

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.