

Insight HR

FACT SHEET

Mental Health

For specific advice and guidance contact your allocated HR Consultant.

In this Issue:

- ◆ What is mental health?
- ◆ Why does good mental health matter?
 - ◆ Prevention
 - ◆ Early intervention
- ◆ 7 practical solutions (NUT)

What is a Mental Health?

We all have mental health, just as we have physical health. Mental health, like physical health, can fluctuate on a spectrum from good to poor. Poor mental health can therefore affect any of us irrespective of age, personality or background.

Mental health problems can appear as a result of experiences in both our personal and working lives – or they can just happen.

Approximately one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year, and in England, one in six people report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as anxiety and depression) in any given week.

Employees may be affected directly or indirectly, if partners, dependants or other family members have poor mental health, which in turn impact on the employee's own health. People can also be affected by friends' and fellow employees' experiences. Poor mental health can affect the way people think, feel or behave.

In some cases this can seriously limit a person's ability to cope with day-to-day life, which can impact on relationships, work and quality of life. However, many people effectively manage their mental health condition alongside the demands of a job and daily life, sometimes with treatment and support.

Others may experience symptoms of poor mental health but may never be diagnosed with a condition. The crucial thing to remember is that everyone's experience of poor mental health is different – two people with the same condition may have entirely different symptoms and coping mechanisms.

Why does good mental health matter?

Managing and supporting people's mental health at work is a critical and growing challenge for employers.

Most people will be affected in some way by poor mental health, either personally or through family and friends, so mental health is an issue for every organisation in the UK.

Equally important are the positive business reasons for supporting staff mental health.

The world of work is changing, with employee engagement, flexible working, resilience and talent management now common currency. Positively managing mental health underpins these approaches and can reap rewards in terms of staff morale, productivity and loyalty.

Why does good mental health matter?

Continued..

The CIPD Employee Outlook survey which was carried out in 2016 shows how poor mental health can impact on performance and productivity if people don't take time off when needed or aren't properly supported at work. Feeling the need to turn up to work when unwell can potentially make someone's condition worse, depending on the individual case. Nearly all of the people with poor mental health said they had 'always' or 'sometimes' gone into work when experiencing stress, anxiety or depression, and the vast majority said it had affected their performance as a result of:

- * taking longer to do tasks (64%)
- * having difficulty making decisions (54%)
- * finding it more difficult juggling a number of tasks (48%)
- * being less patient with customers or clients (48%)
- * putting off challenging work (42%)
- * being more likely to get into conflict with others (37%)
- * finding it difficult to concentrate (85%).

Prevention

Some of the costs associated with poor mental health at work occur because undetected problems are left unchecked and spiral into a crisis. Good communication and people management skills go a long way to preventing stress and poor mental health among employees – often it's about a common-sense approach.

Induction

A good induction programme is important for all new, promoted or redeployed employees, as starting a new role can be a stressful and unsettling experience. A negative first few days in the job, in which people are given insufficient guidance about expectations and processes, can undermine people's confidence and could trigger problems or exacerbate existing symptoms.

Managing People—positive culture

How people are treated and managed on a day-to-day basis is central to their mental well-being and engagement, as well as the level of trust in the employment relationship. The behaviours of line managers will, to a large degree, determine the extent to which employees will go the extra mile in their jobs, are resilient under pressure and remain loyal to their organisation. Good line management can be crucial in supporting wellbeing, spotting early signs of distress and initiating early intervention, while poor line management may exacerbate or even cause mental health issues through an unhelpful approach or behaviour.

Joint research and guidance by the CIPD, IOSH and Affinity Health at Work highlights the core management behaviours needed by line managers to prevent and mitigate the effect of stress at work, as well as to support employee engagement and health and well-being. The guidance highlights five core areas of competence:

- * open, fair and consistent
- * handling conflicts and problems
- * knowledge, clarity and guidance
- * building and sustaining relationships
- * supporting development

Building Resilience

Employers can help employees cope with pressure and adversity in the workplace by focusing on building resilience or coping techniques. Resilience can be defined as the ability to recover or bounce back in the face of adverse conditions, change or pressure. Successful approaches focus on building individual, team and organisational resilience, which are all interconnected. A focus on building resilience can help employees understand how they can manage and withstand pressure more effectively and also ensure that employers are taking steps to identify and prevent stress effectively

Occupational Health Referral/ Medical Advice

Seeking medical advice or making a referral can be done at any point, not just when an employee is currently absent. It may be worth exploring if you identify a change in someone's behaviour or mental health.

Early Intervention—Spotting the signs of stress and poor mental health

No matter how well employees are managed, some people will experience poor mental health in the workplace. Spotting the signs of stress or poor mental health at an early stage means managers can hopefully nip problems in the bud before they escalate into a crisis or sickness absence. The pointers below give ideas of what to look out for.

Symptoms will vary, as each person's experience of poor mental health is different, but there are some potential indicators to look out for. The table below is not exhaustive, but it offers some useful pointers. 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 talk to the person directly.

Physical	Psychological	Behavioural
Fatigue	Anxiety	Increased smoking
Indigestion or stomach upset Headaches	Tearfulness Feeling low	Using drugs Withdrawal
Appetite and weight changes Joint and back pain	Mood changes Indecision	Resigned attitude Irritability, anger or aggression
Changes in sleep patterns	Loss of motivation	Over excitement Restlessness
Visible tension or trembling	Loss of humour	Lateness, leaving early or extended lunches Working far longer hours
Nervous trembling speech	Increased sensitivity	
Chest or throat pain	Distraction or confusion	
Sweating	Difficulty relaxing	Intense or obsessive activity
Constantly feeling cold	Lapses in memory	Repetitive speech or activity
	Irrational thought process	Impaired or inconsistent performance
	Difficulty taking information in	Uncharacteristic errors
	Suicidal thoughts	Risk taking
		Disruptive or anti-social behaviours

NUT 7 Practical Solutions to Poor Mental Health

Natasha Devon published her second blog which focusses on possible solutions to crisis in mental health. Her blog covers some small changes specifically schools and colleges can make which have been found to have a positive impact.

The blog can be read here:

<https://neu.org.uk/blog/seven-practical-solutions-poor-mental-health-schools>

For any further advice please contact your Senior HR Consultant

www.insighthrld.co.uk