly and build trust through your actions.

04 Support early

Small conversations and timely action can prevent bigger challenges later.

05 Work together

HR, managers and employees create healthier workplaces through partnership.

06 Remember your own wellbeing

Supporting others matters, but so does looking after yourself.

> **Every** conversation. **Every** action. **Every** decision.
> They all shape workplace mental wellbeing.



You don't need to do everything at once.

Start with one conversation, one action or one positive change.
Then build from there.

- Start small.
- Stay consistent.
- Create lasting impact.

Strong people. | Supportive teams. | Healthy cultures. | Better organisations. | Stronger communities.

Final Thoughts

Mental wellbeing is not just about individuals. It is about all of us.

Every conversation, every action and every decision contributes to the culture people experience at work.

HR has a unique opportunity to help create workplaces where people feel supported, respected and able to thrive. You do not need to have all the answers. Often, listening with care, acting with clarity and protecting with integrity can make a meaningful difference.

Thank you for your commitment to creating healthier, more human workplaces.

> Small actions create lasting change. Together, we can build workplaces where people thrive.



SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.