

## Mental Health in the Workplace

**Factsheet 24** is designed to help employers recognise and understand what mental ill health is, how it can affect business, and how to find solutions.

### ➤ Key Facts

According to a year-long study by the King's Fund, in the past decade there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of days lost in the workplace from ill mental health. The cost to the UK is estimated at nearly £50 billion, costing the economy upwards of £26.1 billion and the NHS £22.5 billion.

Along with lost productivity there are many ancillary costs of ill mental health in the workplace leading on to a reduction in the efficiency of the organisation as a whole.

The most common areas affecting employees are:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Psychosis

The main contributing factors towards these are considered to be:

- Excessive workload
- Insecure employment
- Repetition of work
- Imbalance between effort and reward

### ➤ What we know:

- Stress, anxiety and depression the most common reasons for sickness absence.
- 30% of employees at any time suffer with mental health problems.
- It is not just absenteeism which affects the efficiency of employees but also presenteeism.
- People with ill mental health work skilfully and productively with the right support.
- For every £1 invested in mental health promotion in the workplace there is a 9 fold return in reduced absenteeism and increased productivity.

## ➤ Disability Discrimination Act:

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is a complicated piece of law, for in-depth advice it is advisable to speak to your company solicitor. A few key points to be noted are:

- The Disability Discrimination Act states that it's illegal for an employer to treat employees or job applicants with ill mental health "less favourably" than other employees.
- The only exception to this is where an employer can justify treating an employee less favourably because the functions of the business prohibit disadvantaged employees working.
- As well as not treating an employee disabled by a mental health condition "less favourably" an employer also has to make "reasonable adjustments" to prevent the employee being put at a substantial disadvantage because of policies or practices, or any physical features of the workplace.
- Your company policy must be considered and possible solutions for suggestions on reasonable adjustments should be considered. Under the law there is no defence for failing to make reasonable adjustments.
- Areas to consider when working out whether any particular adjustment is reasonable include: effectiveness and practicality of the adjustment; the cost; and the extent of any disruption caused, and the availability to the employer of financial assistance in making adjustments.
- If an employee does not disclose their disability at the time of application/offer/acceptance stage or when specific questions about health have been asked, and if the employee has provided false information, it is accepted that it would be difficult to make reasonable adjustments under the DDA.
- However, if you are made aware at a later date that there is a mental health condition you are duty bound to make reasonable adjustments for that employee.

For more in depth information on DDA please visit Commission for Equality and Human Rights. [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### Other legislation

- Equality Act 2010 – please click [here](#)

## ➤ How to create a healthy workplace

### Health Check

Download the two attached questionnaires to assess how healthy your workplace is. One is for you the line manager and one is for your team.

They incorporate the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) six stress factors around the areas of demands, control, support, relationships, roles and change.

- [Line managers health check questionnaire](#)
- [Team health check questionnaire](#)

## ➤ How to create a healthy workplace cont'd

### Create a healthy workplace

There are certain things any employer can do to tackle stress at work, these include:

- Provide stress management courses for staff
- Ensure there is time for staff to feedback how they are feeling in meetings or at reviews and appraisals
- Monitor stress at work
- Create a no-blame culture
- Encourage clear, open and honest communication
- Be positive about reasonable adjustments
- Provide training on how to recognise mental health issues
- Create a pleasant environment to work in, try adding plants and pictures
- Ensure staff take their lunch breaks and monitor working hours
- Arrange occasional team building events

### Maintaining a healthy workplace

**Have clear statements and policies on mental health:** So that employees feel secure in disclosing mental health issues.

**Provide assertiveness, leadership and interpersonal skills training:** These training courses are really valuable in helping people recognise and review their management and communication style and the impact this has on other people.

**Encourage group cohesion:** Through team meetings and bonding events to ensure that any individual managing a mental health condition isn't isolated from the group.

### Recruitment

When recruiting staff you need to ensure you are not discriminating against anyone who has a mental health condition.

#### Job descriptions and person specifications

- Identify unreasonable or conflicting demands
- Be specific about the skills needed
- Clearly distinguish desirable and essential criteria so flexibility is ensured when making 'reasonable adjustments'
- Focus on outputs not the means by which they are arrived at e.g. working from home etc
- Don't emphasise formal qualifications or work experience where these aren't essential
- Avoid emphasising soft-skills and personality traits (e.g. must be fun and energetic)
- Avoid generalities (e.g. must be able to work under stress etc)

## ➤ How to create a healthy workplace cont'd

### Recruitment cont'd

**Advertising:** Use phrases that are positive about disability e.g. "we welcome applicants from people with disabilities." Provide full details about hours, flexible working, job share arrangements and annual leave entitlements.

**Applications:** Provide clear details on application forms and during the selection process on things like closing dates, interview dates and what the interview will consist of. Include a statement making it clear your commitment to making any "reasonable adjustments".

### Interviews and testing

- When inviting candidates to interview ensure you have asked for information about any adjustments they feel may be necessary
- Allow for the fact that a person with a mental health issue is likely to be more nervous or anxious in the interview and may wish to have support from an employment advisor or support worker
- Remember, confidence is something that will develop once in post
- Be flexible about times and dates to allow for effects of medication and appointments
- Offer candidates extra time to finish tasks or tests designed to assess skill levels
- Ensure there are rest breaks in the timetable and provide refreshments

**Recruitment and selection:** Ensure you consider what reasonable adjustments will need to be in place, for example, a place to store medication or flexible hours.

### Developing a mental health policy

Every company should think about developing a mental health policy. There are three simple steps to developing a policy.

#### 1. Auditing

What are existing levels of stress and mental ill health in your workplace? In what way is the organisation's structure and functions contributing?

There are organisations that can come in and help you assess the wellbeing of your organisation. If that isn't an option for your organisation try out the health check questions we've put together.

#### 2. Developing the policy

This should outline the importance of the policy for the organisation and explain how the policy fits in with other company policies such as sickness absence, and things like alcohol and drug misuse policies.

The policy should outline a commitment to promoting and monitoring mental health at work, and acknowledge the importance of creating a "safe environment" for employees and their mental wellbeing i.e. using reasonable efforts to ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment. The policy should stress what can be done to support staff with mental health problems and cover the area of employing people with mental health problems.

## ➤ How to create a healthy workplace cont'd

### Developing a mental health policy cont'd

The policy can be broken down into:

- Introduction
- Scope
- Other HR policies
- Organisational philosophy and commitment on health promotion and mental ill health prevention
- Details of the auditing process
- Training
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Costs of implementation

### 3. Implementing the policy

When converting the policy into practice it's important to consider that it needs to be supported by senior management who will effectively communicate it to all employees. Ensure employees know who to approach in the first instance for help. Bring in awareness training around mental health for staff and continue to monitor the effectiveness of the policy.

## ➤ What's on offer in Hull?

- Humber NHS Foundation Trust Positive Assets programme:
  - Information, guidance and training on workplace mental health issues
  - Hull Workplace Mental Health Network
  - Support to become a Mindful Employer
- Free Mental Health First Aid training (2 days) for companies with less than 50 employees
- Website for Yorkshire and Humber employers: [www.workplacementalhealth.co.uk](http://www.workplacementalhealth.co.uk)
- Hull & East Yorkshire Mind aims to support people with mental health problems, their families and carers through the provision of services and the promotion of good practices in mental health. For further information please visit [www.mindhey.co.uk](http://www.mindhey.co.uk)
- You can contact the Positive Assets Team on: Email: [positive.assets@humber.nhs.uk](mailto:positive.assets@humber.nhs.uk) or Telephone : 01482 389101

## ➤ Further information & Sources

For further information please visit the following websites:

- [www.workplacementalhealth.co.uk](http://www.workplacementalhealth.co.uk)
- [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)
- [www.tacklementalhealth.org.uk/](http://www.tacklementalhealth.org.uk/)
- [www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/HealthAndSupport/MentalHealth/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/HealthAndSupport/MentalHealth/index.htm)
- [www.mindhey.co.uk/](http://www.mindhey.co.uk/)
- [www.humber.nhs.uk/](http://www.humber.nhs.uk/)
- [www.hullpct.nhs.uk/pages/mental-health](http://www.hullpct.nhs.uk/pages/mental-health)