

# Supporting your staff's mental health

Staff may need additional mental health support during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, particularly if they already have mental health problems.

In some cases staff may need support such as:

- [time off](#)
- [reasonable adjustments](#)

You'll need to be understanding towards the concerns and needs of your staff while they work in new or unexpected ways. For example, working from home or managing childcare while working.

You should also be understanding if staff need to take [time off to look after someone else](#).

When talking about any difficult changes in your workplace, for example [putting staff on 'furlough'](#) (temporary leave), you should deal with matters sensitively. Staff may be feeling anxious or stressed so it's important to communicate in a clear and calm way.

## 2. Supporting your team

You should be approachable, available and encourage team members to talk to you if they're having problems.

Your management style should suit the needs of each person. For example, you could ask team members if they prefer to talk over the phone, through video meetings or by email.

You should keep in regular contact with your team to check how they're coping.

You should check:

- how they're feeling
- how their work is going and if they need support
- if they have any concerns about safety if they're leaving the home to go to work
- if they have the right set up when [working from home](#)

You can use 'Wellness Action Plans' to put steps in place to support your team's mental health. [Find out more about Wellness Action Plans from Mind](#).

You should also make sure your team has realistic targets and clear priorities. Team members should still feel supported and motivated at work.

### Supporting furloughed staff

It's a good idea to ask staff if they'd like to keep in touch while they're on furlough. You should agree how often you'll catch up depending on their needs. Staying in contact with employees can help them feel connected with their workplace. It's also a chance to ask them how they're doing.

## Spotting possible signs of a mental health problem

Not everyone will show obvious signs of a mental health problem and it's important not to make assumptions. But some possible signs at work include:

- appearing tired, anxious or withdrawn
- increase in sickness absence or being late to work
- changes in the standard of their work or focus on tasks
- being less interested in tasks they previously enjoyed
- changes in usual behaviour, mood or how the person behaves with the people they work with

It's harder to spot these signs if employees are working from home, you have minimal contact with them or when many are feeling a heightened level of anxiety and stress. It's important to regularly ask your staff how they're doing and create an environment where they feel able to be open and honest about how they're feeling.

The sooner you become aware that someone you manage is experiencing a mental health problem, the sooner you can provide help and support.

## Talking to someone experiencing a mental health problem

Knowing how to approach and talk to a team member who has a mental health problem may seem difficult.

If you believe a team member may be experiencing a mental health problem, you should:

- arrange a conversation as soon as possible, if appropriate
- make sure you talk to them in private
- be flexible about when and where
- approach the conversation in a positive and supportive way

### **If a team member talks to you about their mental health**

It may be difficult for them to take this step. So it's important you're calm, patient, supportive and reassuring.

When they approach you, you should thank them for opening up to you and give them as much time as they need.

During the conversation, you should:

- listen carefully to what they say
- try to identify what the cause is, for example by keeping questions open ended
- think about ways to help, for example if there's any support they can get at work
- reassure them – let them know you'll help them get the support they need

If either of you need to think about what's been discussed before any decisions are made, you should agree to have some time to think things through.

### **Being clear about confidentiality**

You should reassure the person that you will not share anything they tell you with anyone else without their permission, unless there's a good reason to. If there is, you should be clear about who you'll share it with.

## **Reasonable adjustments for someone with a disability**

If the person's mental health problem is considered a disability under the law, your workplace must consider making [reasonable adjustments](#) to help them carry out their job without being at a disadvantage.

[Find out more about mental health legal rights and responsibilities.](#)

## **Getting support for yourself**

You may find that you need advice and support for your own mental health. For example, you may be under more pressure than usual to support your team and resolve problems.

It may be helpful to talk things through with someone who can support you, for example:

- your own manager
- someone else at work
- through a mental health 'champion' or network at work
- a counsellor, if you can access one through work

If your workplace offers counselling, it'll usually be through a scheme known as an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Related content

[Coronavirus advice](#)

[Tips and videos on mental health during coronavirus](#)

[Blog – Managers have feelings too: managing mental health during the coronaviru...](#)

[Training course - managing employee mental health](#)