

STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1.** Mental health problems affect one in four people at some point in their life and account for over 30% of sickness absence in the NHS. Mental health problems cover a range of conditions such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, obsessive compulsive disorder, phobias, bipolar disorder (manic depression), schizophrenia, personality disorders and psychosis.
- 1.2.** This organisation recognises the importance of supporting staff in relation to their mental wellbeing. Mental health can fluctuate in the same way that physical health does and there may be times when it is better than others. Mental health problems should be supported in the same, honest and consistent way as physical health.
- 1.3.** Managers have an important role to play in supporting staff that are experiencing mental health problems. This involves supporting employees in the workplace and supporting them back to work after a period of absence.
- 1.4.** This guidance (based on NHS Employers guidance) aims to:
 - Support managers to create a workplace environment that promotes the mental wellbeing of all employees
 - Increase awareness of mental health and promote open conversations
 - Provide guidance for managers to support staff experiencing mental health problems, and recognise signs in their staff
 - Provide guidance for managers to support staff returning to work following a period of absence
- 1.5.** Most importantly we must encourage an environment in which people are comfortable about speaking out with regards to mental health and to be able to ask for help.

2.0. CREATING A WORKPLACE THAT PROMOTES MENTAL WELLBEING

- 2.1.** Everyone's experience of mental health is different and can change at different times. When employees experience poor mental health they find it difficult to concentrate, juggle work demands and complete complex tasks. Work demands can be a direct cause of/or a trigger of poor mental health, though the original cause is often mixed with other factors.
- 2.2.** As a manager it is important to get to know your team and understand what employees need and when. By increasing the awareness of mental health and creating an environment which encourages open conversations staff will have a better understanding of how they will be supported and know how to address any issues.

3.0. WELLBEING CONVERSATIONS

3.1. The purpose of a Wellbeing Conversation is to:

- Ensure line managers have a full understanding of the current wellbeing of their staff
- Maximise capability through the effective co-ordination of existing wellbeing support
- Capture emerging wellbeing trends in order, where appropriate, to reallocate existing wellbeing resources or inform future resource bids
- Share best practice

3.2. It is important for managers to be seen as approachable and having time for their staff. Regular catch ups with staff are an opportunity to start a conversation about mental health and wellbeing and for it to be seen as a normal part of line management. Managers should listen actively and carefully regarding staff's wellbeing, and encourage employees to talk openly. Supervision should be followed up in writing, especially any agreed actions or support.

3.3. Confidentiality - following a discussion the manager may need advice from Human Resources or Occupational Health. It is therefore essential that managers are explicit with staff members about confidentiality, and its limits, and agree what can be shared. If, however the individual is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, the safety of the individual concerned and those around them is paramount and in these circumstances, confidentiality can be breached and this should be explained to the individual.

3.4. If a member of your team feels unable to raise a matter with you directly, please advise them to contact an alternative senior manager or seek guidance from a member of Human Resources.

3.5. Based on Mind/CIPD guidance, the following questions are examples of phrases that managers might find useful in having wellbeing conversations:

- How are you doing at the moment?
- You seem a bit down/upset/under pressure/frustrated/angry, is everything okay?
- I've noticed you've been arriving late recently and I wondered if you're okay?
- I've noticed the reports are late when they're usually on time, is everything okay?
- Is there anything I can do to help?
- What would you like to happen? How?
- What support do you think might help?
- Have you spoken to your GP or looked for help anywhere else?

4.0. SUPPORTING STAFF EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM

The following signs may mean the person may require support:

- Reduction in performance at work
- Unexplained lateness or absences
- Signs of self-harm
- Behaving recklessly

- Changes in general mood i.e. more irritable, tearful, erratic
- Sleep disturbance and the individual seems more tired than usual
- Physical symptoms such as taking less care of appearance
- Hyperarousal
- Avoidance

4.1. If an employee discloses a mental health problem a manager should:

- Avoid making assumptions
- Confirm confidentiality
- Encourage employee to talk
- Respond flexibly
- If appropriate, seek further advice.

4.2. Managers and their member of staff may find it useful to put in place a Wellness Action Plan (WAP) which outlines:

- The signs and symptoms of the mental health problem
- Possible triggers and support that could be offered
- Emergency contact in event of a crisis

See MIND website for further details and to download a guide for managers or employees:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download/>

5.0. MAKING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

5.1. When managers are aware of health or disability information about an individual, they have a legal duty to consider making reasonable adjustments as well as a general duty of care and responsibility for employee health and preventing personal injury.

5.2. Making reasonable adjustments can often be straightforward. This could include:

- Allowing an employee time off to attend medical appointments
- Modifying a job description to take away tasks that cause particular difficulty
- Offering flexibility in working hours/patterns, i.e. reduced hours or working from home
- Transfer of workplace
- Social or cognitive support
- Training
- Providing support to overcome barriers to returning to the workplace

Human Resources and Occupational Health advice should be sought when considering reasonable adjustments. Information and advice on workplace adjustments as well as some practical examples can be found in the Disability & Reasonable Adjustments Guidelines and Directory of impairments available on StaffNet.

6.0. KEEPING IN CONTACT

- 6.1.** If a member of staff needs to take time off due to a mental health problem, it is important the line manager keeps in contact with them while they are absent. Positive and regular contact is crucial and can help ensure the employee feels supported and valued as well as helping to avoid feelings of isolation.
- 6.2.** Weekly contact is recommended for employees who are likely to be off for a number of weeks. Individual circumstances will vary and the frequency of contact should be discussed and agreed with the employee so they know how they will continue to be supported. Managers may wish to discuss with the member of staff how much information they would like shared with colleagues about the reason for their absence.

7.0. HELP IN A CRISIS

- 7.1.** If an employee is considered to be a serious risk of self-harm the manager should take the following steps immediately:
- If self-harm seems imminent, managers should make sure the staff member is not left alone. If possible, make sure the person is in a private, secure place until professional help arrives
 - Managers should encourage the staff member to talk but should not promise to keep the conversation confidential
 - If appropriate, the manager should take the employee to the Accident and Emergency Department. If a staff member refuses professional help and insists on leaving the premises contact should be made with the emergency services on 999.
 - Once the employee is under the care of a professional, the manager should liaise with a senior manager and/or follow up with Human Resources and Occupational Health as appropriate

8.0. THERAPEUTIC RETURN, PHASED RETURN AND RETURN TO WORK PLANS

- 8.1.** Managers should explore the possibility of supporting their staff with a therapeutic return, a phased return or a return to work plan.
- 8.2.** Therapeutic return allows the member of staff to make links with the workplace prior to a full return to work. This may include steps like coming into the workplace for a meeting with their line manager or colleagues to have an informal catch up, attending team meetings and/or time outs. This practice is similar to KIT days when returning to work following maternity leave.

8.3. Phased return allows the member of staff to gradually return back to the workplace over an agreed period of time while a return to work plan is agreed between the line manager, the member of staff, Human Resources and Occupational Health in order to support the member of staff back in to the workplace.

9.0. SELF.CARE FOR EMPLOYEES

9.1. Managers should support and encourage all employees to look after their own mental wellbeing. The Trust offers a range of resources with full details available on StaffNet, for example:

- Wellbeing Wednesdays offer activities to staff which are specifically designed to help with staff wellbeing
- Staff Counselling Service is available to all staff
- Schwartz rounds are available for staff to attend and can be requested for specific departments
- Support is available for staff from the Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care service
- Staff can raise concerns with the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians
- Training for staff regarding emotional resilience

10.0. SIGNPOSTING TO OTHER RESOURCES

- **The Samaritans** offer confidential listening services and are trained in dealing with a wide range of concerns. Free phone number 116 123, email: jo@samaritans.org or visit: www.samaritans.org
- **MIND** is the mental health charity, helping people living with mental health problems, or those who are supporting someone who is. The helpline is 0300 123 3393 or visit: www.mind.org.uk
- **Rethink** is a charity which offers support and advice for people affected by mental illness. The helpline is 0300 5000 927 or visit: www.rethink.org
- **SANE** mental health is a national out of hours mental health helpline open from 4.30pm to 10.30pm. Saneline is 0300 304 7000 or visit: www.sane.org.uk
- **Time to Talk** offers a range of NHS therapy treatments in West Sussex to help support people who are struggling. For the nearest phone number to your location, visit the Time to Talk page on: www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk
- **Public Health England** have produced a toolkit for employers which is supported by NSPA (The National Suicide Prevention Alliance) called "reducing the risk of suicide: a toolkit for employers" available at www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/suicide-prevention-toolkit/

- **NHS Employers** (www.nhsemployers.org) have worked with MIND, the mental health charity, to produce a toolkit for employers and managers to support mental health at work.

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