



MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT FOR MANAGERS

SUPPORTING MANAGERS TO DEAL WITH MENTAL HEALTH WITHIN THE WORKFORCE

This Toolkit has been designed for managers and is intended to give you greater confidence to support an employee or colleague who may be showing signs of mental ill health. The Toolkit broadly follows this model of Before, During and After absence, and uses the Action Mental Health 'Mindful Manager' model of 'Listen, Ask, Signpost and Support' as a guiding framework.



RESPONSIBILITIES

ORGANISATIONAL

Organisations have a responsibility to ensure that their employees are working in a safe and healthy environment.

Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring relevant policies and procedures are in place, are kept up-to-date and are shared with all employees
- Providing Occupational Health, Health Insurance and/or Employee Assistance*
- Offering cycle to work/other physical health schemes*

MANAGER

When you are aware of health or disability information, employers have a legal duty to consider making reasonable adjustments. You also have a general duty of care and responsibility for employee health, and adjustments should be made to help all employees cope and recover, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis. For more information, see **The Equality Commission Code of Practice on Disability – Employment and Occupation**.

Responsibilities include:

- Maintaining open channels of communication with employees to include communication during any period of absence
- Ensuring the employee is kept informed of what is happening and is involved in discussions
- Ensuring the employee is aware of their responsibilities under Health and Safety and Organisational policies
- Supporting that staff member to adhere to any rehabilitative treatment offered

*If applicable

- Supporting a return to work and making reasonable adjustments

1 in 5 workers have called in sick due to stress but 90% did not feel able to tell their boss the real reason. **Mind, 2013**

INDIVIDUAL

Staff members also have a responsibility to ensure that they are taking steps to improve and support their own mental wellbeing. It is very important to note that there are no specific legal responsibilities on staff members to engage regarding health. However, they must adhere to company policy and procedures.

Responsibilities include:

- Identifying triggers and maintaining self-care
- Availing of supports and adhering to treatment
- Taking positive actions to improve wellbeing
- Maintaining contact with employer during any period of absence
- Ensure employer is informed about any ill health or changes in circumstances
- Adhere to company guidelines or support plans
- Communicating with their employer regarding reasonable adjustments required/expected upon return to work

Not all triggers and risk factors will be work related but the best employers will support their staff, no matter where the issue has originated!



AT WORK

As a line manager, you should be aware of tell-tale signs that a colleague may be showing of becoming mentally unwell and should feel confident about approaching this topic. Stress and being mentally unwell are two of the biggest factors contributing to long-term sickness absence across all industry sectors. Promoting an open workplace culture where people feel comfortable talking about their mental health and ensuring positive line manager relationships, can reduce the likelihood of individuals needing to take time off work due to mental illness.



OFF WORK

From time-to-time, staff members who are experiencing mental ill health may need to take time off work. As a manager, there are responsibilities both you and the organisation have to this individual while they are on leave. If dealt with correctly, the individual may return to work more quickly.



BACK TO WORK

Returning to work can be particularly difficult after a period of illness due to mental ill health. Employees can be very nervous about returning and your role as a manager is to reintegrate staff back into the work place as seamlessly as possible, and provide adequate support.

Stress and mental ill health are two of the biggest factors contributing to long-term sickness absence across all industry sectors. Mental ill health costs the Northern Ireland economy approximately **£4bn every year. NIAMH**

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

Treat
mental
health and
physical health
in the same
way!



AT WORK – LISTEN AND ASK

As a line manager, you play a vital role in helping and supporting your employees. Many times the first step will be to recognise the signs of poor mental health – in both your colleagues and yourself.

Recognising the signs

- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Being angry for no reason, irritable or aggressive behaviour
- Tiredness or lack of energy
- Loss of interest or social withdrawal

- Feeling anxious, worried or overwhelmed by problems
- Finding it hard to concentrate and make decisions
- Changes in work output, motivation and focus

These are just some of the signs that a colleague's mental health may be deteriorating and as individuals - people may exhibit these signs in different ways. A significant change in normal behaviour that persists over a period of two weeks, is a key factor in recognising when someone needs your help.

So what if you do notice any of these changes or you have other concerns, what can and should you do next?

Always ask
employees what
they want – what
support would work
best for them

“NOW IS THE TIME TO TALK”



AT WORK – SIGNPOST

Get to
know the people
in your team and
this will help you
to identify any
changes in
them

Now is the time to talk!

The key to addressing issues with those who are mentally unwell is being able to talk about them. This may not always be easy or your preferred way to deal with this, but having that conversation is vital for both you and your employee.

What to do if your employee/colleague approaches you first:

- This is positive, it shows a level of trust is already present
- Outline your duty of care as a manager and for the organisation – this sets boundaries
- Don't assume anything
- Find out sensitively if they are already getting help – and if they are, ask what else you can do
- Know what services are available to help to signpost - facilitate this where possible
- Check if there is anything in work that is exacerbating the situation – are there reasonable adjustments that could be made to help this
- Ask who else in work might be aware/ who else could help/who else might be affected by this
- Agree a follow-up meeting and action plan

If you approach them:

- The sooner you approach the staff member, the better the outcome
- Be upfront and confident to normalise the situation
- Ask them their thoughts first, then raise your concerns and the impacts of this
- Never assume they know or don't know anything
- Remember your duty of care and any safety issues

Key points for difficult conversations:

- Choose the right place – private, quiet and comfortable for the person
- Encourage them to talk – ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions. Be prepared for silences and be patient
- Don't make assumptions – about them, their symptoms, what they are able to do in work, etc.
- Listen and respond flexibly – no two people will have the same experience
- Be honest and clear – if you have concerns such as high absence or performance, it is important to address these early

- Focus on the person, not the problem
- Be flexible – each person will react differently to stress so each solution will need to be tailored
- Ensure confidentiality – it is sensitive information and should be shared with as few people as possible. Make sure you discuss and agree with the person in advance what information they would like shared and with whom. Never say it will be confidential if it won't be
- Develop an individual action plan (see back of this guide for advice on how to do this).
- Encourage people to seek advice and support – talk to their GP, use an Employee Assistance Programme or local mental health charity
- Seek advice and support for yourself – use the internal sources of support available (see back of this guide for support available to you)

Including questions about mental health in one-to-ones and appraisals helps to normalise the discussion for everyone. This is about creating a culture that supports people to be open about their mental health.



AT WORK – SUPPORT

It's important to take action to support employees showing signs of being mentally unwell as early as possible. This can help to reduce the likelihood that they will need to take time off work and will also help to create a proactive workplace culture where mental health is openly discussed in the same way physical health is discussed. Take a preventative approach and work with staff teams to develop an Action Plan that outlines key signs and symptoms, stress triggers within and outside the workplace, likely impacts of mental health on work and an overview of the support mechanism that your organisation has in place.



Click here to access the WRAP template as a supporting document to the Toolkit



OFF WORK – SIGNPOST

When a colleague is off work ill, it is important to keep in touch and provide visible support. As they will have already attended their GP, a manager can signpost to Occupational Health who will be able to provide guidance and options taking into account the particular condition and its potential impacts on work, as well as suggesting what level of support the employee may need. Other supports available include psychological services (EAP, counselling), the Workable programme (link to www.sesni.org.uk) and even your organisation's HR department.



BACK TO WORK – LISTEN & ASK

Manager responsibilities (on behalf of organisation):

- Employee to be consulted on their needs
- Give information regarding support
- Organisational policies and procedures – Occupational Health (OH)
- Take fit notes into account
- Reasonable adjustments – legal obligation (DDA)
- Back to work interviews
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- Health and safety at work
- Inform employee of changes in advance
- Agreement on review arrangements



BACK TO WORK – SIGNPOST

You should be in regular contact with the individual during their absence, and will know in advance when they are due to return. It is important to arrange a time to sit down with the colleague ahead of their return to identify any concerns or worries that they may have, and to ascertain what support they may need in returning to work.

Before returning, an action plan should be developed and once back in the workplace, the individual should feel supported in adhering to this. An open channel of dialogue should be maintained to communicate any concerns. Psychological services are also an option here, particularly when an individual is waiting to engage with NHS services.



OFF WORK – LISTEN & ASK

Manager should ensure that:

- Employee is consulted on their needs
- Organisational policies and procedures are in place and fit notes are taken into account
- Reasonable adjustments are put in place – bearing in mind the legal obligations under the DDA
- Inform employee of changes in advance
- Agreement on review arrangements

Staff member should ensure that they:

- Maintain communication during absence
- Show evidence of appointments etc.
- Notify employer of triggers and risk factors
- Advise employer of the effect your condition may have on your work
- Appropriate reasonable adjustments – amended duties as per fit note/OH report
- Attend back to work interview
- Agreement on review arrangements



OFF WORK – SUPPORT

Prior to a return to work, the employee will hopefully have been assessed by Occupational Health as to their suitability to return. In many organisations, however, attendance at OH is not mandatory but recommended. If the employee is unwilling to attend OH it can impact on the reasonable adjustments they require and can result in a health and safety risk. It is best practice for the employee to attend these meetings for themselves, and the employer.



Click here for further information on a range of mental health conditions.



BACK TO WORK – SUPPORT

Reasonable adjustments – what might they be?

A reasonable adjustment is an alteration that an employer could make that would enable a disabled person to continue to carry out their duties without being at a disadvantage compared to others. Under equality legislation, there is a legal duty on employers to make these reasonable adjustments for employees who may be living with a disability. Examples are listed below. If a reasonable adjustment is required, these should be undertaken in full agreement with the employee.

- Making adjustments to premises
- Allocating some of the staff member's duties to another person
- Transferring them to fill an existing vacancy
- Altering their working hours
- Allowing absence for rehabilitation, absence or treatment
- Arranging or giving extra training
- Acquiring or modifying equipment
- Modifying instructions or reference manuals
- Modifying procedures for testing or assessment
- Providing a reader or interpreter
- Providing supervision

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WHAT IF YOU ARE THE CAUSE?

This is not always easy to hear but if it is raised as an issue, it is something you must consider and reflect on.

Is there any way that you may have contributed to the situation?

The Business in the Community **Managing Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit** could help you to manage your team more effectively and help you to improve your own and your team member's emotional wellbeing.



EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Action Mental Health** www.amh.org.uk
- AMH Works** <http://www.amh.org.uk/services/amh-works/>
- Aware** <https://www.aware-ni.org/background.html>
- Business in the Community** www.bitcni.org.uk
- Contact NI** <http://contactni.com/>
- Drink, Work and Me** <http://www.drinkworkandme.com/>
- Health and Safety Executive** www.hseni.gov.uk
- Mind** www.mind.org.uk
- NIAMH** <http://www.niamhwellbeing.org/>
- PIPs** <https://pipscharity.com/>
- Public Health Agency/Health Trust supports** <http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/directory-services-help-improve-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing>
- Workable Programme** www.sesni.org.uk



MINDFUL MANAGER

Mindful Manager gives managers the tools required to identify issues that staff may be having in the workplace and more effectively manage the health and well-being of their employees. This course can be a full or half-day and can be tailored to meet the specific requirements of your organisation.

This course will include an overview of mental health issues, and their signs and symptoms, as well as the costs of mental ill health including absenteeism and presenteeism as they relate to your business. It will consider appropriate staff management including managing difficult conversations, reduce stress, increasing personal resilience and promoting a culture of positive work based on wellbeing and performance. The course will also consider the legal implications of mental ill health in the work place, and discuss ways to facilitate staff engagement and buy in.

Upon completion of this course all participants will receive a certificate stating that they have successfully completed AMH Works Mindful Manager training.



INTERNAL RESOURCES

This space is intentionally blank and can be populated by the individual organisation with specific and relevant resources. Speak to a member of the team at Business in the Community for further details.

This toolkit was developed by Business in the Community, in association with Action Mental Health and supported by:

