

**BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY**



**THE PRINCE'S  
RESPONSIBLE  
BUSINESS NETWORK**

# Mental health toolkit for employers

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In association with



**Public Health  
England**

Protecting and improving the nation's health

**Your journey to a workplace  
that leads on good mental  
health starts here**



**Mental health is an integral part of how we feel about our jobs, how well we perform and how well we interact with colleagues, customers and clients. With 1 in 6 employees currently experiencing mental health problems, mental health is an essential business concern. There is a strong relationship between levels of staff wellbeing and motivation and performance. Taking a positive, proactive approach to mental health at work can help you grow your staff and your organisation.**

*“The toolkit has good signposting to a range free resources, as well as guidance you can take straight from here. The content is easy to understand and is very useful, step by step. I think this will be a valuable tool for all sorts of organisations.”*

Jim Blakemore, Bikeworks

*“As someone who runs an SME, I found the content very helpful, especially the way it is drawn together at the end. The information is excellent and will help me to generate a plan of action. It has given me plenty to think about and act on.”*

David Schluter, Fluid-IT

*“As a major contributor to sickness absence in the workplace, it is important for employers of all sizes to pay focus to the mental health and wellbeing of their workforce. The toolkit lays out a ‘core recipe’ of steps to follow and we are now seeing the steps we have taken as an employer are benefiting our staff.”*

Eric Barratt, NHS England

*“We understand the positive benefits for both the employee and the business of creating a culture where we can openly discuss and manage mental wellbeing. Over recent years we have been raising awareness internally with all our employees, providing resources and tools to demonstrate this culture and stimulate conversations. We are now keen to expand this approach outside our company. We are very proud that two of our suppliers have already road tested this new toolkit. Its publication gives us the perfect opportunity to start a conversation with the rest of our supply chain.”*

Peter Simpson, Chief Executive of Anglian Water Group, Chair of Business in the Community's Wellbeing Leadership Team

**Your journey to a workplace that leads on good mental health starts here.** The ambition of this toolkit is to help your organisation – whether business, public sector or charitable – support the mental health and wellbeing of your employees. It will help you take positive actions to build a culture that champions good mental health and provide a greater understanding for how to help those who need more support.

There has been a lot written about how to tackle mental ill health and promote wellbeing in the workplace. This toolkit will make knowing how to act simple; it will help you pick out the best free resources that are most useful to you and your team, and help you develop an approach that fits the needs of your staff and organisation.

Every organisation has an opportunity to support and develop a mentally healthy workforce and thankfully it doesn't need to be complicated – this toolkit will help you understand and act, step by step.

## How to use this toolkit



Hover your cursor over the relevant box below to see more information:



I'm a micro, small or medium sized organisation  
(1 to 250 employees)



I'm a big organisation  
(Over 250 employees)



## Dr Justin Varney, National Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing, Public Health England

We all have mental health and we will all experience periods of good and poor mental health, just as we do physical health.

All employers have a responsibility to support the health and wellbeing of their staff as part of the health and safety duties and at a national level we want to see more people leading healthy lives and achieving their potential. Supporting mental health in the workplace is not just a corporate responsibility, staff who have positive mental health are more productive and businesses who promote a progressive approach to mental health can see a significant impact on business performance, so it's about good business too.

There are many ways to maintain positive mental health and as we will see in this toolkit, there are things that

all organisations can do, whatever your size and experience. There are also many simple ways to help those experiencing mental ill health, and ensure they can stay in work or return to work promptly and without stigma.

We have partnered with the charity Business in the Community to produce this toolkit because of their understanding of how the workplace operates, and how every organisation can do the right thing by their employees. It's designed to help businesses as a standalone resource or to help those working toward accreditation through the Workplace Wellbeing Charter.

Public Health England recently launched One You (see [page 28](#)), a national campaign to help everyone understand and make healthy lifestyle

choices. Maintaining a healthy mind is an important aspects of this – it ensures we can work effectively, maintain relationships and cope with everyday stresses.

We encourage all organisations across England to use, share and discuss this toolkit.





## Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community

Over the last few years, we have published a series of landmark reports showing why and how employers must tackle the culture of silence on mental health. The business and moral case is clear and we are thrilled that businesses are acting on the back of our guidance.

It is often said by organisations that ‘our people are our most important asset’. It makes sense then to keep people as mentally healthy as possible.

We partnered with Public Health England to develop this Toolkit to help businesses use the research and evidence base in practical and pragmatic ways to support and improve staff mental health.

We understand that acting on the evidence can feel tricky for some – this toolkit will make that easier and help ensure everyone can work towards being a leader on good mental health, whatever stage of the journey they are at. By reading here about what can be

done and seeing examples of organisations that have done it, you can act with confidence.

We are proud to have developed an approach to workplace wellbeing that works – Business in the Community’s Workwell Model provides a strategic framework for embedding wellbeing into any organisation and covers the actions employers need to take to create an environment where employers can make informed, healthy choices. It’s available for everyone to use and we encourage you to explore how it can help your organisation.

We also have a membership programme that is bringing businesses together to share best practice and develop their understanding and approach to workplace wellbeing, as well as providing businesses with an advisory service to help advise and provide bespoke guidance on developing their approaches – find out more and see if this is suitable for you.

All organisations need to take steps to proactively incorporate better management of mental health into the everyday working environment, and it should be the marker of every responsible business to talk openly about mental health. Those that don’t are less productive, less competitive and more prone to absences and turnover – those that do attract the best talent and clients and ensure they are successful for the long term.

We invite you to lead on promoting positive mental health and enjoying the benefits this brings.

## ➤ Step 1: Make a commitment

- ☑ There is a clear commitment from the senior level of the organisation that mental health matters and that it will work to promote good mental health, support those that need it and challenge the stigma.
- ☑ This commitment is stated in a form that is visible and understandable to all employees. This may include signing the Time to Change Employers Pledge.
- ☑ The organisation has appointed a senior level employee to be the Mental Health Champion to drive forward this commitment. This Champion is supported by a working group that helps to support the Champion and develop and implement the commitment.

## ➤ Step 2: Build your approach

- ☑ The senior team understands and acts on all its legal requirements around workplace mental health and risk management – the rights of employees is also communicated to all employees.
- ☑ The organisation has assessed the mental health needs of its employees, understands where improvements are needed and identified clear objectives for development, along with the business case for doing so.
- ☑ Mental health is reflected in all relevant workplace policies and a plan for delivering better mental health is in place, with clear actions that can be achieved and reported back on every six months / year.

## ➤ Step 3: Positive culture

- ☑ There are effective management standards in place that ensure employees feel supported and valued.
- ☑ The organisation ensures that the workplace environment is conducive to promoting healthy behaviours and limiting the potential for it to cause ill health.
- ☑ There is a system in place, such as risk assessments, to prevent stress.
- ☑ Job design and roles are reviewed so as to ensure they are appropriate and conducive to productive work.
- ☑ Social activities, volunteering and out-of-work activities are actively encouraged and supported by the organisation.
- ☑ The organisation provides appropriate avenues and frequency of communication to keep staff at all levels informed of the approach to wellbeing.

## ➤ Step 4: Support & training

- ☑ The structure of the organisation ensures that information is freely shared and every employee knows how to access support and who to discuss their needs with.
- ☑ The organisation has recognised the key role in effective line management in driving good mental health and wellbeing.
- ☑ All line managers receive training in mental health and all employees are educated to increase their mental health literacy and to recognise the signs that they may need support.
- ☑ Build mental health awareness into all induction programmes.
- ☑ Performance reviews allow employees to comment on issues that affect their performance and enables training needs to be identified.

### ➤ Step 5: Managing mental health

- ☑ The organisation takes a proactive approach to ending mental health stigma in the workplace.
- ☑ Mental health is discussed openly in team and company meetings as well as 1 to 1s and performance reviews.
- ☑ All employees are supported to reduce the potential to experience stress and organisational changes are made when risks are identified that may lead to stress or other mental ill health. Adopt the HSE's management standards for work related stress.
- ☑ Every employee knows how to access information on the company's approach and further information about mental health and wellbeing.

### ➤ Step 6: Providing the right support

- ☑ Managers are trained and confident in how to handle sensitive conversations around mental health.
- ☑ The organisation is prepared to be able to make adjustments to work patterns and structures for anyone experiencing difficulties, to keep them in work.
- ☑ The organisation provides a confidential support service in-house or externally to individuals who come forward with a problem.

### ➤ Step 7: Helping people recover

- ☑ Employees who experience ill health and have to take time off work are supported to make a speedy and appropriate return and adjustments are made for their successful return to work, through regular contact with their manager.
- ☑ The organisation is equipped to provide support through such government initiatives as Fit for Work and Access to Work to ensure people who experience mental ill-health can continue to work successfully.

### ➤ Step 8: Going further

- ☑ Staff consultations/surveys take place that seek information on the mental health and wellbeing of staff and also covers working conditions, communication, work life balance, staff support and work related or other causes of stress, with action plans drawn up to address major issues.
- ☑ The organisation regularly evaluates its approach to mental health and identifies areas it can develop in, reporting back on its progress with all employees.
- ☑ It also shares its approaches with other organisations to share best practice and learn ideas for new approaches.

# About mental health



**What do we mean by mental health?**  
**Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act.**

**Staying in positive mental health allows people to:**

- ★ **Realise their full potential**
- 🧠 **Cope with the pressures of life**
- 🕒 **Work productively**
- ❤️ **Have positive relationships**
- ✓ **Make good choices**

Being in good mental health is therefore important to individuals, organisations and society and adopting approaches that help keep us in good health, and being resilient to the pressures of life, is essential.

Mental health, like physical health, can fluctuate on a spectrum from good to poor. Mental health problems can affect any of us irrespective of age, personality or background. They can appear as a result of experiences in both our personal and working lives – or they can just happen.

Despite the fact that it is very common, some people still find it difficult to talk about. It can seem too personal or complex. There is still a stigma associated with mental health problems, through a lack of understanding. You might feel very happy to tell a colleague about a physical injury you've sustained, but when it comes to changes in your mental health, people can keep this to themselves through fear of being treated differently or judged.

It is important to create a culture in every business that promotes positive mental health and helps prevent people from experiencing mental ill health or helps them better manage mental health problems. As you will see, one of the key ways to do this is to ensure everyone can talk about mental health (see [Step 5](#)) but maintaining good mental health is also assisted by many factors, including having clear job roles, responsive line managers, a healthy approach to diet and exercise, and many other factors.

However, even with the most robust preventative plans, it is likely some people will still experience mental health problems, for a range of factors, so it is also essential for every business to know how to provide support. This might include knowing how to spot the early warning signs, being confident to signpost colleagues to appropriate support, how to make adjustments to someone's work or role, and ensuring there is a process to help people return to work smoothly after a sickness absence, see [Step 6](#) and [Step 7](#).



## What different types of mental health problem are there?

One of the biggest challenges we face is the need to make conversations about mental health more common. A good starting point for this is to learn more about mental health, and particularly mental health problems. There are a number of different types of mental health problem, and they each have a different impact on the individuals who experience them, as well as their friends and families. Problems can range from anxiety and depressive disorders to much more complex and severe mental health illnesses.

 [Click here for a list of some of the more common conditions](#)

## Why this is important to you



Bust some myths by hovering your cursor over the statements below:



### Mental health problems are rare

Having a mental health problem is actually quite common – 1 in 6 working age people will be experiencing one right now – this includes your friends and colleagues. Many people experiencing mental ill health can undertake their work with no changes at all, but will benefit from ensuring you are aware of their issues and able to provide support if they need it. It is essential to support people with

People at different stages of life can be affected differently. Depression affects around 22% of men and 28% of women aged 65 years and over, and depression has been found to be more common in women of all ages.

An organisation is only as good as its people; it depends on a happy and healthy workforce.

**Organisations that take a positive, proactive approach to mental health can benefit from:**

- > **Attracting the best talent**
- > **More engaged and motivated staff**
- > **Retaining staff, less turnover**
- > **Reduction in absence,**
- > **Improved professional reputation**

## **Under stress or feeling the pressure?**

A certain level of pressure in a business environment is desirable. Pressure can help to motivate people and may boost their energy and productivity levels but when pressure exceeds people's ability to cope – and particularly when there is no respite – it can become a negative rather than a positive force – in other words, it can lead to unmanageable stress. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them'. It is important to understand what pressures your employees are under and ensure this doesn't lead to stress.

## **Useful resources**



The mental health charity Mind has a range of useful resources on this issue:

 **Click here to read 'Introduction to mentally healthy workplaces'**

for more information on why this matters.





# Step 1: **Make a commitment**

## Lead from the top

**Prevention and early intervention are the most effective ways to support workforce mental health, rather than tackling problems after they arise. The steps needed to encourage this cultural shift are, in the majority of cases, simple – but they need to be driven at a senior level to help implement lasting change.**

Every business must understand that driving a culture where mental health is prioritised cannot be achieved where it is an add-on but only when it is a fundamental part of how the business is run. Unless leaders within your organisation visibly act to promote good mental health then any efforts to affect an organisational change will be undermined.

By leading from the top and agreeing actions at a senior level, employees who will drive the changes will feel that they have the support and authority to tackle stigma and promote positive mental health. Employees are also more likely to open up about their own mental health if there is a clear signal from the business leader or senior management.

## Action



### ➤ Appoint a 'Mental Health Champion' who is responsible for your mental health policy

- If your organisation is large enough, these Champions should be supported by a working group that develops ideas and seeds them through the organisation.
- The Mental Health Champion can create a Mental Health Plan (See [Step 2](#)) by following all steps in this toolkit and making regular updates on progress.
- Ensure mental health and is raised as part of each Board meeting or at least every six months with senior team reviewing progress.
- Ensure mental health is communicated across your company to normalise the topic and promote positive, preventative approaches to good mental health (see more on this in [Step 5](#)).

## Make a pledge

**If you can't talk openly about something, you can't manage it. This is why we need to see more organisations speaking publicly and across the business to help normalise discussions around mental health and end stigma around mental health at work.**

**Every plan to promote good mental health and tackle mental health problems requires a public facing commitment that people can buy in to and for which organisations can hold themselves responsible for.**

A priority for any business committing to end the stigma and to promoting positive mental health is to sign up to Time to Change's 'Employers Pledge'. It's a signal to employees, service users and the public that the organisation is taking steps to improve mental health. It isn't a quality mark, accreditation or endorsement and you don't have to pass a test or submit a lengthy application. Organisations are asked to develop a pledge action plan with details of activities you will undertake or celebrate at the time you sign the pledge. Your plan can be expanded over time but must provide some immediate goals to make the pledge a reality and signal your commitment. Time to Change will work with you to identify what these commitments may include.



**Click here for more information on the pledge and how to sign**

## Action



- **Sign the Time to Change employers pledge, and work with Time to Change to identify what immediate actions you can commit to as a business**
- The development of the pledge action plan should be led by your new Mental Health Champion but signed by your CEO or equivalent.
- Ensure your pledge includes a stated commitment that you can share publicly and with all your employees – this is often the first step any business will take and provides a vital springboard into further, long-term action by simply stating a commitment to act. Time to Change will help you develop this 'pledge action plan'.
- Revisit your pledge on a regular basis (at least every 6 months) to ensure you are progressing against your commitments. If you are exceeding your goals then think about what other actions you can commit to.

**Time to Change** is England's biggest programme to end stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. The programme is run by the charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness. It aims to empower people to challenge stigma and speak openly about their own mental health experiences, as well as changing the attitudes and behaviours of the wider public.

By signing the Employers Pledge, you will be joining a growing movement and network of employers in England, across all sectors, who are working to tackle mental health stigma and to help keep their staff well for work.

The pledge does not require costly interventions. As we will see, there are plenty of free ways to build on the commitment, from simply sending an email linking to myth-busting videos, to arranging a chat over tea and coffee, or distributing downloadable fact packs.



Click to see the Time to Change pledge wall and browse examples of pledges made by other businesses, to get inspiration

## The role of line managers

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) research consistently identifies good-quality people management, particularly by line managers, as one of the core drivers of employee engagement, wellbeing and good mental health. However, good line management cannot exist in a vacuum. Only support and strategic leadership from the top will create organisational cultures where management styles based on openness and mutual respect can flourish. The senior management team will influence how managers throughout an organisation see their jobs and the extent to which they place a priority on people management. Learn more about line managers and their training needs in [Step 4](#).

*“Since signing the Time to Change pledge we have set up a mental wellbeing committee which is formed of staff from across all levels of the business and has been important for peer to peer communications. They have developed and implemented new initiatives with ideas including access to mindfulness apps, free yoga classes, offsite coffee catch-ups to bring together colleagues from different teams, and company breakfasts where everyone can come together, eat healthily and chat.”*

Amanda Powell-Smith,  
Forster Communications

*“Our approach is led from the top – we have a Board member overseeing wellbeing, with a big emphasis on mental health. We have signed the Time to Change pledge, and our updated implementation plan will support us to go further.”*

Eric Barratt, NHS England



## Engage for Success

**The leaders of any organisation play a vital role in affecting the culture and helping to ensure everyone can live the values. The way senior leaders behave influences how everyone else does through the organisation.**

Engage for Success is a growing movement, promoting employee engagement as a better way to work that benefits individual employees, teams and whole organisations. It has identified four key drivers for engagement – having a strong narrative about the organisation from the senior team, engaged managers, employees given a voice and organisational integrity.



**Click here to find out more about this and the role of senior leaders in driving change**

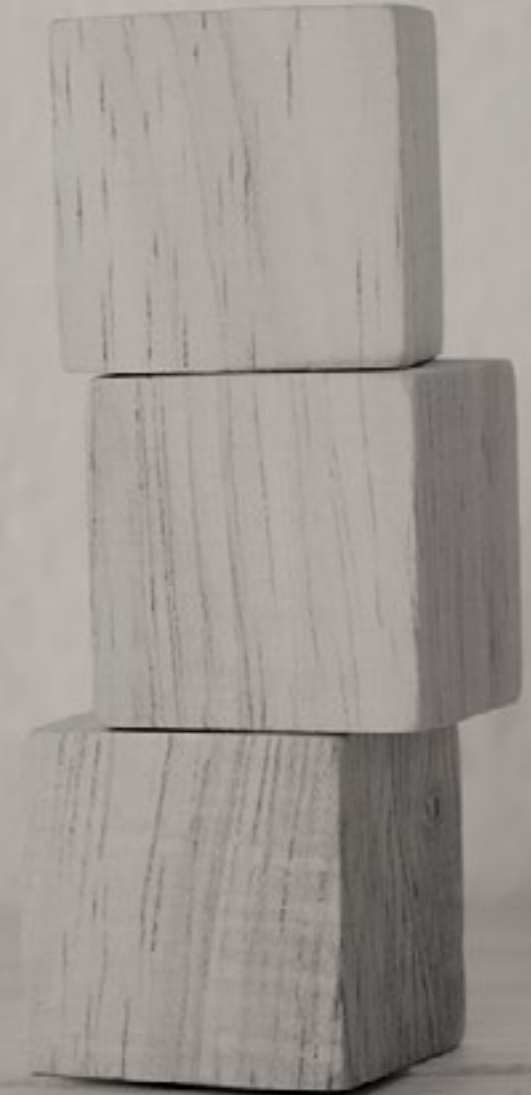
*“Employee wellbeing is important for numerous reasons; not only is it about looking after your staff, it also has an impact on business performance by helping with productivity and the mood of the workplace. It’s also important for staff retention and recruitment – fostering a good atmosphere means people are more likely to join us and stay with us.”* Harriet Kelsall, Harriet Kelsall Bespoke Jewellery



## Did you know?

A study by Mind found that fewer than half of employees told their bosses after being diagnosed with a mental health condition. This suggests that most employees fear that admitting a mental health condition will jeopardise their position at work. 1 in 3 employees also reported that they had received support in response to informing their bosses of a mental health condition, but that no further adjustments were made as a result. Perhaps most significantly, less than half of employees (41%) said they would feel able to talk openly with their line manager if they were experiencing stress. Another Mind poll showed that one in five workers would not disclose stress or mental health problems to their manager for fear of being placed first in line for redundancy. Making a pledge to end the stigma and take a proactive approach can help overcome this.

# Step 2: **Build your approach**



## Understand the law

**Putting plans in place isn't just a good thing to do; it helps ensure you are following your legal obligations as an employer. It is important to understand the law and ensure you are compliant.**

If someone has a mental health problem that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities, they are considered disabled and will be protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

The Act makes it unlawful for an employer to treat a disabled person less favourably for a reason relating to their disability, without a justifiable reason.

It also requires that businesses make reasonable adjustments to ensure that a disabled person is able to carry out their job.

Employers also have duties under health and safety legislation to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and to take measures to control that risk.

## Action



### > Understand your legal obligations as an employer

- Read up on the Equality Act 2010 and make a note of any areas you have concerns about, before developing your understanding further and making changes in your approach.

## Useful resources



**Direct Gov** has more information on the Equality Act 2010:

 **Direct Gov: Equality Act 2010**

**The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)** has published a range of guides for employers to help them understand their obligations under the Act:

 **EHRC: Guides for employers**

**ACAS** lists a number of suggested adjustments, from page 21 of the guide below:

 **ACAS: 'Promoting positive mental health at work'**

Read and understand the **Health and Safety Executive's (HSE)** 'Management Standards for Stress':

 **Click here to read the document**



## Deciding where to start

It is important to understand the requirements within your business so you can set meaningful objectives. The size of your business, along with such factors as the type of industry you work in and the services you provide will all affect the approach you need to take.

It is important to understand your employees and how they can benefit from a better approach to mental health, along with the pressure points you and your employees currently face. It is also worth seeing how much benefit your business could receive from investing in mental health, to help assess the scale of the programme you want to create and help you to prioritise your options.

A staff survey will probably already ask staff about things like their workload, leadership and management, opportunities for personal development and internal communication. However, it may not make the links between these issues and the impact they have on employees' mental health and wellbeing. It also might not ask specific questions about mental health.

this might be a simple conversation.

- If you already run a [survey](#) with your employees, build in questions on mental health and general wellbeing.

### > Understand the rewards

- Improve your understanding about the costs of poor employee health and wellbeing to your organisation and create a business case for taking action, along with an understanding on the return you will get from this investment. Use this [government tool](#) to help.

### > Assess your approach so far

- If you have already introduced initiatives to promote mental health, assess how far these efforts are going by taking Time to Change's [mini healthcheck](#). This will help you to review your practices and then plan for the next steps.

### > Set your goals

- The three steps above will help you to set clear objectives for your mental health programme that you can measure against over time. You can prioritise actions and 'park' less important issues for later.



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## Tools



Tools to help you understand your employees needs better:

- **Survey Monkey** provides a range of free employee satisfaction feedback templates
- **Happy People** offer a free staff survey tool to find out how your staff feel

## Useful resources



A resource for bosses, line managers and HR professionals:

- **Mind's: How to take stock of mental health in your workplace**

It provides practical advice on how to collect vital information about your employees' wellbeing in a joined-up and comprehensive way

## Build your programme

**Once you have identified and prioritised your objectives, they can be put together into a plan for the year ahead for your business. The remaining sections of this toolkit will help you to build your actions, and they do not need to be complicated. As you will see, there is a lot that doesn't cost money and can be adapted for any business (from free toolkits to piggybacking on national awareness days).**

Many businesses will find the Workplace Wellbeing Charter a useful starting point in building their approach. It provides employers with an easy and clear overall approach to make workplaces a supportive and productive environment in which employees can flourish.

Once you have built the plan, it is important everyone knows about it – the communication of your initiatives is key to their success. If employees are not aware of them or do not participate in them, they have failed.

## The Workplace Wellbeing Charter

The Charter is a national standard for workplace health and wellbeing. It's a benchmarking process businesses can work through in order to gain accreditation for their investment in workplace health, including mental health. It is free for small and medium sized enterprises.

It includes a self-assessment tool to discover what you are already doing to meet the Charter standards, and where there are gaps needing improvement. It has three levels to work towards. The entry, or commitment, level has been developed as a baseline for all organisations to achieve and acts as a useful checklist for smaller organisations to ensure legal obligations are met as well as getting on the way to more significant promotion of health.

From there, organisations can move on to the achievement stage and ultimately, to excellence. For small organisations, meeting the criteria for the standards should not involve significant financial investments, and there are lots of free resources and guidance on the website as well as support from your local provider of the Charter available.

See more at the [Workplace Wellbeing Charter website](#).

 **I'm a bigger organisation**



**THE WORKPLACE  
WELLBEING CHARTER**  
NATIONAL AWARD for ENGLAND

## Actions



### > Make sure mental health and wellbeing are included in your policies covering areas such as:

- Absence and sickness
- Health and safety
- Working time / TOIL / overtime
- Performance management and personal development
- Recruitment, change management and redundancy
- Equality, diversity, inclusion, bullying, harassment, whistle blowing



**Click here for HSE's examples of a stress policy.**

(For smaller organisations, it may be that a statement of intent serves the purpose of a specific mental health policy).

### > Create a positive mental health plan

- Develop a scheduled programme of activity to promote good mental health and introduce measures to assist those with poor mental health, by analysing the results of your need and assessing your strategic priorities.
- Use elements from the rest of this toolkit to help build this plan and make use of the Workplace Wellbeing Charter to help provide the framework for your approach (or adopt the BITC Workwell model if you are larger business).
- Ensure your senior team is fully bought into the plan and feel confident they can help implement it.

### > Communicate this programme to your employees

- Consider 'launching' your programme with an event with employees or by ensuring the approach is communicated in team / company meetings and in line manager catch-ups.
- See more about communicating your programme in [Step 5](#).

*"Whatever the size of your organisation, you have to start somewhere and for us it was the formation of a 'Health and Wellbeing Group', made up of representatives from across the organisation, and at every level. We discuss approaches we can take to promote good health and wellbeing, including mental health."*  
Kate Abbott, DCLG

## Working groups

Some aspects of your plan may need to be taken forward by HR or the senior management team – such as reviewing policies or setting up new systems. Other areas may need staff input, so you could set up a staff working group to explore possible solutions.

## Useful resources



The Health and Safety Executive has a range of case studies of businesses that have implemented changes to help improve their approach to mental health:



[Read the case studies here](#)

## Did you know?



60% of employees say they'd feel more motivated and more likely to recommend their organisation as a good place to work if their employer took action to support mental health and wellbeing.

(Source: Mind)

*“We run Pukka Pulse – a consultation committee which meets monthly where every team is represented below management level. This provides meaningful recommendations we can implement across the business. It’s important to listen to employees and act on what they need, to develop their engagement with the business.”*

Vicky Murray, Pukka Herbs

# Step 3: **Positive culture**

## Set up the culture

**A workplace environment and working culture that promotes wellbeing can reduce the risk of mental health problems. This is reinforced by cultivating an open, supportive organisation where people understand the importance of wellbeing and feel able to talk about physical and mental health.**

Many of the factors that support workplace wellbeing are simply good management practices, including:

- Actively and transparently engaging and communicating with employees
- Preventing bullying and discrimination
- Ensuring your staff are able to use their skills and perform their work to the best of their abilities
- Preventing bullying and discrimination

Work overload, job insecurity, poor career progression, poor quality of work and poor communication all have a strong negative influence on employee mental health. Supportive supervision, whether from managers or co-workers, as well as positive interactions with customers/clients has positive benefits.

### Action



- > **Ensure you have effective and positive management standards in place. This includes:**
  - Regular reviews – structured appraisal systems (as well as informal catch-ups) help you see if employees are happy in their job, to discuss any issues and determine what support they might need.
  - Setting objectives – having clearly defined goals, roles and responsibilities supports mental health and wellbeing. Employees should be involved in setting their own objectives.
  - Work hours – everyone needs a healthy work-life balance. Reasonable hours, agreed deadlines, offline time and flexible working can all reduce stress and boost wellbeing.

### Useful resources



- > **Time to Change** have top tips and resources for making your workplace healthy
- > **Mind and the Federation of Small Businesses** have put together simple, low-cost, common-sense actions your small business can take to manage mental health
- > **Mind** has tips for employees on staying well at work
- > **How are you feeling today?** A toolkit from NHS Employers to help start the conversation on wellbeing and how to manage it
- > **Mind's guide 'How to promote wellbeing and tackle the causes of work-related mental health problems'** sets out simple, practical and inexpensive steps you can take to build a working culture that supports wellbeing



## Encourage healthy behaviours

**Simple steps like taking a lunch break, exercising (including going for a walk), getting enough sleep, taking time out to relax and eating a healthy balanced diet can help our mental health.**

Health and wellbeing programmes, events, activities and awareness campaigns can all help make your staff happier and healthier. They can also help to build emotional resilience – which helps people deal with difficult or stressful situations both in and out of work. These initiatives are always most successful when senior management are involved, and act as role models.

### Actions

#### > Get physical:

- Encourage walking and cycling to work
- Organise sports events
- Subsidise gym memberships (you may be able to negotiate something with your local gym so that it doesn't cost your business)
- Provide advice and information on sleep, sensible drinking and how to quit smoking
- Encourage employees to take the **One You quiz – see page 28**

#### > Be sociable:

- Organise company events and activities, with or without a health element, to strengthen relationships between staff.

#### > Give back:

- There's strong evidence that volunteering and being involved in the community is good for wellbeing and mental health. Encourage staff to volunteer year round, and consider taking part in BITC's Give & Gain Day.

#### > Provide a healthy environment:

- Wellbeing can be influenced by factors such as:
  - Air quality

- Lighting
- Temperature
- Noise
- Layout
- Food offer

#### > Develop wellbeing activities:

- Healthy eating (and look at food provision for meetings)
- Activity classes
- Talks from mental health professionals about prevention and getting support
- Show videos about mental health
- Organise wellbeing days
- Piggyback on public awareness days – see **Plan Ahead** on **page 27**
- Take part in national physical exercise initiatives, such as **Cycle to Work** day

#### > Develop a knowledge resource for all employees:

- Host all relevant free resources in one, easily accessible place for all employees (including web links to trusted sites) and regularly communicate this resource to your employees.





## Five ways to wellbeing

Research by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) has identified five key things we can all do in our everyday lives to improve our wellbeing:



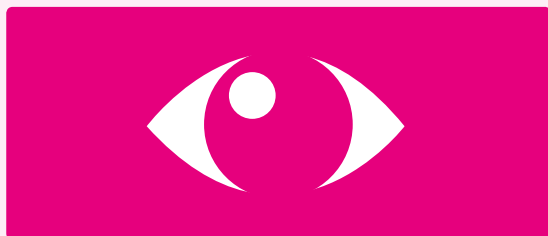
**Connect**  
with other people



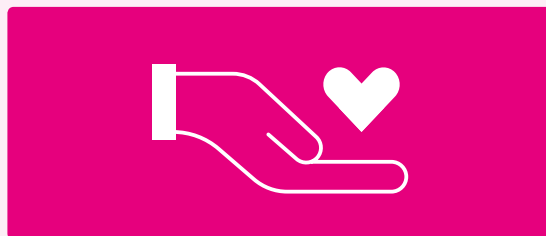
**Be active**




**Keep learning**  
new things



**Take notice** of the world around you  
(some people call this **mindfulness**)



**Give** – do things for the community  
and other people

 **Find out more about the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' on the NEF's website**

## Useful resources



For each of the Five Ways to Wellbeing, Mind has put together a list of simple ideas that you can use in your workplace:

 **Click here to see Mind's list of simple ideas**

*“There’s a lot of travel and long hours worked in our industry, so prioritising wellbeing is crucial. We provide workplace benefits for our employees for every day of the working week and we believe these are all essential in providing the building blocks for helping people to stay well. We constantly assess what we can do to further improve the wellbeing of our staff, whether they are on or off site.”*  
Tracy Patfield, Icon Films

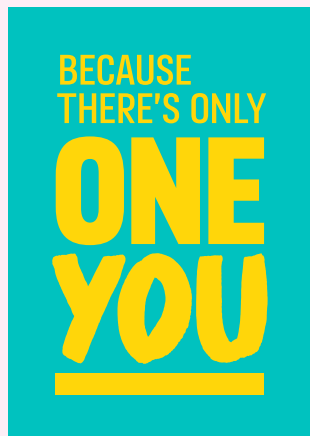
## Useful resources



- **Change 4 Life** has a range of resources to encourage healthier behaviour, including promoting physical activity, healthy eating and sensible drinking aimed at families. **Messaging and materials specially designed for small businesses** include posters, booklets and tray-liners
- **Mind** has put together top tips and an interactive template to help employees create their own **Wellness Action Plan** to stay well at work
- **Business in the Community** has released a comprehensive **Emotional Resilience Toolkit**
- The **British Heart Foundation** has a free **Think Fit pack and other resources** for promoting healthy eating and wellbeing in the workplace
- Studies have shown that introducing a workplace cycling scheme can significantly reduce staff turnover. Encourage employees to **cycle to work** by registering with **TfL Cycling Workplaces**
- **Living Streets** offers free resources for businesses to encourage their employees to walk more
- **How to look after your mental health:** 10 tips from the **Mental Health Foundation**
- **Action for Happiness** is a movement of people committed to building a happier and more caring society. It has courses, tips and ideas
- **This is me in the city:** tools and ideas to reduce stigma and break the silence

**Plan ahead: hook into the FREE calendar**  
**From Mental Health Awareness Week to the International Day of Happiness and Cycle to Work Day, external events and campaigns provide a useful hook to promote health and wellbeing activities in your own organisation. Business in the Community has produced a comprehensive Health Calendar that you can download to plan your own events.**

*“We have an open and supportive culture, where everyone knows who they can turn to if they need to discuss anything, and they know what support is available to them. It is important to put structures such as our Employee Assistance Programme in place but this means nothing if individuals don’t know what they are or how to access them.”* **Amanda Powell-Smith, Forster Communications**




**One You** is a campaign to help everyone make simple changes towards a longer and happier life. It provides tools, support and encouragement. Start by taking the **'How Are You' online quiz**, which will assess the person's health.

It will then direct you to a series of online tools and programmes around seven key behaviours:

- > moving more
- > being smoke free
- > drinking less
- > eating well
- > checking ourselves
- > stressing less
- > sleeping better

Employers can support One You in the workplace by ordering an employer toolkit, which includes conversation starters and dispensers, posters, wall charts, guerrilla stickers and bunting.

The toolkits are available free of charge for distribution across sites in England and can be ordered by clicking the link below, using the password **oneyou** (case sensitive).

 **Order your toolkit here**  
(password **oneyou**)

## Watch this



**Time to Change** has produced a series of video workshops, with supporting materials that you can use in the workplace:

- An Introduction to Mindfulness
- Emotional Resilience
- Five Ways to Wellbeing
- Starting the Conversation



**Watch them here**

*"We want people to feel welcome, supported and inspired. This open and honest approach is in the DNA of our organisation. We try to let people know what is going on, both the good and the bad. We are a transparent organisation and have taken steps to try and de-silo our work and allow everyone to ask questions."*

Jim Blakemore, Bikeworks

# Step 4: Support and training

## A structure that works

**To implement your approach to mental health, it is important to have structures in place that allow for information on mental health to be shared with all, for feedback to be passed back up to the top and for everyone to feel there is a structure in place that will promote their health and protect them if they become unwell.**

The structure needs to ensure that everyone can access all the organisation's information on mental health, and allow them to easily find what their rights and responsibilities are.

## The importance of training

An essential part of making this work is training employees so they have the competence and confidence to bring the mental health policies and programmes to life.

Training for line managers is particularly important as they are the ones who balance the aims of the organisation with staff health and wellbeing. They are critical in driving change and may well be the first point of contact to notice when an employee is experiencing difficulties. They should be equipped with skills in effective leadership, workplace health, stress risk assessment, mental health awareness and the management of sickness absence. Intervention at an early stage may allow adjustments to be made to the workplace to enable the employee to continue with their work.

Training can take many forms: induction processes, staff handbook modules, specialist supervision, intranet hosted or even lunch and learns. Training can be internal but there are also a range of options for bringing in effective external support to deliver training to be better at understanding and responding to their own and others mental health issues. Charities such as Mental Health First Aid, Mind and Rethink Mental Illness have a number of options. (More information can be found in the 'Tools' section on the following page).

Managers also have a vital role in making sure your approach reaches beyond members of the immediate team – it is important to ensure care is also given to remote workers, support staff, volunteers and ancillary workers.

## Actions



### > Get the right structures in place

- Ensure there is a clear structure within your organisation for sharing of sensitive information on mental health and that everyone is aware of who they can speak to about their own mental health.
- Make sure any new employees are aware of your mental health policies and procedures by making positive references to them during their induction.

### > Offer training on mental health

- Train all existing and new managers on mental health, your plans and to build their confidence in supporting staff with mental health problems.
- Ensure that supporting employee mental health is embedded within the line managers' job descriptions at every tier of the organisation and that they are aware it is a central part of their role.
- Ensure training is inclusive – record training sessions to share with remote workers.

## Getting it right

### Good leadership

Leaders who get it right are confident in communicating about mental health in their workplace. They take responsibility to commit to cultural improvements, participate in training themselves and break stigma about mental health and career progression. Some good senior leaders are even open about their experiences, their coping mechanisms and tips for resilience, which can help to normalise the conversation and reduce stigma.

### Good management

Good managers don't try and do too much and do not try to be therapists. They are conscious of the signs of poor mental health, clear on the support available and 'check in' with individuals at appropriate times. They encourage safe disclosure and employee led ideas for adjustments. Managers who show empathy, compassion, fairness and consistency have been found to be respected, and have kept more valued talent at work. This includes undertaking basic manager duties such as 1-to-1s, appraisals and catch-ups.

(Source: Time to Change)

## Tools



Training options to help you understand your needs better:



### Mental Health First Aid

Training helps people to define mental health and some common mental health issues, identify stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health issues, relate to people's experiences, support people in distress, help someone recover faster and look after their own mental health.

MHFA England run courses around the country including a 'Lite' course that provides an introductory three-hour awareness course. Train the trainer options are also available which might be considered by larger organisations.



**Mind** offers a range of courses on mental health including how to build emotional intelligence and resilience, how to support someone, managing mental health at work and general mental health awareness. Mind can also provide in-house training to your teams or organisation.



### Rethink Mental Illness

Training packages are built around helping people to feel more comfortable and confident to talk about mental health and respond in helpful ways when problems arise. They offer bespoke courses for your organisation.







**Acas** has a range of training packages that include developing interpersonal skills or improving how you deal with specific issues like health and wellbeing, absence or managing change. It also offers an online course in mental health awareness.




## Useful resources



-  **Mental Health First Aid's line manager's resource** provides helpful guidance and advice to employers who would like to improve how they support employees experiencing mental health issues and how they can improve mental health within the workplace
-  **CIPD's factsheets** include guidance on performance appraisal and how individuals and line managers should engage in a dialogue about their performance and development and the support they need in their role
-  **NHS Employers** has compiled a list of key themes that managers may want to consider when promoting a healthy approach within the workplace
-  The **Heath and Safety Executive** have produced a tool to check on your line manager abilities to deal with stress

## Transform the role of line managers

BITC has produced a comprehensive report that examines the role of line managers in managing the mental health of organisations and provides a number of recommendations for all organisations to take.

-  [Click here to read BITC's report: 'Transforming the role of line managers'](#)

*"We created a 'Break the Stigma' network. It's a community of buddies that offer an at-work support mechanism for people who are suffering from mental health problems and want to talk about what they are going through. The network allows people to chat and then they can signpost people off to the right support that is needed, such as through the Employee Assistance Programme."*  
Sarah Heslop, Defra

*"We introduced training for all managers to give them a good understanding of mental health and increased awareness on how to spot the signs someone may need help, and then know how to support them. This also covers how to handle sensitive conversations, as well as how to look after your own health. We have seen some real benefits from this approach and it has allowed our managers to be much more proactive with their support."*  
Bobby Walker, GPS PE Pipe Systems



# Step 5: Managing mental health



## End the silence

**Making sure everyone can talk about mental health is an important step your business can take to help people manage it.**

**Much progress has been made in reducing the stigma of mental health, but we still need to do more.**

**Despite many employees feeling their employer or line manager would be supportive if they shared a mental health issue, a significantly smaller number of people actually do disclose concerns. Some say this is because they fear discrimination.**

A progressive approach to mental health encourages employees to be alert to their own health and to flag concerns and to share their concerns and issues before they become serious. This works best when staff feel they can do this without fear of judgment by colleagues. In turn this can have a positive impact on business performance. (See more on developing a statement tackling the stigma in [Step 1](#)).

Employees need to feel confident that they can be open about their mental health problems, to know that support is there if they need it and that anything shared would be in confidence.

To help tackle stigma, follow Time to Change's five-point plan for running anti-stigma activities.



**[Click here for Time to Change's five-point plan](#)**

## Open the conversation

Communication is key when it comes to mental health. Employee perceptions about attitudes towards mental health and available support may be as important as having the support there in the first place.

Address the topic of mental health in team meetings and individual performance reviews. Regular one-to-one meetings are a chance to ask people how they're doing, which helps to build trust and creates an opportunity to address any problems at an early stage.

## Manage common problems

Feelings of stress and anxiety can be common but it is possible to manage them without them having an impact on an employee's ability to do their job. There are steps your business can take to provide the support that employees need. These include:



Hover your cursor over the boxes below for more information:

Use the resources within this section to help employees manage stress

Balancing work and home commitments (such as caring responsibilities) can be a major cause of stress. Offering flexible working hours can help – and can also increase productivity and profitability. See the Vodafone link below

If somebody has more work than they can manage, both the work and the person will suffer

Uncertainty is a major cause of anxiety, particularly during times of organisational change, so communicate clearly and openly with your staff

It should be easy for employees to raise potential problems, both formally and informally



See Vodafone's global survey on flexible working

You can also follow the guidance in the HSE's 'Management Standards for managing work related stress' – see [page 37](#)

## Actions



### > Tackle stigma

- Ensure mental health can be discussed openly and without fear of judgement by following Time to Change's tips on anti stigma activities.

### > Open the conversation

- Develop an internal communications approach or campaign to promote the importance of mental health in the organisation.
- National events like Mental Health Awareness Week (in May) can be good opportunities to launch your own events – here are some **dates for your diary** from NHS Employers.

### > Adopt standards on stress

- Adopt the HSE Management Standards to reduce stress in your workplace. (See **page 37**).

### > Help manage wellness

- Develop Wellness Action Plans to help ensure employees can stay healthy or manage any mental health concerns that they are experiencing. (See the information box on the right).

## Wellness Action Plans

These are an easy, practical way of helping you to support the mental health of your team members or your own mental health. Everyone can complete a Wellness Action Plan. It means that you already have practical steps in place to ensure you are supported when you start to struggle. Mind has two guides and templates – for individuals and for managers.



[Click here for more info](#)

*“We now have a large number of people confident in dealing positively and openly with mental health situations. Staff are more engaged with the subject and have a greater understanding of the impact it has on individuals and the business. As such, we are more able to offer appropriate support and manage mental health issues quickly, and before they turn into a more difficult problem.”*

Kate Abbott, DCLG

## Standards on stress

The Health and Safety Executive Management Standards for managing work-related stress define how organisations successfully manage the risks of poor mental health and wellbeing. They cover the six main causes of stress in the workplace:



Hover your cursor over the boxes below for more information:

Such as  
workload and  
the work  
environment

How much  
influence employees  
have over the  
decision making  
process

Help and  
resources  
provided by the  
organisation,  
management and  
colleagues

Promoting  
positive working  
and dealing  
with problems

Having a clear  
understanding of  
their role within  
the organisation

How the  
organisation  
manages and  
communicates  
change



## Did you know?

In a poll by Mind, less than half of people with a diagnosed mental health problem had told their manager about it. And one in five people felt they couldn't tell their boss if they were stressed at work.



Read “Management Standards for work related stress” here

## Hear from employees

Time to Change has collected hundreds of personal stories showing just how common mental illness is:

 [Click here to read the personal stories](#)


You can also read more about what employees say about their experiences of mental health:

 [Click here to read Time to Change's review of organisational health checks](#)

See how individuals have experienced stress at work in these video case studies from the HSE:

 [Click here to watch the videos](#)

You can also find out what other organisations have done to change the way they manage stress:

 [Click here to see HSE's business solution case studies](#)

## Watch this



Watch the video of how **Royal Mail** created the programme '**Feeling First Class**' to help promote good mental health throughout the business. Watch staff members of Royal Mail sharing their experiences and talking openly about mental health problems:

 [Click here to watch the video](#)

## Useful resources



 [How to be mentally health at work](#) – a guide from Mind

 [Advice for individuals](#) from Mind on dealing with stress

 [Training, resources and links from Acas](#) on stress and mental health at work

*"We believe that communication is key. We conduct a regular employee survey, where anyone can say what they would like to change about the workplace environment. All line managers have an open door policy and are encouraged to have weekly meetings. We make it clear that anyone can discuss their personal circumstances with their line manager or the People Manager. Finally, individuals can make suggestions or ask questions via our Suggestion Boxes or put things forward directly to our employee body."*

Vicky Murray, Pukka Herbs





# Step 6: **Providing the right support**

## Provide the right support in work

**The steps outlined so far will all help to promote the positive mental health of your employees. But even the most supportive workplaces can't prevent some people from experiencing mental health issues. Just as some people experience physical ill health, some will experience mental ill health.**

**You can take steps to make sure you are engaged and ready to provide support when it is needed.**

### Spot the signs

Early intervention is important. You can help by equipping all employees – but especially management and senior staff – with the knowledge to spot the signs that either they themselves or someone they know may be struggling, and to signpost them towards appropriate sources of support.

You should also encourage staff to be open about their mental health, and to seek support when they need it.

Remember, though, that there are often no obvious outwards signs that somebody is experiencing a mental health problem. It's vital to maintain close contact and good communication so you know how people are really feeling.

Symptoms will vary, as individual experiences of mental health problems are different, but there are some potential indicators to look out for. Mind has compiled a list of possible signs here:



**Click here to read 'Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers' (see page 30)**

## Handling sensitive conversations

**It is important to make sure everyone knows what to do, and what not to do, when an employee or colleague begins to talk about their mental health.**

Build the skills and confidence to be able to approach someone who may be experiencing difficulties. Focus on the person, not the problem. Ask if they need any short-term adjustments to their work environment. They are the experts on their mental health, so they are best placed to know what they need.

### Actions



- **Start by having an informal chat – but if there's a problem, plan a more formal meeting with the employee:**
  - Find a private place where you won't be interrupted – perhaps a neutral space outside work.
  - Switch off your mobile!
  - Ask open questions: "How are you doing at the moment?", "You've seemed a bit withdrawn lately. Is anything the matter?"
  - Give them time to answer, and listen to what they say – don't make assumptions.
  - Give advice and support, where appropriate.
  - Agree a plan of action and schedule a follow-up meeting.

**You may not reach this stage in a single meeting –** people may not open up straight away. Don't worry – reassure them that your door is always open, and that the support is there if they need it.

**Remember, once a conversation has taken place about someone's mental health, it should be returned to to see how the employee is progressing.**

### Useful resources



- **Acas** has produced a guide to managing difficult conversations
- **Friends Life** and **Business in the Community** produced a toolkit to help give everyone the confidence to talk, whether you are suffering yourself or believe someone would benefit from a conversation

## Knowing what support to offer

### If an employee is living with a medical condition, you have a legal responsibility to consider making “reasonable adjustments” to enable them to remain in work.

These might include:

- Flexible hours or home working
- Adjusting their job description and reassigning tasks
- Moving their workplace
- Providing extra training or mentoring

Most reasonable adjustments are simple and inexpensive, and are really just good people management and part of your general duty of care to your employees. But in some cases employees with a mental health condition may need further professional support.

Time to Change has put together some information:



**Click here for more information**

Note that given the changing nature of mental health problems, these adjustments must be reviewed periodically to see if they are still appropriate or indeed necessary any longer.

If you haven't already, it may be appropriate to consider equipping your organisation with an Employee Assistance Programme or EAP. (See [page 44](#) for more information).

If appropriate, encourage them to speak to their GP. They will be able to provide information and referrals to support available on the NHS, such as talking therapy.

**Note:** much of the advice given in [Step 5](#) will help anyone who has revealed a mental health concern.



**The Mind Infoline** provides confidential information on mental health, including where to get help, medication and alternative treatments, and legal issues. Call **0300 123 3393** or text **86463**.

## Actions



### > Spot the signs

- Ensure senior team and all line managers are equipped to spot the signs that someone is experiencing a mental health problem or that they may need help.
- To do this, explore the training options outlined in [Step 4](#).

### > Manage sensitive conversations

- Ensure you and all your managers are prepared with the knowledge for how to respond to employees that express concerns for their mental health.
- Also be able to facilitate these conversations when signs of distress are spotted, to open the conversation on what support can be provided.

### > Provide the right support

- Ensure you have the support mechanisms in place to help anyone who is experiencing mental health, whether this is making adjustments to their workload, signposting them to your resources or even directing them to professional support.

## Spotting signs

Here are some useful questions to help you assess if an employee or colleague is experiencing mental distress:

- > Does the individual appear overly stressed, disturbed or distracted?
- > Do they appear dazed, withdrawn or shutdown?
- > Are they fidgety, restless or jumpy?
- > Are they talking incoherently or laughing incongruously?
- > Do they seem over-excited, euphoric, irritable or aggressive?
- > Do they appear to be having illogical or irrational thought processes?
- > Do they keep repeating themselves or obsessing?
- > Do they appear to be taking information in?
- > Do they seem to be responding to experiences, sensations or people not observable by others?

(Source: Mind/FSB)

However, if one or more of these signs is observed, this does not automatically mean the employee has a mental health problem – it could be a sign of another health issue or something else entirely. Always take care not to make assumptions or listen to third party gossip and to talk to the person directly.

## Support staff experiencing a mental health problem

Mind has produced an in-depth resource for line managers and HR professionals, setting out practical steps employers can take to support at every stage of the mental health spectrum – whether they're stressed or have a diagnosed mental health condition.



**Click here to read 'How to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem'**

*"We are very pro-active in supporting those who need it. Line managers regularly refer to the capability policy and make reasonable adjustments for each individual. They can also refer staff to an Occupational Health service or staff can self-refer. Staff are also able to access six sessions of face to face counselling or sign up for sessions of CBT."*

Peter Murphy, Porchlight



## Employee Assistance Programmes or EAPs

An EAP is a benefit programme intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their job performance, health, and wellbeing. This includes issues such as relationship problems, money worries and other pressures.

Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by telephone, although increasingly EAP providers are also providing their services through the internet. They also generally include short-term counseling and referral services for employees and their household members.





The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) is the professional body for EAPs. Its website contains details of providers and consultants as well as news and information on employee wellbeing. You may also find that your insurance provider can provide an EAP as part of your package.

 [Click here to visit the EAPA's website](#)

### Watch this








Royal Mail worked in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation to produce the below videos to help workplace mental health. They include Royal Mail staff sharing stories about their mental health. Share them with your employees:

-  **Recognising distress**
-  **Mental and Physical Health**
-  **Supporting Someone**
-  **Helping Yourself**

*“We have an Employee Assistance Programme, which offers all staff access to confidential support, advice and, where required, counselling. We are expanding this to enable line managers to seek guidance to support their staff and to include access to procure mediation services locally as required.”* Eric Barratt, NHS England

### Useful resources



-  **Supporting staff who are experiencing a mental health problem** – advice and links from **NHS Employers**
-  **FAQ from line managers on managing mental health** – real questions from a **Mind** webinar, answered by a panel of experts
-  **What works for you** – a guide for helping colleagues through tough times, from the **Mental Health Foundation**
-  **This Acas guide** provides further guidance on spotting signs and knowing how to respond (from page 10)
-  **CIPD** and **Mind** have produced this guidance – **Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers**. This also contains information, practical advice and templates to help managers facilitate conversations about stress and mental health problems and put in place support so employees can stay well and in work



# Step 7: Helping people recover



**Absence and return to work. Sometimes employees who experience mental health problems will need to take time off work to get better. Employers should provide the support people need while they're off sick and on their return to work. Adopting supportive policies will help you to reduce sick leave, retain valued employees and also meet your legal obligations.**

Your approach will be informed by the nature of the problem and the number of days spent away from work recovering.

It is important to maintain close contact with anyone off sick, but not to put pressure on them to return before they are ready.

Tell your employees what they can expect from you to help them return to work. Make sure they understand their own contractual duties to you, including what procedures you require for absences from work. It is important to have a fair and consistent approach to return to work. The sooner you take positive action, the more likely it is that your employees can return to work successfully.

There are a number of free resources out there to help you manage absence but many organisations will benefit from the government's **Fit for Work** service, which provides free occupational health advice to employers and employees. (See [page 47](#) for more info).

Another useful resource is the **Access to Work programme**, which provides grants to employees who are in work or accessing work, to ensure their illness does not stop them for being able to work. (See [page 48](#)).

It's worth knowing now what resources are available so you are prepared for any mental health sickness absence, if it occurs.

## Actions



### > Understand your obligations as an employer

- Ensure you are familiar with all your legal obligations under the Equality Act (see [Step 2](#)).

### > Understand what resources are out there to help

- Ensure you are aware of the range of support that Fit for Work and Access to Work provide.
- Turn to these support frameworks when an employee is off sick.

### > Follow the recommended support protocols

- Follow the tips on the following page, developed by the HSE.
- Use the Fit for Work programme to support employees.

### > Record sickness absences

- It is important to know the cause of sickness absence, in case it is work-related.
- If it is, you can put in place organisational measures, i.e. modified work, including reasonable adjustments that will help them and those who are sick in the future to return to work.

## Managing sickness absence

 **Hover your cursor over the boxes below for some general rules that you should follow:**

 **Fewer than 3 days of sickness absence**

 **Between 4 and 14 days of sickness absence**

 **Between 15 and 28 days of sickness absence**

 **After 28 days of sickness absence**

Source: HSE

### Fit for Work

This service, commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), provides occupational health advice and assessment to employers and employees. It is of particular value to SMEs that do not have their own occupational health provision. There is a telephone and online support service for employers, and an assessment and support service for employees.

An employee can be referred to the Fit for Work service if they have been on sickness absence for four weeks. GPs can refer sooner if they feel that their patient is unlikely to return to work

within the four weeks. The employee will receive an occupational health assessment over the phone and will be provided with a specially tailored return to work plan with recommendations on workplace adjustments. This will be sent to the employer after employee consent has been granted.

Employers adopting treatment plans recommended by Fit to Work can claim a £500 tax rebate per employee, per year, on the cost of treatment.

 **Visit the Fit for Work website**

*“We had an employee who suffered from anxiety. We gave him time off, signposted him to counselling and he is now back and much better. We try to provide a supportive environment and it’s great to see him in better health. It was important for us all as people that he got better quickly and important for our business to have his skills and knowledge back in the business as soon as possible.”*

Jim Blakemore, Bikeworks

## Access to Work provides support to employees with disabilities or long term health conditions who are already in work or about to start work.

There are grants to help cover the cost of workplace adaptations that can help the employee to carry out their job. Grants can be used to pay for:

- Adaptations to equipment used by the employee
- Special equipment
- Fares to work if the employee cannot use public transport
- A support worker or job coach to help in the workplace
- Disability awareness training for colleagues
- A communicator at a job interview

 **Read more about Access to Work**

## Is there any other available support?

- Local authority public health teams can offer advice and support to employers looking to take the first steps on implementing workplace health programmes.
- Engagement with the local Job-centre Plus will enable local employers to take part in schemes to find work for people with health issues or disabilities.
- Organisations like the local Chamber of Commerce or the Federation of Small Businesses may be able to offer advice and support. Some trade associations and professional bodies, such as CIPD, also have advice and support on workplace health.
- If you work as a supplier for a large business then talk to them about the potential to access their staff health and wellbeing support.
- Remploy runs a free and confidential **'Workplace mental health support service'**, delivered in partnership with Access to Work.

## Useful resources



-  **Samaritans:** 116 123
-  **Citizens Advice:** 03444 111 444
-  **Relate:** 0300 100 1234
-  **Talk to Frank:** 0300 123 6600
-  **CLASP:** [www.claspcharity.com](http://www.claspcharity.com)

*“We had an employee that was suffering from depression, and while he was off work he became increasingly anxious about returning to us as he felt like he had let his colleagues down. We provided reassurance and support by producing a tailored ‘back to work’ plan, and spoke to him openly and regularly to ensure he felt confident about getting back into work.”*

Lee Freeman, Public Sewer services



# Step 8: Going further



**To achieve excellence in mental health, it may take time, but investing time in ongoing development of your approach will produce a number of rewards. Excellence means happier, healthier staff with greater productivity, morale and staff retention, and reduced absence. It means mental health and physical health being managed effectively and positively, as equals.**

To keep building momentum, it is important to measure success, refine your approach to make it even more effective and regularly share progress and activities with employees. If you involve your employees in your programme, there is a collective sense of responsibility and a collective momentum to achieve the ambitions.

The importance of getting this right is increasing – it is likely that larger businesses will actively seek to partner more closely with organisations in their network or supply chain that take a proactive approach to promoting and improving mental health, as it shows they are committed to the long term success of their business.

*“We are working towards achieving ‘Excellence’ accreditation for the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, which includes a Mental Health competency. And we are sharing our knowledge to primary care organisations, which operate on a much more local level, like small business themselves. We want to be best practice and there are definitely things we are doing that anyone can implement.”*

Eric Barratt, NHS England

*“We have made a commitment to the wellbeing of our staff as an integral part of our business. Our approach to taking positive, preventative approaches, especially to mental health, means we have an exceptionally low sickness rate in comparison with other businesses and staff report feeling engaged and motivated.”*

Vicky Murray, Pukka Herbs



## Actions



### > Measure success

- Note any differences in company approach to issues since implementation of the programme.
- Develop mechanisms for feedback and use existing wellbeing data through staff surveys, turnover and absence data, as well as participation rates in wellbeing activities.
- Assess whether you have a physically and mentally more robust workforce with a healthier lifestyle.
- Ensure that talking about and supporting mental health becomes a normal way of working by reviewing whether mental health conversation and management are part of everyday working practices.
- Make use of the Workplace Charter Standards to see how you have progressed against the plan you established in **Step 2**.

### > Refine your approach

- Adjust programmes as needed: Do you need more training for staff, more frequent communication, more regular initiatives such as wellbeing days?
- Include everyone: ensure your approach to mental health is inclusive of remote, temporary and contract workers.
- Ensure that everyone is empowered to contribute and feel that their views are listened to and acted on.
- Ensure commitment from all parties (senior management, employees and their representatives).
- Ensure there are arrangements to identify those aspects of the work, organisation or environment that are known to be risk factors for work related stress, and place initiatives alongside these to protect your employees.

### > Celebrate achievements

- Share the success with your employees. This will give them a feeling of collective responsibility for the programme and will add to staff morale and retention.
- Include your mental health programme when recruiting new staff. It could give you the edge over the competition to attract the best candidates and presents your company as a caring and progressive employer.
- Ask employees to share their experiences and make suggestions for the future. This will allow the programme to grow and develop with your company.




**CIPD** has also produced a factsheet that explains employee communication and its importance, to help you communicate your approach to mental health effectively.

## BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

### Learn from what works

As well as the stories in this toolkit you will find a range of ideas, resources and examples of programmes implemented by business in the workplace reports developed by Business in the Community.

 [Browse the list of resources](#)

 [Browse the case studies](#)

This is the final step in the toolkit, the following section contains case studies from some of the organisations which helped contribute to the development of this toolkit.

*“Overall, you get back commitment in spades what you give if you support your staff. Our people are so dedicated to us because we support them, and as a result we have a really low turnover. In our annual employee satisfaction survey every single person said they were proud to work here. For us there is a real link between caring for people and their wellbeing, customer satisfaction and profit.”* Nicola Ryan, Rowlinson Knitwear

*“Since introducing the workplace benefits, we feel there is a difference in morale and particularly with those on short-term contracts. We find that people come back again and again to us for work, which is great in the context of an industry with so many freelancers. Last year our staff took part in a staff survey which was run in conjunction with Broadcast magazine. We are really proud to have been named as one of The Best Places to Work in TV.”* Tracy Patfield, Icon Films

# Case studies



## Bikeworks

**Name:** Jim Blakemore, Co-founder

**Organisation type:** Social enterprise bike store

**Employees:** 26 fulltime staff, 25 freelancers, and 6 volunteers



We want people to feel welcome, supported and inspired. This open and honest approach is in the DNA of our organisation. We try to let people know what is going on, both the good and the bad. We are a transparent organisation and have taken steps to try and de-silo our work and allow everyone to ask questions.

If a person is off work for illness it impacts on day to day delivery. Budgets are tight and there is real financial implication. The wellbeing of our employees is important to us not just from a personal perspective, but from a business perspective.

We believe in the power of approaching these kinds of issues in a 'humanistic' way: this comes from having the right workplace culture that allows challenges to be raised as they arise.

I want to introduce mindfulness more in our workplace, as well as work closely with other businesses on problem sharing and problem solving.

We did have an employee who suffers from anxiety. We gave him time off, signposted him to counselling and he is now back and much better. We try to provide a supportive environment and it's great to see him in better health. It was important for us all as people that he got better quickly and important for our business to have his skills and knowledge back in the business as soon as possible.



## Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

**Name:** Kate Abbott, Head of Learning and Development

**Organisation type:** Government department

**Employees:** 1,700 staff



Whatever the size of your organisation, you have to start somewhere and for us it was the formation of a 'Health and Wellbeing Group', made up of representatives from across the organisation, and at every level. We discuss approaches we can take to promote good health and wellbeing, including mental health.

One of the first ideas was to send myself and a colleague on Mental Health First Aid training. Because that was so successful, we did further training to become instructors ourselves and we have been training our colleagues – we have now trained more than 100 staff as mental health first aiders across the country.

Because that specific course is two days, we identified an appetite for a shorter course in mental health awareness too. We put together a half day workshop for line managers and due to the success of that we have made it slightly more general and extended it to all staff. We have now rolled out an even shorter – 1.5 hour – course that gives a good

introduction to the subject, to help people to better understand mental health and how to stay in good health.

The feedback from all this has been really positive. We now have a large number of people confident in dealing positively and openly with mental health situations. Staff are more engaged with the subject and have a greater understanding of the impact it has on individuals and the business. As such, we are more able to offer appropriate support and manage mental health issues quickly, and before they turn into a more difficult problem.

Our work has also led to the formation of a 'Support Network' where people experiencing mental health problems can talk to others in similar situations in confidence. And we have set up an 'Ambassadors Network' – this is a group of people who are there to answer any questions you have. The ambassadors' details are all on the intranet so you can find anyone

easily. I often find it is line managers who want to know how best to support their team and I can point them in the right direction.

We have also been piggybacking on national dates too, so we ran some anti stigma events on Time to Talk Day. We want everyone to feel comfortable talking about mental health, if they wish. We have a commitment to promoting good mental health, as well as raising awareness about mental health problems and providing support to colleagues. It's an approach that is having a real, positive impact on our business and the wellbeing of our employees.

## Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)

**Name:** Sarah Heslop, Wellbeing Advisor

**Organisation type:** Government department

**Employees:** 2,000 in core of organisation



We are a large organisation but are spread across the country, sometimes in small teams. We also have a lot of people who work from home or in remote locations so it is important to have a very proactive and open approach to mental health.

We have long tried to support mental health issues and have an Employee Assistance Programme, which ensures everyone has somewhere to go for advice and resources when they need them. We have also been running resilience training for some time.

We took a step forward in our approach when we had someone return from a sickness absence for depression. He felt we had supported him well and he wanted to give something back – so he helped us to create a ‘Break the Stigma’ network. It’s a community of buddies that offer an at-work support mechanism for people who are suffering from mental health problems and want to talk about what they are going through. The buddies are all people who have some experience of

mental ill health, either personally or through someone close to them. The network allows people to chat and then they can signpost people off to the right support that is needed, such as through the Employee Assistance Programme.

That employee who helped create the network shared his story on our intranet. This had a really powerful and positive reaction – it led to others sharing their experiences of mental ill health. This in turn has led to people feeling much more confident to be open about mental health generally and to talking about how to maintain good mental health.

We continue to provide resilience training and mindfulness sessions. We have also started providing ‘managing mental health’ sessions for line managers in recognition of the role they have in managing people to be in good health. We are now sharing what we have learned with other departments and are learning from others. We look forward to building on this success.



## Forster Communications

**Name:** Amanda Powell-Smith, CEO

**Organisation type:** PR and communications business

**Employees:** 30 staff

**FORSTER**  
COMMUNICATIONS

Forster Communications is committed to driving positive approaches to life and work, and we do this through communications. Ensuring the mental and physical wellbeing of everyone who works for us is a long-established commitment and an essential part of our business success.

We have had a range of policies in place since we started the company over 20 years ago. Signing the Time to Change organisational pledge in 2012 helped us to gather this together in an updated plan and show all our employees that we take their mental health seriously.

We have an open and supportive culture, where everyone knows who they can turn to if they need to discuss anything, and they know what support is available to them. It is important to put structures such as our Employee Assistance Programme in place but this means nothing if individuals don't know what they are or how to access them.

We have run training sessions on how to keep in good mental health, how to handle sensitive conversations with people who need help and general understanding of mental health issues.

Since signing the pledge we have set up a mental wellbeing committee which is formed of staff from across all levels of the business and has been important for peer to peer communications. They have developed and implemented new initiatives with ideas including access to mindfulness apps, free yoga classes, offsite coffee catch-ups to bring together colleagues from different teams, and company breakfasts where everyone can come together, eat healthily and chat.

We make use of the best free resources available and on Time to Talk day we use the free kits from Time to Change to get conversations going on mental health and break the stigma. We also share videos and content more widely through our social media channels.

Our employees know this is an important issue and know it is not a taboo subject. This is essential to make sure we can be in good health, and be an innovative and successful business. Our initiatives contributed to us to being awarded PR Week 'Best Place to Work' in 2015 which is great recognition for the benefits of this approach.

## GPS PE Pipe Systems

**Name:** Bobby Walker, HR Manager

**Organisation type:** Manufacturer

**Employees:** 150 staff



Ensuring as many people as possible can be in good mental health is incredibly important for all businesses. We believe that education is critical to this.

We introduced stress training for all managers to give them a good understanding of mental health and increased awareness on how to spot the signs someone may need help, and then know how to support them. This also covers how to handle sensitive conversations, as well as how to look after your own health.

We have seen some real benefits from this approach and it has allowed our managers to be much more proactive with their support. They have the confidence to take their initiative to help. In general, all our staff are much more comfortable discussing mental health now.

When new staff join, we make sure they understand all the benefits of working here, including the resources available to help with their mental health, and we ensure they understand the importance of looking after mental health.

We provide an Employee Assistance Programme, available to all employees 24/7. They can call or contact that service if they have any questions at all related either to their work or outside life.

We are pleased with our success so far. We are now looking how we can take the next step. The new toolkit from Public Health England and Business in the Community will help us in this.

## Harriet Kelsall Bespoke Jewellery

**Name:** Harriet Kelsall, Managing Director

**Organisation type:** Bespoke jewellery

**Employees:** 30 staff across two locations



We take employee wellbeing very seriously. We have a line manager system in place and employees also have a team leader they can talk to about any concerns. This helps to resolve most potential concerns quickly. Our line managers are also sensitive to the needs of those they work with, which helps them spot any emerging issues.

We make sure that our dedicated HR Administrator has time to focus on ensuring employee wellbeing. We give all new employees an induction programme that ensures they are reassured on how wellbeing is put into practice and are aware of the steps in place if they do want to talk to anyone or report an issue.

Before we made a concerted effort to focus on employee wellbeing, the levels of sickness absence were higher. Our teams are relatively small, which means the morale of the whole company can easily be affected if people aren't happy in the workplace.

We foster an open and equal environment where everyone has the ability to change things. For example, we conduct staff feedback sessions and discuss new ideas and initiatives in company meetings.

We also have a committee of six people – from across the business – that implements wellbeing initiatives in tandem with our commitment to being an ethical business. The committee's ideas, which help to promote holistic wellbeing across the company, have included sponsored bike rides, walks and cake sales, through to giving talks in local schools and starting yoga and pilates classes in our local village hall.

Employee wellbeing is important for numerous reasons; not only is it about looking after your staff, it also has an impact on business performance by helping with productivity and the mood of the workplace. It's also important for staff retention and recruitment – fostering a good atmosphere means people are more likely to join us and stay with us.

## HM Revenue and Customs

**Name:** Andrea Bishop, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Adviser

**Organisation type:** Government department

**Employees:** 66,600



HM Revenue  
& Customs

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is committed to reducing discrimination and stigma around mental health. Our Mental Health Strategy sets out what we're doing to encourage a culture where staff can seek support on any mental health issues by talking openly and in confidence, including with their manager, and for these to be acted on.

The Strategy targets five key areas:

- Improving people's understanding of mental health issues and the impact in the workplace;
- Taking steps to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and foster a culture where people can talk openly and seek support;
- Providing people with the tools and the support needed to improve their mental health;
- Building manager capability and confidence to effectively manage mental health issues in the workplace and support their staff;
- Tackling work related stress.

To support the strategy, HMRC introduced a mental health policy/guidance and provide access to mental health awareness training for staff and managers. Guidance and further sources of information to facilitate effective management of mental health issues in the workplace can be viewed by all employees on the department's intranet.

We also introduced a Mental Health Advocacy (MHA) service which provides a confidential support service for people with mental health conditions and their managers. Our network of 62 MHAs can help by listening and encouraging the individual to take positive steps towards accessing professional help and signposting to the appropriate services, including the department's Reasonable Adjustment Support Team, HR and comprehensive support from our Occupational Health Provider (OHP) and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

We work closely with our OHP and EAP to develop interventions including broadcast dial-in sessions for large groups of managers,

as well as new service lines to help OH practitioners work more closely with our managers. Our employees also have access to a free, confidential online Health and Wellbeing Assessment to measure and monitor their wellbeing and are provided with a report which includes tips on how to make a positive difference through small changes that are achievable and practical.

Our people are encouraged to talk about mental health and we facilitate this through a Diversity Network and mental health support groups on Yammer.

HMRC is a partner of the Public Health Responsibility Deal and we have signed up to the Mental Health and Wellbeing pledge; our delivery plans and updates are published on The Deal's website. We have also pledged to support Time to Change and other similar mental health campaigns in the rest of the UK. We continue to embed Time to Change activity throughout the department marking the recent Time to Talk day with communications and local activity to raise awareness.

## Icon Films

**Name:** Tracy Patfield, Operations Manager

**Organisation type:** TV / media production company

**Employees:** Approx 90 (30 staff, 60 freelancers)



There's a lot of travel and long hours worked in our industry, so prioritising wellbeing is crucial. We provide workplace benefits for our employees for every day of the working week and we believe these are all essential in providing the building blocks for helping people to stay well. We constantly assess what we can do to further improve the wellbeing of our staff, whether they are on or off site.

When we started working towards the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, we realised that we were already doing a lot for our staff wellbeing and were delighted to be awarded 'commitment' level. We are now currently working towards 'achievement' level.

On Mondays we have a subsidised mindfulness session; it's organised for Monday so that people can settle calmly into their week. On Tuesdays we have a circuit training cardio class. On Wednesdays we have free fruit and subsidised soup – which helps to bring people together and

encourages people to network with other members of staff on different floors. This is particularly beneficial for new starters and for those on short-term contracts. On one Thursday each month we have a 'Screen Thursday' where we gather together to watch one of the films in our archive or premier something that is due to be transmitted. On Fridays we have a 'stretch and relax' class, which is a combination of yoga and pilates. We also bring in a Dr. Bike service for our employees who cycle into work, giving them free advice and maintenance.

Since introducing the workplace benefits, we feel there is a difference in morale and particularly with those on short-term contracts. We find that people come back again and again to us for work, which is great in the context of an industry with so many freelancers. Last year our staff took part in a staff survey which was run in conjunction with Broadcast magazine. We are really proud to have been named as one of The Best Places to Work in TV.

We took part in a free taster through PHE of the 'mental health at work' course, which was provided by the Wellbeing Charter. Two people attended, and fed learnings back to senior management. The course was subsequently offered to all production managers and will be rolled out to other team heads this year. We're doing this so that people will know how to handle any sensitive conversations should they arise.

Mental health is definitely still a taboo subject in society and many people still find it to be a sign of weakness. We want to make progress in reducing this stigma and supporting people's wellness. It is difficult to open up the lines of communication, but by encouraging informed conversations across the business we hope that in the long term, people will be talking about mental health as easily as they do about their physical wellbeing.

## NHS England

**Name:** Eric Barratt, Programme Manager, Healthy Workforce Programme

**Organisation type:** Healthcare

**Employees:** 5,500 staff (but sharing learnings with smaller associates)



NHS England leads the National Health Service (NHS) in England. We set the priorities and direction of the NHS and encourage and inform the national debate to improve health and care. We want everyone to have greater control of their health and their wellbeing, and to be supported to live longer, healthier lives. It is important that we therefore set an example and ensure that we not only look after our employees but that we also encourage other businesses to join us in taking this issue seriously. Organisations that do will see improvements across customer satisfaction, staff retention and reduced costs.

Our staff spend a large portion of their time at work; we can harness this time to positively impact their overall health, wellbeing and happiness. We foster a culture that improves the chances of people remaining well at work, whilst also providing better early intervention support.

Our approach is led from the top – we have a Board member overseeing wellbeing, with a big emphasis on mental health. We have signed the Time to Change pledge, and our updated implementation plan will support us to go further.

We have trained over 300 employees in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) so far, and we intend to increase this capacity to 600 through 2016. The learning from this two day course is increasing knowledge and understanding of how best to support others with a mental health problem, and is giving them the confidence to do so.

We are also offering training to all line managers to give them support and guidance for how to create a healthy working environment for staff.

We have an Employee Assistance Programme, which offers all staff access to confidential support, advice and, where required, counselling. We are expanding

this to enable line managers to seek guidance to support their staff and to include access to procure mediation services locally as required.

We have also introduced more hands on tools – all staff can access a 12 month subscription, free of charge, to the mindfulness smartphone app, Headspace. And we have been sharing the free resources provided by One You across the organisation – this has led to many more everyday conversations about mental health and wellbeing at printers and kettles.

We are working towards achieving 'Excellence' accreditation for the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, which includes a Mental Health competency. And we are sharing our knowledge to primary care organisations, which operate on a much more local level, like small business themselves. We want to be best practice and there are definitely things we are doing that anyone can implement.



## Porchlight

**Name:** Peter Murphy, Director of HR

**Organisation type:** Charity helping the homeless and those with mental health issues

**Employees:** 160 staff



Porchlight has made a specific commitment towards the mental health and wellbeing of our employees. We go beyond – for instance, we embrace flexible working and we offer more maternity, sickness pay and annual leave than the legal requirement.

I am the HR Director, we also have an HR Advisor and an Assistant. All staff have a line manager who is seen more as a coach. Our plan revolves around having a good standard of HR practices, such as an absence policy, knowing our staff and making reasonable adjustments where needed.

We believe we have created a positive culture. We encourage a healthy lifestyle physically and mentally, with access to information on healthy living, eating and drinking.

Each person has an Annual Training Plan of both internal and external training. Within this, all staff learn about managing stress and resilience in the workplace, as well as understanding mental health issues more broadly. We are also training some of our staff as Mental Health First Aiders.

We believe in keeping the lines of communication open. Everyone has a regular 1-to-1 line manager meeting and when someone is returning after an absence the HR department encourages them to declare the reason why they have been off sick, so we can best support. All employees also have access to an Employee Assistance Programme.

Porchlight is very pro-active in supporting those who need it. Line managers regularly refer to the capability policy and make reasonable adjustments for each individual. They can also refer staff to an Occupational Health service or staff can self-refer. Staff are also able to access six sessions of face to face counselling or sign up for sessions of CBT.

We have a legal and moral requirement to support colleagues with mental health issues better, and we need to ensure that other colleagues understand why someone may be getting more help. Mental health issues come and go and with the right support the staff member can be very productive. However, it is important to ensure that it is not the nature of the work that is causing the problems.

## Public Sewer Services

**Name:** Lee Freeman, Managing Director & Joanne Theobald, Performance & Development Manager

**Organisation type:** Sewer infrastructure maintenance and repair

**Employees:** 85 staff



Our company fosters a very caring and personal environment. It has a close-knit 'family feel' – we even employ several members of the same family. We can usually tell pretty quickly if someone is having issues because of how close employees are to one another.

We have a dedicated HR Manager, as well as an informal 'buddy system' which involves co-workers looking out for each other. This means there is always someone for people to speak to if they have a concern. If an issue does arise, employees know they can speak to their line manager in complete confidence.

We provide staff with both practical and financial support. For example, we recently allowed an employee to borrow a company van so that he could move house more easily. We also gave another employee an advance on his wages to help him cover the costs of a flat, and did the same for someone who needed to pay for the repair of their car in order to travel to work.

Our work involves emergency sewer maintenance and repair and this means there are substantial business implications if people take sickness leave – particularly because we are a relatively small company. We always check to ensure the wellbeing of staff and try to address an issue before it becomes more significant. If people do become unwell however, we support them to get better.

We had an employee that was suffering from depression, and while he was off work he became increasingly anxious about returning to us as he felt like he had let his colleagues down. We provided reassurance and support by producing a tailored 'back to work' plan, and spoke to him openly and regularly to ensure he felt confident about getting back into work.

The team events we hold outside of the office also provide opportunities for employees to speak openly about any concerns. For instance, at a summer away day previously, I was approached by a dyslexic employee who was anxious about taking a particular course. As a result of the conversation, we were there to support and reassure him.

Taking periods of rest from work is very important and we encourage all our employees to maximize their annual leave allowance.

## Pukka Herbs

**Name:** Vicky Murray, Sustainability Manager

**Organisation type:** Retailer of herbal teas and supplements

**Employees:** 90 staff, 10 temporary staff



We have made a commitment to the wellbeing of our staff as an integral part of our business. Our approach to taking positive, preventative approaches, especially to mental health, means we have an exceptionally low sickness rate in comparison with other businesses and staff report feeling engaged and motivated.

Our HR is covered by the 'People Manager', a part time assistant, and all employees have a dedicated line manager. We believe that communication is key. We conduct a regular employee survey, where anyone can say what they would like to change about the workplace environment. All line managers have an open door policy and are encouraged to have weekly meetings. We make it clear that anyone can discuss their personal circumstances with their line manager or the People Manager. Finally, individuals can make suggestion, ask questions, etc via our Suggestion Boxes or put things forward directly to our employee body (Pukka Pulse).

We believe that prevention is the best attack. Where employees have an issue we can provide support by making work adjustments where required. We also try to deflect stress from outside the workplace – for example, we realise some people may need the possibility of flexible working to balance work with care responsibilities.

We have introduced an employee education programme called the 'Pukka Life Academy', which not only covers how wellbeing relates to herbs – to link to our core business – but also other wellbeing activities such as yoga, or meditation techniques and we are expanding this. New team members also undertake a full induction programme, which covers our values, policies, our approach to sustainability and such things as our commitment to supporting work-life balance.

We have established a Wellbeing Fund and a Development Fund. This allows up to £300 for each employee (£150 for each fund) by covering 50% of the cost of an opportunity or activity that they have always wanted to do. Employees have used the money for a variety of uses including massage, yoga, gym membership and cookery lessons.

This approach ensures we live our values and can continue to thrive as a business. As we grow, we are looking to build on this success.

## Rowlinson Knitwear

**Name:** Nicola Ryan, Head of People Services

**Organisation type:** Clothing manufacturer

**Employees:** 43 staff



Our core values are trust, care and striving to be better. We look for people that hold these values and it's important to us that everyone is open and honest about all issues they have, good or bad.

We live and breathe the open door policy. Our philosophy is that you should be able to talk to anyone and share feedback honestly and we don't wait for appraisals.

For about a year we have been working on the listening skills of our management when it comes to discussing issues and we have had great feedback from our staff on this.

We also formalised our values in writing four years ago, which helps guide our approach.

We want to be a great employer and a great company to work with. We have a lot of benefits in place to achieve this. Everyone has access to a cycle to work scheme and we've put in place rewards for achievements with customer satisfaction – for example, we all had 3 extra days of holiday last year!

There's a profit sharing scheme in place and as we are now employee owned this was tax free – this meant that everyone, irrespective of job title, received around £1,950 which was paid just before Christmas. Childcare vouchers are also available for parents. We are flexible on working hours, and have interest free loans for crises – such as a boiler breaking. We also fully contribute to auto enrolled pensions meaning that our employees need not contribute anything.

As part of the Employee Assistance Programme, there's a telephone helpline employees can use and we have access to 6 free face to face counselling sessions depending on the nature of the issue.

Mental health is important to us. Eighteen months ago we achieved the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, the first employer in our town to do so, which was free of charge and made such a positive difference to us. Consequently we have trained a section of our managers on mental health wellbeing

strategies. We want them to be comfortable in talking about it and signposting people to relevant services.

In the past people have had to take time out of work because of their mental health, and we try to support them in a tailored way so they can return to work more easily. The impact of stress is obvious to us, and we bring in extra resources to support staff through our peak times.

Overall, you get back commitment in spades what you give if you support your staff. Our people are so dedicated to us because we support them, and as a result we have a really low turnover. In our annual employee satisfaction survey every single person said they were proud to work at Rowlinson. For us there is a real link between caring for people and their wellbeing, customer satisfaction and profit.

## Thanks to the following organisations for contributing to the development of this toolkit:

- [Anglian Water](#)
- [Bikeworks](#)
- [CIPD](#)
- [Defra](#)
- [Department for Communities and Local Government](#)
- [Department for Transport](#)
- [Fluid-IT](#)
- [Forster Communications](#)
- [GPS PE Pipe Systems](#)
- [Harriet Kelsall Jewellery](#)
- [HMRC](#)
- [Icon Films](#)
- [Johnson & Johnson](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [National Grid](#)
- [NHS England](#)
- [Porchlight](#)
- [Public Sewer Services](#)
- [Pukka Herbs](#)
- [Rowlinson Knitwear](#)
- [Royal Mail](#)
- [The Work Foundation](#)



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**BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY**



**THE PRINCE'S  
RESPONSIBLE  
BUSINESS NETWORK**