



# Supporting Healthy Minds

## Managers guide

Recognising and managing Mental Health  
and Wellbeing

## Introduction

Work is a huge part of our lives so it's vital that while we're working, we're happy and healthy.

When we think about the phrase 'mental health', we often think about mental health *problems*. We think of symptoms like low mood and conditions such as depression or anxiety. In fact, everyone has mental health. You and your colleagues will have times when your mental health is good – and times when it is less good. Just like physical health.

As a manager, you have a really important role in supporting colleagues' wellbeing and promoting good mental health in the workplace.

# 1/2

Only half of people who struggle with mental health issues speak to their manager about it.

## Supporting team members

As a people manager, you can improve working practices, encourage your team to speak openly and reassure them that you will offer support.

**Here are just some of the reasons why it's important to think about your colleagues' mental health:**

- Work can cause mental health problems or make mental health problems worse. Issues like bullying, uncertainty, lack of control and a demanding role are all linked to the development of common mental health problems
- Positive work and line management can help people with mental health problems, providing identity, income and purpose

**It's good for everyone else too:**

- Colleagues who have high levels of wellbeing are likely to be more creative, loyal and productive
- Stigma is reduced when people can talk openly about mental health. This leads to more understanding and a greater likelihood people will seek support earlier

**It's good for business. If colleagues aren't given the right support, the costs can mount up:**

- Mental health problems are the leading cause of long-term sickness absence
- Increased absence and reduced productivity can see workloads grow for other colleagues, which can worsen some of the root causes of poor mental health

**And it helps you as a manager:**

- It's much easier to support colleagues at an earlier stage, rather than wait until they reach crisis point
- Effectively supporting colleagues with mental health problems means you can employ, retain and get the best from them

## Heads up

Stigma is reduced when people can talk openly about mental health.

This leads to more understanding and a greater likelihood that people will seek support earlier.

## Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety is a feeling of unease. We all get anxious when faced with stressful situations, and it's normal to feel anxious when you face something difficult or dangerous.

Anxiety becomes a mental health problem if it has lasted a long time and it's severe (out of proportion with the situation), and interferes with someone's everyday activities. For example causing severe distress, panic attacks, or causing someone to start avoiding situations which create anxiety.

## Depression

Everyone has ups and downs. It's common for people to say that they're 'depressed' when they're feeling down. Depression is a low mood which is interfering with someone's life and doesn't go away after a couple of weeks, or comes back over and over again for a few days at a time.

# 1 in 6

people will experience a common mental health problem at any one time.

## Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia affects mood, thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. It doesn't mean someone has a 'split personality' or that they are likely to be dangerous or violent.

Symptoms include:

- Feeling disconnected from emotions
- Wanting to avoid people
- Hallucinations, such as hearing voices or seeing things others don't
- Delusions (strong beliefs that others don't share)
- Disorganised thinking and speech
- Not wanting to look after yourself

This means that some people think schizophrenia may not be one condition but actually different, overlapping conditions.

## Personality disorders

If someone has a personality disorder, certain ways that they think, feel and behave have a significant and negative impact on different aspects of their daily life. These problems continue for a long time and are not solely caused by a substance or medical condition, such as a head injury.

Someone might have particular patterns of thoughts, feelings or beliefs that are difficult to change, and emotions which are frightening and overwhelming.

**Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is an anxiety disorder which includes obsessions and compulsions (or in some cases just obsessions):

- Obsessions are intrusive and unwelcome images, urges, thoughts or doubts that repeatedly appear in your mind
- Compulsions are activities you feel you have to do to reduce the discomfort caused by the obsessive thoughts, to prevent them becoming distressing and unmanageable

Although many people experience minor obsessions (such as worrying about leaving the gas on, or if the door is locked) and compulsions (such as avoiding the cracks in the pavement), these don't significantly interfere with daily life, or are short-lived.

# 9 in 10

people have experienced a mental health challenge ourselves, or known someone in that situation

## Heads up

By better understanding mental health conditions, you'll be more informed and it'll be easier to connect with those affected.

**Bipolar disorder**

The term bipolar refers to the way someone with the condition's mood can change between two very different states – mania and depression. In the past, people used to refer to bipolar disorder as manic depression. You might still hear people use this older term today.

But both terms can lead to misunderstanding. Mood episodes can range from severe depression to mania, and anything in between. Sometimes episodes may feel intense and other times someone may feel stable. And someone may never experience certain mood episodes. For example, not everyone with bipolar disorder will experience mania.

## What to look out for

Everyone's experience of mental health is different and can change at different times. As a manager, it's important to get to know your team and understand what they need and when.

Understanding some of the signs of poor mental health doesn't mean you should make assumptions about what mental health problems your colleagues may have.

Instead, use these signs as a way of noticing when you should check in and start a conversation about how your team member is coping right now.

### Some early signs might be:

- Poor concentration
- Being easily distracted
- Worrying more
- Finding it hard to make decisions
- Low mood
- Feeling overwhelmed by things
- Tiredness and lack of energy
- Talking less and avoiding social activities
- Talking more or talking very fast, jumping between topics and ideas
- Finding it difficult to control your emotions
- Drinking more
- Irritability and short temper
- Aggression

## Heads up

When you recognise signs of poor mental health, check in and start a conversation about how your colleague is coping right now.

## 1 in 5

Mental ill health is now the primary cause of long-term sickness absence for one in five UK organisations.

## How to help your colleagues

If you're a people manager, you play an important role in supporting your team's mental health and wellbeing. But it can be hard to know where to start. The suggestions in this section should help.

### **Look after your own mental health**

As a manager, your focus is on supporting your team in the workplace – but remember your own wellbeing is just as important. You have a duty to yourself to look after your own mental health at work. This doesn't mean you can always avoid problems entirely, but we still all need to look after our mental health in the same way that we look after our physical health.

### **Familiarise yourself with the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy**

Make sure you have read and understood the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy, and the supporting documentation. Familiarise yourself with where to find our Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs). Make sure your team also understand where to find this information, what's included and what will happen if they ask for support.

### **Make sure you have a good knowledge of common mental health problems and signs of poor mental health**

Get to know your team so that you can notice any changes in their behaviour. Make sure you're prepared to have a conversation about their mental health.

Be aware that mental health problems affect different people in different ways. You may have to adapt your approach to suit different individuals. If you feel you need more support you can always speak to a Mental Health First Aider.

### **Show colleagues that their wellbeing matters to you**

Encourage your team to work sensible hours, take full lunch breaks and holidays. Looking after their mental health is just as important as their physical health. This will lead to a more productive team in the long term.

# x7

Employees absent due to mental ill health are seven times more likely to have further absences than those with physical health-related sick leave.

# Heads up

Looking after your team's mental health is just as important as their physical health, and leads to a more productive team in the long term.

### **Make sure you're available**

Prioritise regular one-to-ones and catch ups with your team. Make sure you use this time to check how they are and talk through any difficulties at home or work. Knowing your team's 'normal' outlook and activities will give you a frame of reference to spot changes in these early. This will make conversations easier if problems do arise.

### **Keep asking questions and encourage open conversations**

It might help to add wellbeing as a standing item on your agenda at team meetings. Give colleagues an opportunity to talk about how they have been doing and anything that might be affecting their wellbeing.

**71%**

of people still consider mental health to be a taboo subject in the workplace.

### **Praise colleagues and show you appreciate their efforts**

Colleagues who don't feel properly rewarded for their effort are more at risk of common mental health problems and increased stress. It's also important to distribute praise fairly and authentically, while making sure that you avoid favouritism within the team.

### **Help your colleagues prioritise their workloads and feel confident to work effectively**

While it may not be possible to offer colleagues complete control over their workload and hours, you can still think together about areas where they could make their own decisions and manage their own time.

Make sure that your team are trained to do their jobs. Look for development opportunities and make yourself available to offer support and suggestions.



## Conversation tips and advice

Something as simple as **'How are you?'** is a good place to begin. Choose honest and open questions, rather than avoiding the issue completely or referring to it indirectly. This is especially useful if there's a particular issue to address, such as underperformance or absence.

### Examples for starting the conversation:

- You seem a bit down lately. Is everything OK?
- I've noticed you've been late with a few pieces of work recently. I wanted to check whether everything is OK and if there is anything I can do to help?
- I saw you were quite upset yesterday [when you were talking to...], [on the phone]. Is everything OK?
- I've noticed that you've had more days off than usual recently – I just wanted to check in to make sure everything was ok and whether there was anything I could do to help?

### Keeping the conversation going:

The way you listen and respond could affect how much your colleague tells you and how comfortable they feel about further disclosure. These tips could help.

- Ask simple, open questions – let them explain in their own words. Give them time and be prepared for some silences
- Don't interrupt or impose your opinions or ideas
- Show empathy and understanding. Don't make assumptions about what they're experiencing or try and guess how it will affect their work

- Remember that lots of people are still able to work effectively, despite managing a mental health problem
- It's OK to admit that you don't know much about a condition or diagnosis, and it's important to remember that each person's experience of mental health conditions will be different. Ask questions about how it affects them and what they think the implications are, if any, for their work

### Example phrases and questions

- I'm really sorry to hear that things have been so hard
- It sounds like you've been having a difficult time lately
- I'm really pleased you've chosen to speak to me about this
- How do you feel this has been affecting your work?
- Is there anything you do at the moment that helps you manage how you feel / your condition?
- Have you asked anyone for support or talked to anyone else about this?
- What kind of support do you think might help?
- What would you like to happen now?

## What if a colleague becomes upset?

If your colleague is very upset, they might prefer to continue the discussion another time. Check what they need and whether they would like to take a break before going back to work.

- Would you like to talk about how we can help you now, or would you prefer to talk more another time?
- Are you feeling OK to return to work, or would it help to have a break and a walk or a cup of tea? Would it help to ask someone to go with you?

## Heads up

The thought of talking to a colleague about their mental health might feel daunting, especially if you are worried about saying the wrong thing.

These useful prompts will hopefully help you feel confident when approaching the conversation.

## Outlining support options

You should check how aware your colleague is of the various support options offered by Marshalls. Make sure your own knowledge is up to date too.

- Have you had a look at our Mental Health and Wellbeing policy? Would it help to talk it through so you can understand how we can help you?
- Have you been in touch with our Employee Assistance Programme - CiC?
- It's common to feel like you have to handle things on your own – but it's always OK to seek help. Have you spoken to your GP about how you are feeling?

## Where to signpost to:

We have Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) based across the business. You'll find their contact details on Marshalls NOW through our [Wellbeing Centre](#), or under the Wellbeing menu option.

Our MHFAs are available as a point of contact if you, or someone you are concerned about, are experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. They can give you initial support and signpost you to appropriate help if required.

You can get in touch with **any** of our MHFAs for help and information, no matter what work you do or where you're based.

Alternatively you can contact our Employee Assistance Programme, run for us by CiC.

The Counselling in Companies (CiC) employee assistance programme is designed to offer employees, and their immediate family members, practical information and advice – linking to face-to-face counselling where necessary.



The support available from CiC isn't just limited to mental health. Issues that they can help you or your team with include:

- Marital issues and relationships
- Work issues, such as performance, coping with change, bullying, harassment and managing pressure
- Stress
- Anxiety and depression
- Addictive behaviour
- Bereavement
- Psychological / emotional issues
- Health
- Redundancy

## How to contact CiC

- Call on 08000 935 819 – the confidential Freephone number is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- Email [assist@cic-eap.co.uk](mailto:assist@cic-eap.co.uk)
- Visit [www.well-online.co.uk](http://www.well-online.co.uk) for further useful information and helpful guides (**username:** mllogin; **password:** wellbeing)

Remember, CiC offers a completely confidential service. Marshalls won't know who has called, or the nature of your call.

## CiC Managerial Advice Line

CiC also provide a dedicated Managerial Advice Line for confidential day-to-day support and guidance.

This line is a resource for managers and supervisors to get support with queries and issues relating to their team members. The service is available Monday to Friday 8am to 9pm, by calling 0800 085 3805.

The Managerial Advice Line should not be seen or used as a substitute for appropriate face-to-face discussions with employees. It is also not a substitute for proper discussion or referral to a member of the Marshalls HR Team.