TAKING CARE OF EMPLOYEE MENTAL WELLBEING

Business in the Community promotes a whole person approach to wellbeing that includes mental, physical, social and financial aspects. All these areas of your wellbeing may be at risk due to COVID-19. The following are steps to promote good mental health for yourself and your employees.

Encourage your staff to discuss any mental health and wellbeing issues with their line manager or to reach out to a designated mental health first aider if they are finding things difficult. Many of your employees will be under immense pressure and stress juggling childcare, home schooling, working from home and managing underlying health conditions, so be flexible with your staff and discuss alternative work patterns that might help to alleviate stress. Remind your staff that that it's ok not to be ok.

Access the Business in the Community COVID-19 HUB that provides resources that can help with a range of stress-causing concerns including: financial wellbeing, home schooling, bereavement, caring responsibilities and more. Visit the Hub at http://www.bitcni.org.uk/covid-19.

Make the most of your Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
Speak to your EAP provider and find out what other resources and services they are providing during COVID-19 and communicate this to staff regularly. BUPA recorded a 300% increase in accessing counselling services in April 2020. Some providers are increasing their online offer via webinars and e-learning.

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

The Responsible Business Network
Northern Ireland

www.bitcni.org.uk

Signpost colleagues to relevant support available from mental health charities such as Aware, Mind or Rethink Mental Illness. The Action Mental Health website offers coping tips to boost mental health during the Covid-19 crisis. The Public Health Agency offers excellent online resources, such as free meditation and managing stress classes at www.mindingyourhead.info. Relaxation apps, such as Calm and Headspace, have made a variety of services free during COVID-19.

Technology Use video calls, rather than phone calls, to connect with employees regularly for formal and informal catch ups.

Communication is vital at this time. Your communication strategy should be clear to all employees, including those on furlough, working remotely, or on site. Talk about mental health, share tips, and promote and encourage a culture that takes the stigma of mental health issues away.

Take care of yourself It is very important to look after your own mental health, so you can effectively take care of yourself and your employees. Our Tips to Combat Stress Factsheet provides a range of techniques that can help you manage your stress, because you can't pour from an 'empty cup'. Business in the Community also offers Employee Health and Wellbeing e-learning, in partnership with Legal Island, which provides employers and staff with the digital tools to better support their own wellbeing.

Leadership This period is an opportunity for leaders to show vulnerability and compassion. The ability to connect and empathise with staff during a period of enormous change is a primary characteristic of a good leader. Trust your staff and remember that they are not just working remotely, they are working remotely in a crisis - this is an important difference. Showing vulnerability is a strength and "vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change", Brené Brown, The Power of Vulnerability, TED.

For more information on training, support and guidance in relation to COVID-19, visit www.bitcni.org.uk/COVID-19 or contact stephanie.reid@bitcni.org.uk.