Promoting positive mental health in the workplace

**Spot the signs**

Common symptoms could be:
- an increase in unexplained absences or sick leave
- poor performance or timekeeping
- poor decision-making
- lack of energy and uncommunicative or moody behaviour.

Start by having a quiet word. You may discover that something at home is troubling them and you just need to show understanding and patience.

**Focus on what you can control**

Mental health is complex and many of the factors causing mental health problems are out of your control but you can influence:
- workload and work variety
- quality of working relationships
- employee confidence in being able to talk to you about their problems
- bullying
- employee involvement in decision-making.

**Tackle the causes of stress**

HSE have identified six common causes of stress at work. Employees may feel:
- overloaded by demands placed on them
- fed up by the lack of control they have over the work they do
- line managers fail to give them enough support
- they are not sure what their role is at work or what is expected of them
- very anxious and uncertain by the way change is being managed
- relationships at work are not based on trust and good behaviour.

**Make reasonable adjustments**

Under the Equality Act 2010 you may be expected to make reasonable adjustments to help an employee stay in work or get back to work.

**Help employees to cope**

You do not necessarily need to be an expert/counsellor. For example, helping an employee to manage their depression may include:
- specialist medical treatment following diagnosis of the illness
- managing interactions with colleagues and avoiding stressors that may trigger symptoms
- getting line management support/understanding
- working flexibly.

**Keep talking**

If the employee is absent or returning from sickness absence try to:
- keep in touch while they are away
- hold a return to work interview on their first day back
- check on how they are coping within themselves and monitor their behaviour and performance.

**Keep informed about mental health**

Education around mental health issues will help to fight the misconceptions people have about mental illness. Try to keep up-to-date with the latest sources of help, such as occupational health and charities.

www.acas.org.uk/mentalhealth