

## 1. Purpose

This Resource Sheet is intended for any worker who does not have access to an employer's mental health and wellbeing programme, or equivalent.

It provides information about mental health and wellbeing and sources of support.

Sections 1 to 4 are relevant to absolutely everyone.

Section 5 is relevant to people who manage or supervise others. Section 6 is relevant to leaders in businesses.

## 2. Introduction to mental health and wellbeing

Everybody experiences mental health.

When our mental health is good, we can cope with the normal pressures of life. We can work productively and contribute to our community.

There are practical things that we can do to maintain good mental health:

1. Talk about our feelings
2. Keep physically active
3. Eat well
4. Drink alcohol sensibly
5. Keep in touch with people
6. Take a break
7. Do something you are good at
8. Accept who you are
9. Care for others
10. Ask for help with any personal problems

Here are examples of support available in relation to personal problems:

- Debt and legal issues – Citizens Advice Bureau  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)
- Bereavement – Cruse Bereavement Care [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)
- Relationships – Relate [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)
- Drink and drugs – Addaction [www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk) Alcoholics Anonymous [www.alcoholics-anonymous.co.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.co.uk) Narcotics Anonymous [www.ukna.org](http://www.ukna.org)
- Gambling – Gamcare [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk) Gamblers Anonymous [www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk)
- Sexuality – Lesbian and Gay Foundation [www.lgf.org.uk](http://www.lgf.org.uk)
- Post-natal depression – PANDAS foundation  
[www.pandasfoundation.org.uk](http://www.pandasfoundation.org.uk)
- Other - <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mental-health-helplines.aspx>

Everyone feels fear, anger, anxiety, worry and sadness. Sometimes these emotions persist until we feel helpless, overwhelmed or out of control.

We might have difficulty sleeping. Our physical condition or behaviours might change. Symptoms might have a negative impact on day to day life. When this happens, we might be experiencing mental ill health.

Changes in behaviour that can indicate mental ill health:

Late / lack of attendance

Loss of sense of humour

Lack of concentration

Problems coping

Withdrawal

Exaggerated humour

Seeking reassurance

Confusion / indecision

As soon as we recognise we might have a problem, we can begin the road to recovery.

There are places that we can go for help:

- A sympathetic friend or family member
- Advice on-line
  - Mind [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
  - Mental Health Foundation [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)
  - Samaritans [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
  - Sane [www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)
  - *Go direct to reputable advice (above) – do not just “google” as the information you find might be inaccurate and distressing*
- Talking to a helpline run by a charity
  - Samaritans – tel: 116 123 – free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
  - One of the many listed at <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mental-health-helplines.aspx>
- Advice from a healthcare professional
  - GP (general practitioner)
  - An NHS walk-in centre
  - *N.B. Avoid hospital accident & emergency departments wherever possible*
- Any employee assistance programme provided by your employer

- Mental ill health is the UK’s biggest cause of workplace absence
- Suicide is the leading cause of death of men between 20 and 45 years old
- Incidents of eating disorders and self-harm are increasing

Someone suffering mental ill health is advised to talk to their employer about their situation – and particularly if the cause might be related to work (e.g. bullying, heavy workload). This can be difficult. The employer must not be judgemental. They should try to empathise and consider how to support the employee in getting better.

Mental ill health is not something to be ashamed of. It is an issue that affects the majority - three quarters of employees suffer symptoms of mental ill health at some time.

No one should be embarrassed about having mental ill health. Nor should they be stigmatised because of it.

### 3. Supporting the mental health of others

Sometimes it's someone else who spots the symptoms of mental ill health before the sufferer recognises them.

If you are that someone, consider finding a safe place and starting a conversation.

Use a phrase to start a conversation, for example:

"Hello – my name is... what's yours?"  
"How are you?"  
"Is there anything I can do to help?"  
"You seem a little upset, can I help at all?"

Then listen. Most people will appreciate having the opportunity to talk. Don't be judgemental. Avoid clichés (e.g. "Chin up", "It'll all be alright in the end")

If you have specialist training in mental health issues and think it appropriate to continue the conversation:

- Offer to break out to a quiet/ private space
- Outline your role so that you can sign-post them to further support – but you won't be able to offer any specific guidance or solutions to their concerns
- Discuss the terms of confidentiality of your conversation
- Listen empathetically but try not to use your personal experiences to help the person. Avoid terms like "It'll be OK"
- Use positive responses to block the conversation evolving into a counselling / coaching session
  - "I can see how much this upsets you..."
  - "I realise this is a difficult situation for you..."
  - "Have you considered speaking to your line manager...?"
  - "Have you considered contacting our employee assistance provider?" - if your company has such a provider

- “There is lots of information on what you have described to me on our health and wellbeing portal – have you considered looking there...?” - if your company has such a portal

Not everyone will want to talk to you. If someone doesn't, accept how they feel. You might want to say something along the lines of:

“I understand, but if you do need to talk to anyone about where you might get support, I'm based... (work location)...”

If possible, speak to a colleague who works close to the person. Suggest that they maintain a watchful eye and offer the person another chance to talk later.

If you encounter a colleague who is so distressed that they could be a danger to themselves, other people or the business you should consider safeguarding them. You are not taking responsibility for resolving the issue but you can seek help.

You can safeguard a person by:

- Telling their line manager (or another person of responsibility)
- Calling the police
- Calling the ambulance service
- Calling your building security and notify facilities
- Advising the person to contact their GP (doctor)

#### **4. Mental ill health versus mental conditions**

Mental ill health is different to a mental condition – but the two are inter-related. For example:

- Stress causes mental ill health – but, if untreated, it could predispose a person to develop a mental health condition.
- A person with a mental health condition can have good mental health at some times and mental ill health at others. Mental health conditions almost certainly require medical support to recover from.

A person should always medical advice on the diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions.

Examples of mental health conditions include:

- Psychosis
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Clinical depression
- Post-natal depression
- Certain forms of self-harm
- Dementia
- Severe phobia
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

Where the mental health condition is long-term – or likely to be long-term (12 months or more) - then it can become a disability. Under the Equality Act 2010, employers are required to make “reasonable adjustments” so that a person with a disability can continue working.

## **5. Tips for Managers and supervisors**

The ways you speak and behave towards others has a direct impact on the wellbeing of your workers. Here are some tips on how you can improve your performance and your impact on others.

Reflect on how your behaviours and language impact on the people working for and around you. Work to professionalise them if you need to.

Set time aside regularly (e.g. monthly) for one-to-ones with each member of your team.

Take the time to get know about your team outside of work, for example, understanding what their home circumstances are. You will be better able to pick up on character changes that might indicate that something is wrong. Some people might be cautious about sharing information about their private life (e.g. if they are gay or lesbian) for fear of bullying or discrimination.

Know the limits of your team – when to push harder and when to give a bit more room

Plan carefully. If demands are increased on a team or supply chains then they are likely to have an impact on people. A late change in design, for example, might require labour agency staff or workers with a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier contractor to work up to 70 hour weeks and this can cause mental (and physical) ill health.

Not everyone with drug or alcohol problems is identified through workplace testing. Support your people to address any potential drug or alcohol issues before they cause ill health. The relationship between mental ill health and alcohol or drug abuse is a strong one; 37% of alcoholics have a mental illness, as do 53 % of drug addicts.

You can better understand the stigma that can be associated with mental ill health by viewing the "Time to Change" video at <https://www.youtube.com/user/ttcnow2008>

Manage behaviours in your team so that stigma around mental ill health is reduced or eliminated. For example, apply the Mental Health Foundation's "Relationships at work: our top tips for managers" (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/relationships-work-our-top-tips-managers>); give time, be present, listen and be heard, recognise [and address] unhealthy relationships.

Review and use other useful publications, for example:

- ACAS "Promoting positive mental health at work"  
<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1900>
- Mental Health Foundation publications  
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications> e.g.  
[https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/CR00233\\_Ebook\\_dualbranded\\_interactive.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/CR00233_Ebook_dualbranded_interactive.pdf)

## 6. Suggestions to leaders

Work to eliminate bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination in your workplace. Treat everyone fairly and in accordance with their needs. Establish professional standards of language and behaviour (e.g. reduce swearing and anger).

Take a strategic approach to protecting the mental health and well-being of your workers. For example, use Business in the Community's "Mental

Health Toolkit" <http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/mental-health-work-report-2016>

Take a mental health first aid course <http://mhfaengland.org/> and suggest that your managers do so.

Become involved in the Mental Health Foundation's "tea and talk" campaign <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-involved/tea-and-talk>

**Network Rail is inviting external companies to become involved in their Mental Health Champions network. To find out more, please email [Sharon.stevens@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:Sharon.stevens@networkrail.co.uk)**

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