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Managing workplace mental health

Employers have a 'duty of care'. This means you must do all you reasonably can to support employees' health, safety and wellbeing. This includes:

- making sure staff can work safely and healthily
- protecting staff from discrimination, for example making sure reasonable adjustments are considered for employees with a disability
- carrying out risk assessments

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, you should do all you reasonably can to encourage positive mental health. For example, it might be helpful to:

- arrange mental health training for managers and staff
- appoint mental health 'champions' who staff can talk to
- promote existing wellbeing support, such as counselling

You should also remind managers to communicate regularly with their team and support them if they need to have sensitive conversations with team members.

[Find out more about mental health and the law](#).

3. Communication during this time

It's important to communicate regularly and openly with staff because the pandemic is changing the way we work and staff need to adapt quickly. Staff may be feeling worried so you should reassure employees and acknowledge their concerns. Making it clear how you plan to support them will build trust and reduce anxiety.

You must tell staff about important workplace updates and let them know you're available if they need support.

To help staff feel reassured, you should:

- communicate openly and share information in a highly visible location, for example on the intranet or by emailing all staff
- 'consult' with staff (ask for and consider their views) so they can give feedback and share concerns
- provide timely information so staff are regularly updated

You should also brief managers so that they can share information with their teams. If staff have concerns about mental health and wellbeing, they may be more likely to talk to their manager.

You should communicate information and decisions in a clear and straightforward way, with empathy. This will help avoid panic and reassure staff.

You should know what resources and support you can offer and signpost them clearly. For example, an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offering staff counselling or 'drop-in' sessions with someone from HR or a third party to talk through any issues.

Assessing mental health in your workplace

You should talk to managers to understand how their teams are doing, which resources are helpful and if they need any more support.

If you have an online channel where staff can share updates, it may be useful to look through it to understand staff's concerns and areas where they need more support.

You could also use wellbeing surveys to understand how staff are feeling at work.

Support available

You may feel overwhelmed trying to manage mental health in your workplace during the pandemic. You should not be expected to be an expert in mental health. But, knowing what support is available can help.

Trade unions and other employee representatives can help you promote positive mental health.

Trade union representatives are usually:

- trained by their union on mental health
- more willing to share concerns than staff may be
- aware of issues that could cause mental health problems
- able to work with you to promote the support and resources available to staff

You can also find support services that can help you improve mental health in your workplace, for example:

- Mindful Employer – workplace mental health training, information and advice
- Remploy – provides a free Access to Work Mental Health Support Service to improve mental wellbeing in the workplace

Acas training on mental health

Our practical mental health training course can help managers:

- recognise signs and symptoms of mental health conditions
- have conversations about mental health with more confidence
- identify and address issues earlier
- support employee wellbeing, both remotely and in the workplace

Our training is currently run remotely.

Book mental health training for managers, or arrange training tailored for your workplace.

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