

A Basic Managers Guide: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace

STRAIGHTFORWARD HR ADVICE AND SUPPORT



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Why staff wellbeing in the workplace is so important

More and more employers are recognising the invaluable role that managers play when it comes to tackling mental wellbeing today.

According to Mind, one in four people in the United Kingdom will experience a mental health problem each year. Not only this, but one in six workers will experience depression, anxiety, or stress at any one time within the workplace.

It is important that employers put steps in place to deal with mental health problems in the workplace. After all, the wellbeing of your staff members has a tremendous impact on your performance and productivity levels.

One of the key steps that employers need to take is encouraging managers to play a critical role by having conversations with staff members about any issues they are experiencing and helping them to resolve and overcome these obstacles.

In this guide, employers will be provided with advice on how managers can be trained to tackle and advise on mental wellbeing topics within the workplace. Read on to discover everything you need to know.

What Methods can Managers use to Combat Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace?

So, first let's take a look at some of the different steps that can be taken to help managers enhance mental wellbeing in the workplace...

Develop a Culture of Openness and Awareness

When it comes to managing stress and other mental health issues in the work environment, the biggest barrier is the reluctance that employees have to be open.

In fact, according to the public health campaign *Time to Change*, 67% of people with mental health issues do not tell the person that they work for because they are worried about how they will react.

If your workforce does not feel comfortable to disclose their issues, they will only come to light later on when they have become more severe.

This is why it is important to focus on creating a culture of openness when it comes to wellbeing. You have the power to reduce stigma if you have a work environment that is more aware of mental health issues. Your employees will feel supported, which will encourage them to speak up when they need to.

There are a number of different ways that your managers can foster communication. This includes the following:

- Upskill managers so that they can offer support around mental wellbeing.
- Support people's independence. Employees want to feel in control of their work and so managers can enable them to feel this way by giving them trust in their work.
- Encourage 'safe failure' by giving workers the chance to try new things without there being a significant and detrimental impact on the business if something were to go wrong. This gives people

the chance to try new ideas and learn from both their successes and their failures.

- Budget resources and time for your managers' development and education.
- Praise people's efforts.
- Ensure that there is a structured way for people to share their thoughts, observations, and feelings.
- Spend time with staff members at all levels, ensuring that you lead by example by demonstrating good communication skills and discussing your own wellbeing.

If an employee does open lines of communication when it comes to their own mental health, it is important that managers keep this line of communication open.

Employees are often scared to talk about a problem again at a later date because they are worried about saying or doing the wrong thing.

This is why you need to encourage managers to keep these communication lines open.

Offer Managers Mental Health Training

Another important step that should be taken when it comes to helping managers address mental wellbeing in the workplace is by introducing training programmes.

A good example of this is a four-hour training programme that is known as RESPECT. This training programme combines communication and mental health training.

It focuses on three key areas:

- The key features and impacts of mental health issues that are common in the work environment

- The responsibilities and roles of senior staff members when it comes to employee mental health
- The development of effective skills for communicating with staff members about mental health matters

In regard to communicating with employees, the RESPECT principles come into play. These are as follows:

- Regular communication is a must
- The earlier the better
- Supportive and empathetic contact
- Practical assistance, not psychotherapy
- Encourage people to seek help
- Consider options for returning to work
- Tell them that the door is always open and arrange your next contact

A test was run on 128 managers who had taken the RESPECT course. The first measurement of success was to do a sickness absence comparison, comparing the results of managers six months before and after the intervention.

The secondary measure of success was to take a look at the manager and their knowledge. The test was highly successful. It showed that managers had much more knowledge about mental health after taking the course.

Moreover, when it comes to work-related sickness absence management, this slightly reduced in the group for the managers that had taken the course, while it increased slightly for the other group.

There are lots of different training courses available today for managers to take to broaden their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing, so it's really important to research this thoroughly to find a

training programme and training provider that fit your organisation's needs.

Final Words

To conclude, employers need to ensure their managers understand the importance of addressing mental health issues as early as possible.

Employee wellbeing is a key factor in business performance and culture. Despite this, current management levels across the UK are under prepared for such issues.

According to research conducted by the Business in the Community Charity (BITC), only 22 per cent of managers have been trained in mental health despite the fact that 76 per cent of line managers believe that employee wellbeing is their responsibility.

This shows that more needs to be done to ensure that managers are playing a critical role in helping their team members to overcome mental health challenges and enhance mental wellbeing in the longer term.

Do you need mental wellbeing support in the workplace?

Contact us with the details overleaf

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