

Disability awareness

Mental wellbeing in the workplace

So why is it important for us to understand mental health better?

Here are a few reasons:

- ⦿ Mental health affects one in six people in any one year.
- ⦿ The current direct cost of mental health in the UK is currently £33-42 billion. But according to NHS England mental health conditions impose a total economic and social cost of between £74-99 billion annually.
- ⦿ Mental health is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, with more than 91 million days lost each year to mental health problems.
- ⦿ The impact of mental health on life expectancy is more than that of obesity.
- ⦿ Among people under 65, nearly half of all ill health is mental illness.
- ⦿ The UK has one of the highest self-harm rates in Europe: 400 per 100,000 population.
- ⦿ Nine in ten prisoners have a mental health condition.

When we talk about mental health, what we are actually referring to is poor mental health or mental health which is defined as...

“...when someone experiences significant changes in their thinking, feelings or behaviour which affects how the person functions or causes distress to them or to other people. ”

Promoting good mental wellbeing ‘Prevention is better than cure’

There are many ways an organisation can indirectly improve the mental wellbeing of its workforce including:

- ⦿ Mindfulness leaflets in staffroom
- ⦿ Policy of making internal promotion
- ⦿ Comprehensive training resources
- ⦿ Good internal communication systems
- ⦿ Employee Assistance Programme
- ⦿ Mental wellbeing training for managers
- ⦿ Anti-bullying policies
- ⦿ Healthy canteen menu
- ⦿ Discounted health insurance or gym membership
- ⦿ Contact details for external support on intranet.

Leaders and managers in the organisation can help more directly by:

- ⦿ Having an open door policy
- ⦿ Openly discussing mental wellbeing
- ⦿ Leading by example
- ⦿ Having a flexible approach
- ⦿ Regular one to one's with staff
- ⦿ Fair allocation of workload
- ⦿ Dealing quickly with bullying
- ⦿ Consulting people about change
- ⦿ Challenging negative comments about mental health
- ⦿ Trying to make sure deadlines are reasonable
- ⦿ Recognising good performance
- ⦿ Addressing concerns quickly
- ⦿ Open communication with team
- ⦿ Asking ‘how are you?’
- ⦿ Making adjustments to work tasks.

Mental health awareness training for managers can be really helpful in enabling them to spot the early warning signs of mental health issues. It can also give them the knowledge and confidence to be able to have open, productive and helpful conversations with employees and then be able to offer them appropriate support.

Everyone experiencing mental health or poor mental wellbeing will be affected differently and require individualised support.

However below are some basic principles for adapting how you handle some workplace situations:

First meeting

- ⦿ Make a phone call to introduce yourself and explain what will happen at the appointment
- ⦿ Find out how you can make it easier for them to attend an appointment
- ⦿ Find a quiet space or offer a private room
- ⦿ Be aware of potential symptoms they might be experiencing
- ⦿ Find out about current support and medication.

Ongoing support

- ⦿ Look out for signs of distress or symptoms worsening
- ⦿ Be supportive and positive - give loads of praise
- ⦿ Agree plans and goals together
- ⦿ Set small achievable goals and celebrate successes
- ⦿ Offer continuity where possible.

Training and development

- ⦿ Ensure they are ready for group activities
- ⦿ Avoid putting too much pressure on them to answer
- ⦿ Be aware of group dynamics and conflict

- ⦿ Watch out for signs of distress and offer an opt-out
- ⦿ Small group activities or pairs might be better than individual tasks
- ⦿ Offer loads of positive feedback.

Adjustments in the workplace

- ⦿ Be aware of potential triggers that make their condition worse
- ⦿ Minimise workplace change and pressure
- ⦿ Consider if manager and colleagues need to be aware
- ⦿ Offer support with time management/organisation/planning
- ⦿ Develop agreed strategies to use if they become unwell
- ⦿ Link in with specialist/medical support if required
- ⦿ Offer flexible working and allow time off for appointments
- ⦿ Can tasks be reallocated or would a change of role help?
- ⦿ Offer phased return in terms of hours and targets.

If in doubt, ask the individual how you can help!

Contact us:

If you would like further information on how we can help you, please get in touch with us:
t: 0300 456 8113 e: training@remploy.co.uk w: www.remploy.co.uk/training

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