INTRODUCTION TO BECOMING A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE

Mental Health Charter

RIGHT NOW 1 IN 6 WORKERS ARE DEALING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE SUCH AS ANXIETY, DEPRESSION OR STRESS. THIS CAN STOP PEOPLE PERFORMING AT THEIR BEST.

Simple, inexpensive measures to support staff mental health and wellbeing can:

• increase productivity, efficiency and innovation

• increase profits and reduce business costs

• improve staff morale and performance

• reduce sickness absence, presenteeism and staff turnover

• enhance your reputation as an employer

• help to honour your duty of care as an employer.

We're here to make sure anyone with a mental health challenge has somewhere to turn for advice and support.
Smart employers know that organisations are only as strong as their people – they depend on having a healthy and productive workforce.
They also know that people perform better when they feel able to put everything into their job and when they are confident, motivated and completely focused on doing that. Good mental health underpins this. By positively managing and supporting employees' mental wellbeing, employers can ensure that staff perform to their potential – and this allows the business to achieve peak performance.

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Employee engagement

The strong relationship between levels of staff wellbeing and motivation and business performance is often called employee engagement. Increasing engagement is a major priority for UK leaders because engaged employees have been shown again and again to deliver improved business performance.
Studies show that organisations with higher levels of employee engagement benefit from better productivity, profitability and stronger staff commitment. In the public sector, this brings better outcomes and better-quality customer service.

The twin goals of increasing employee engagement and creating a mentally healthy workplace are interdependent.
• Positively managing mental health underpins good employee engagement and benefits everyone – employees, employers and the bottom line.
• If you look after your employees' mental wellbeing, then levels of engagement will rise and so will staff morale and loyalty, innovation, productivity and profits.
Engagement cannot happen without good mental health – research shows that when staff wellbeing is not supported, employee engagement declines, motivation and performance levels drop and staff retention is affected. But a recent survey highlighted that if employers take steps to support employee mental wellbeing, this would have a positive impact on levels of staff motivation and loyalty.

Engagement is about recognising that employees, if they are to perform at their best, must be respected, involved, heard, well-led and valued. Making changes that have a positive impact on employees' experiences at work are integral.
Approaches such as flexible working, building resilience and staff development contribute to good engagement.
The way we work together is also changing – team work, collaboration and joint problem solving are increasingly demanded by employers, but these working processes cannot thrive in an environment where there is not mutual trust between employers and employees and where staff's abilities are not valued.

THE COST OF NOT ACTING

Ignoring the mental health of your staff comes at a high price. And will only make problems worse.

Lower productivity
Workers may come to work even though they are unwell because they are concerned that if they disclose a mental health problem, they will face prejudice. Reduced productivity costs UK businesses up to £15.1 billion a year.

Lost work days
Stress and other mental health problems are the second biggest cause of work absence, accounting for 70 million lost working days every year.

Higher recruitment costs
Valued employees are lost when employers do not invest in mental health. Staff turnover as a result of employees leaving their jobs due to mental health problems costs £2.4 billion each year.

Increased conflict at work
Stress and mental health problems can lead to costly and time-consuming work conflict. Stress is the second biggest cause

The economic downturn is impacting significantly on wellbeing and stress levels. Work pressures and job insecurity have dramatically increased, along with financial demands at home. Many people tell us they are struggling to cope.
But in tough times, people are even more reluctant to raise workplace issues or disclose mental health problems. A recent survey found that while stress has forced one in five workers to call in sick, 90 per cent say they have lied to their boss about the real reason for not turning up.

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How to create a mentally healthy workplace

1. Promote wellbeing

Effective management and open dialogue are fundamental to unlocking the potential of staff, reducing uncertainty and preventing stress – and having an effective, empowered employee voice is integral to this relationship.

A workplace culture where employees feel able to voice ideas and are listened to, both about how they do their job and in broader decision-making about the organisation's direction of travel, is also a key driver of employee engagement. This is because employees feel more committed to the organisation's goals when they feel that their work is meaningful and valued.

Raising awareness and promoting discussion

To achieve this, we recommend employers adopt a three-pronged strategy that:

1. Promotes wellbeing for all staff
2. T ackles the causes of work-related mental health problems
3. S upports staff who are experiencing mental health problems.

of mental health and wellbeing also drives engagement, helps to overcome prejudice and means that employees will be more likely to disclose issues sooner.

Encouraging a good work/life balance, developing good communication, supporting flexible working practices, and promoting positive working relationships and social activities are also important.

How to create a mentally healthy workplace

2. Tackle the causes of mental ill health

Regular supervisions or one-to-one meetings are crucial to build trust and give employees a chance to raise issues at an early stage. Providing mentoring or onthe-job coaching also helps to develop this relationship. Improving the physical environment and publicising available support pathways, such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) or occupational health (OH) can also help tackle the causes of mental health problems.

Carrying out an assessment of your workplace can give a clear picture of the state of the organisation as a whole. This enables you to understand what factors affect staff mental health in your workplace and what needs to be done to make improvements. The next resource in this series explains the key areas of your business or team that you should look at when assessing mental health in your workplace and provides practical step-bystep guidance on how to collect this data.

3. Support staff with mental health problems

Promoting wellbeing and tackling the causes of mental health problems will create an environment where staff can feel confident to talk to their manager.

If mental health problems are suspected or disclosed, the first step is to establish honest, open communication with the employee, and this should be maintained if people take time off for sickness absence. If possible, the frequency of contact should be agreed before someone takes time off. How you respond to an employee experiencing a mental health problem is a fundamental test of your organisation's values. Trust and integrity are key drivers of engagement – employees need to see that the organisation lives its values and does what it says it will in terms of treating its people well. But standing by people when they experience problems is not only about keeping hold of a valuable staff member – it also sends a message about your organisation's values to staff and external audiences. Supportive organisations find they reap the benefits in terms of loyalty and commitment from all staff.

Everyone's experience of a mental health problem is different, so managers should be supported to work with staff to develop a personal action plan which identifies triggers and what support the employee needs.

Checklist

To get started, we recommend you consider your current approach to ensuring a
healthy workplace.

If you work in HR or are on the senior management team:

• How are mental health and stress talked about in your workplace?
• What policies for managing mental health does your organisation have?
• Does your organisation offer flexible working practices?
• Does your organisation offer formal wellbeing support?
• Does your organisation provide stress management training to line managers?
• Does your organisation provide stress coaching to individuals?
• Does your organisation prioritise learning and development among its staff?
• Does your organisation run an annual staff satisfaction survey? And if so, does it ask about mental wellbeing in the workplace?
• How does your organisation manage change and redundancy processes?
• How well do you involve staff in making decisions about internal changes?
• How do you look after your own mental wellbeing at work?

If you're a line manager:

• How are mental health and stress talked about in your team?
• What policies for managing mental health does your organisation have?
• Do you regularly ask your staff about their wellbeing?
• Do your staff have a good work/life balance?
• Do you have regular catch-ups or one-to-ones with your staff?
• Do you communicate staff responsibilities and expectations clearly?
• How do you help your staff to effectively manage their workloads?
• Do you support your staff with personal development?
• Do you praise staff and acknowledge their efforts?
• Do you feel equipped to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem?
• How do you look after your own mental wellbeing at work?

We are the Mental Health Charter, here for your business 12 months of the year!

Experiencing a mental health challenge is hard enough. Fear of judgement, shame and isolation just makes it that much harder. That's why we work to end mental health stigma and discrimination.
The Mental Health Charter is a social movement to change the way people think and act about mental health challenges. The charter started in 2020 and is growing year on year! We support leaders in work and in communities to deliver change and help people with lived experiences of mental health challenges to stamp out stigma through their own charter activities.

Support us

The Mental Health Charter is a nonprofit organisation. Meaning any profit made from our membership levels and any fundraising raised is put straight back into making sure we can reach as many companies as possible with the best resources possible. This means we rely on our members to continue doing our work. Please visit www.mentalhealth-Charter.co.uk to see how you can volunteer or fundraise.

Join us

Please visit www.mentalhealth-Charter.co.uk to see how to become a member or call 0333 3355 999 to talk to one of our team.

Contact us

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