

WELLBEING

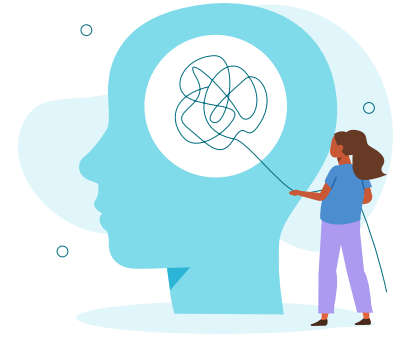
Your mental health toolkit

Top tips for managers

All you need to know to manage mental health
This guide is to help you as line manager create a healthy culture and support any employees who may be experiencing mental health challenges.



Discover more at healthshield.co.uk



Inside this guide

Why is this important?

Mental health challenges can affect anyone. Creating a supportive culture helps employees thrive, enhancing productivity and reducing absence.

What is mental health?

This is a broad area. We have included summary information on mental health, mental illness, myths and facts.

What is the manager's role?

Be supportive, as for any other health condition. Raise awareness, reduce stress and stigma, keep in touch, spot signs and symptoms, act on concerns and signpost to support. Managers do not need to be the expert.

What are the signs and symptoms?

There are several signs of poor mental health to look out for. Change from the normal for that individual is an important marker.

How do I create healthy workplace culture?

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are a great template to follow: Connect, Be Active, Learn, Give, Take Notice.

How do I support a team member with mental health challenges?

Follow our step-by-step process to help you work through any issues. Lay the groundwork, prepare, talk, set next steps and keep in touch.

Where can I find more help?

Signposting links for you and your team

Need some help?

If you're ever unsure about anything, don't worry, we're always around to help. Just pop over to www.healthshield.co.uk/contact-us/individual/ for all the ways you can reach us or simply give us a ring at 01270 588555. We're available from 9am to 5pm on weekdays.

**Remember, we're not just a health plan, we're your health friends.
So, let us look out for you.**

What is mental health?

Mental health challenges are really common and they can affect us all. Creating a workplace culture which supports good mental health brings loads of benefits for employees and employers, whilst businesses who do not address this area can see some major challenges.

Why supporting mental health is important

- ✓ **It's the right thing to do.** Employers have a duty of care to look after their people, and at Health Shield we want to help you go beyond this to keep employees in the best of health.
- ✓ **Reduced absence.** Mental health challenges are always one of the top causes of short- and long-term absence in the UK and beyond. The cost of mental ill health is around £56 billion each year with absence a big part of this bill.
- ✓ **Reduced presenteeism.** Presenteeism is when an employee is unwell, but still comes to work. This causes more problems than absence, because it might go unnoticed, productivity and morale is affected and it may lead to longer absence in future.
- ✓ **Improved performance.** Addressing mental health issues at work can increase productivity by up to 12%.
- ✓ **There is a strong business case.** Deloitte studies have shown return on investment for mental health support is around £5 for every £1 spent.
- ✓ **Enhances reputation.** There is an expectation that good employers should be supporting the wellbeing of their people. We want to help you lead the way.
- ✓ **Reduces turnover.** If employees are not well supported with mental health this can lead to long term absence and increase turnover. The cost of employees leaving roles due to mental health have risen by 150% in recent years to over £22billion.
- ✓ **Increases engagement.** Good mental health support shows people they are valued which means they are more likely to give back to the organisation.



Mental health myths and facts

Myths

Myth: Mental health and physical health are separate

The two are really closely linked and one thing affects the other

Myth: You can't see mental health

There are often signs and symptoms to look out for, which we have listed later in the guide.

Myth: Mental health problems are rare

1 in 4 people will be affected by a mental health problem in any given year. 1 in 6 people are experiencing poor mental health this week.

Myth: Mental health means mental illness

Mental health is not a bad thing – we all have mental health, all the time. It is our state of mind and does not mean mental illness

Facts

Mental health is not fixed. It can and will change.

See our stages of mental health section on the next page

Depression is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide.

This stat from the World Health Organisation is true and again shows how common mental ill-health can be.

There is still mental health stigma

True, unfortunately. It is important to talk about mental health, be open, supportive and non-judgemental.

We have to make an effort to maintain good mental health

Just like with physical health, we cannot take good mental health for granted. It is important to do something everyday to maintain good mental health. Do things you enjoy, exercise, eat well, get enough sleep and connect with others.



Stages of mental health

Mental health is not fixed and can change between these stages.



Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Unwell
Normal changes in mood	Change from normal that you or others notice	How you feel is causing problems	Unable to keep going as normal
Coping well with stress	Change last longer than a few days or recurs	Feelings have lasted several weeks or more	Feelings are impacting everything – behaviour, relationships, work, activities
Sense of humour	Irritable	Having thoughts or feeling that are hard to cope with	May experience:
Consistent performance	Sad or low	Struggling with normal tasks	anxious, panic attacks, depressed, angry and aggressive, numb, fatigue
Keeping active	Nervous	Deep sadness, hopeless, worthless, anxious or angry	suicidal thoughts
Good energy levels	Overwhelmed	Relationships affected	Unhealthy eating, drinking, sleep
Social active, maintaining relationships	Poor decision making and concentration	Change in eating habits	Drug use
Good self-efficacy	Low energy, poor sleep	Drinking more or using drugs	
Care for others	Headaches, sore muscles	Change in sleep pattern	
Sleeping well	Less social activity	Minor physical illness	
Eating well	Comfort eating		
Drinking in moderation	Drinking more than normal		

Actions to take for each stage

Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Unwell
<p>Don't take it for granted</p> <p>Make time everyday to do things you like and are good for you</p> <p>Keep talking</p> <p>Be active, eat well, sleep well</p>	<p>Be self-aware, pay attention to how you feel</p> <p>Make time to do the things that help</p> <p>Talk to someone</p> <p>Recognise limits, say no, take breaks</p> <p>Don't wait until you feel worse</p>	<p>Take action to make things better, as you would for a physical illness</p> <p>Get professional support – GP, Mind, Rethink, Samaritans</p> <p>Get help from friends and family</p> <p>Build coping mechanisms into your routine</p> <p>Talk to your manager</p>	<p>Seek professional support without delay</p> <p>Take professional advice on board</p>
HOW MANAGERS CAN HELP	HOW MANAGERS CAN HELP	HOW MANAGERS CAN HELP	HOW MANAGERS CAN HELP
<p>Support work-life balance</p> <p>Minimise work-related stress</p> <p>Create healthy workplace culture</p> <p>Promote healthy lifestyle</p>	<p>Keep in touch regularly</p> <p>Look out for signs and symptoms</p> <p>Signpost to resources and support</p>	<p>Signpost to support</p> <p>Seek advice from HR, OH. Make adjustments</p> <p>Keep in touch</p>	<p>Signpost to support</p> <p>Encourage to engage with support. Follow up.</p> <p>Seek immediate support on their behalf if concerned for immediate safety: doctor or emergency services</p> <p>Seek advice from HR team</p>

Types of mental health conditions

Anxiety – Worry or nervousness that lasts a long time, becomes extreme and hard to control, sometimes causing panic attacks. Can be specific or without cause. Affects 1 in 10. Do not try to rationalise someone else's anxiety. Listen and be supportive. A treatment and self-care plan is recommended.

Depression – Low mood and feelings of hopelessness that do not go away and last for at least several weeks. Affects 1 in 6. Prevents a person from doing everyday things and can be life threatening if not treated. Medical treatment and self-care is needed.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) – A serious condition causing loss of control over thoughts, extreme anxiety and leading to compulsive behaviour. It is very important not to mock, and to take this seriously. Less common, but commonly spoken about. Affects around 1 in 100. A treatment and self-care plan is recommended.

Personality disorders – Thinking and relating to others in very different ways which can cause problems in daily life.

- Cluster A – difficulty relating to people
- Cluster B – difficulty controlling emotions
- Cluster C – strong fear or anxiety

Severity of symptoms can vary. Affects 1 in 20. Find out about the condition, how this affects the person and what kind of support they need.

Psychosis – A serious condition causing a person to perceive reality differently to those around them. May experience hallucinations, delusions, or disorganised thinking and speech. Can be a symptom of other mental health conditions, which may cause ongoing or regular episodes, or can be a 'brief psychotic disorder'. Affects around 1 in 100 in their lifetime. Treatment and support is needed.

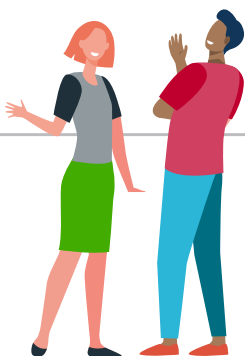
Neurodiversity – Not an illness. Around 1 in 7 in the UK are neurodivergent, meaning that the brain functions, learns and processes information differently to the average, neurotypical, person. Examples are ASD, ADHD, ADD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia. Support required varies depending on the type and severity of condition. Be flexible, treat people as individuals, and ask what help, if any, is required. Individuals may benefit from reasonable adjustments to the typical working day.

For more detail on all of the above and other mental health conditions you can find out more from Mind <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/>

The role of managers

Managers are there to be supportive, signpost to the experts and help employees manage work alongside any ongoing conditions, just like for a physical health condition. Managers are not expected to be mental health experts.

The line-manager's role	How to do it
1. Raise your own level of awareness and understanding	Use this guide to learn more about mental health so you can feel confident. Be aware of the support available. Health Shield Wellbeing provide a range of training courses for managers.
2. Reduce stress	Stress is not an illness, but can increase risks of poor mental health. Read our Manager's Guide to Stress.
3. Reduce stigma	Encourage openness. Share information to build mental health awareness. Do not tolerate discrimination of any kind.
4. Create healthy workplace culture	Use the five ways to wellbeing as a template.
5. Keep in touch.	Ask how your team are in regular 1:1s and team meetings. Always ask how people are, not only when you have concerns. Check in more often with those working at home, at least once per week.
6. Look out for signs and symptoms of mental health challenges	More on this on the next page.
7. Act on any concerns.	Be approachable and supportive. Talk and take action if you have concerns. See step-by-step later in the guide.



Signs and symptoms of mental health challenges

One of the most important things to look out for is a change from normal for that person. Getting to know your team and how they usually act can make it easier to notice when something is not quite right.

MIND, the mental health charity, recommend looking out for feelings, behaviours and physical effects. One thing on its own might not be anything to worry about, but several should prompt a conversation. Remember, you are not there to diagnose, but if you have any concerns, talk to the employee and signpost to support if needed.

What employees might say they are feeling	How employees might behave	Physical effects to look for, or that employees might tell you
irritable, angry, impatient or wound up over-whelmed anxious, nervous or afraid racing thoughts and can't switch off down or depressed lost interest in things lost sense of humour a sense of dread worried neglected or lonely	finding it hard to make decisions constantly worrying avoiding things snapping at people unable to concentrate being tearful or crying not performing at work in the usual way change in timekeeping like being late, or working late at night don't seem themselves change in how they look or dress	frequent short-term absences panic attacks muscle tension blurred eyesight or sore eyes problems getting to sleep, staying asleep or having nightmares tired all the time grinding teeth or clenching jaw headaches chest pains high blood pressure indigestion or heartburn upset stomach or feeling sick feeling dizzy

How to create healthy workplace culture

The five ways to wellbeing are a great template to follow at home and work.

Connect

- Take time to talk instead of an email.
- Ask questions and listen well.
- Make time to talk to teammates, friends and family every day.
- Encourage the team to join work messaging groups to keep in touch

Be Active

- Try walking 1:1s (in person or on the phone).
- Encourage activity in the commute (or do this when team members would be travelling if working at home). Promote cycle to work.
- Encourage regular, short movement breaks for desk workers.
- Encourage walk and talks on the phone instead of emailing,
- Stand up for team meetings.

Learn

- Promote any learning and career development opportunities for your team.
- Ensure learning and development is part of performance reviews.
- Regularly communicate and remind people of important information.
- Ask questions and learn about your team.

Give

- Give your time to help others, even if just for a few minutes.
- Encourage volunteering.
- Share your expertise to help solve a problem.
- Give ground in a disagreement, which helps defuse a situation leading to more constructive discussion and saving potential stress.

Take notice

- Promote any digital tools or resources that support mental wellbeing.
- Encourage clear, uncluttered workspaces.
- Take notice of how your team are behaving. Look for signs and symptoms of poor mental health.
- Encourage employees to pay attention to how they feel and make sure to find the time to do something which makes them happy, especially when stressed.

How to support employees with mental health challenges

Use this section as a step-by-step process to help you work through any issues when you need it. Lay the groundwork, prepare, talk, set next steps and keep in touch. This is general advice, so you do not have to follow it to the letter.

Lay the groundwork

Create opportunities for employees to talk to you by including a short discussion on wellbeing at each 1:1.

Look out for signs and symptoms of mental health challenges. Act as soon as you have concerns.

Prepare

Think about how the employee prefers to communicate. Face to face should work best.

Think about the best time to have the conversation, so you both have time and privacy. Ideally this would be your regular catch-up, but don't leave things too long if you have concerns.

Think about your conversation starter. 'You don't seem yourself, how are you?' probably leads to a more open chat than 'you look terrible, what's wrong?'



Talk

Ask questions, listen, don't judge, try to understand and be supportive. Praise the employee for opening up and being honest. Let the employee be in control. You can ask what might help, but try not to offer solutions.

You can't force people to tell you how they feel. If the employee says they are fine and you really feel they aren't, gently ask again and remind them you want to help and that they can always talk to you when they are ready.

Find out about any professional support in place. If none, ask the employee if they feel this might help and encourage them to talk to their GP or the other signposting options at the end of this guide.

If you have immediate concerns for the employee's safety, encourage them to seek professional support and ask if they would like you to contact support on their behalf. In an emergency, dial 999. Contact HR and seek support in this instance.

If this is a return-to-work interview, make sure you fill in a return to work form and log this in the usual way. Check if this meets any absence triggers.

Next steps

Agree and record main points of discussion and any actions to move things forward. You might want to use the Wellness Action Plan template at the end of this guide. Contact HR and seek advice on whether reasonable adjustments should be made.

If neither of you can come up with a solution then and there, that's fine. Agree to think about it and explain you can look for advice before you meet to discuss again.

Think about whether you need support from your own manager or HR, especially if there is likely to be an ongoing issue possibly requiring adjustments.

Use the signposting links in the next section.

Keep in touch

Agree when you are going to speak again. It's usually a good idea to keep in touch more regularly than normal, but decide on this together.

If there are actions to follow up on, it's important that you do. Doing nothing could make the problem worse and damage your relationship.



Signposting

Get further help from the right places. Make a note of your internal sources of support, and also check the external sources of support for both you and your team members.

Internal support for you as the line manager

External support you can recommend to your team

Get further help from the right places. We've listed external sources of support, both for you and your team members.

<p>Rethink https://www.rethink.org/aboutus/what-we-do/advice-and-information-service/get-help-now/</p>	<p>Comprehensive list of contacts for phone support, text and online, with general support and specific topics covered with immediate help. Local support groups also listed. Advice and Info number: 0808 801 0525</p>
<p>GP or A&E</p>	<p>The GP is the best person if someone is unwell. In crisis, anyone can call 999.</p>
<p>Hub of Hope https://hubofhope.co.uk</p>	<p>A search engine specific for mental health support near you, listing local and national services based on your needs</p>
<p>Mind https://www.mind.org.uk/</p>	<p>Information, advice and support on mental health.</p>
<p>Every Mind Matters – One You https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/</p>	<p>Interactive tools, resources, information and support on mental health.</p>
<p>SHOUT</p>	<p>SHOUT - text SHOUT to 85258 for immediate support via text, for when you need help, but don't feel like talking.</p>



Wellbeing Action Plan (WAP) template

You may find it helpful to use this template as one of the ways to support an individual in your team suffering from stress.

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

(For example taking an adequate lunch break away from your desk, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunchbreak, light and space in the office etc.)

2. What can your manager do to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work?

(For example regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments)

3. Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health for you?

(For example conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan)

4. How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?

(For example you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches)

5. Are there any early warning signs that we might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health?

(For example changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from teammates)

6. What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or help you to manage the impact?

(For example extra catch-up time with your manager, guidance on prioritising workload, flexible working patterns, consider reasonable adjustments)

7. Are there elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth your manager being aware of?

(For example a preference for more face to face or more email contact, a need for quiet reflection time prior to meetings or creative tasks, negotiation on deadlines before they are set, having access to a mentor for questions you might not want to bother your manager about, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear deadlines if you have a tendency to over-work a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon)

8. If we notice early warning signs that you are experiencing poor mental health – what should we do?

(For example talk to you discreetly about it, contact someone that you have asked to be contacted)

9. What steps can you take if you start to experience poor mental health at work? Is there anything we need to do to facilitate them?

(For example you might like to take a break from your desk and go for a short walk, or ask your line manager for support)

10. Is there anything else that you would like to share?



At Health Shield it's all about healthy, happy people

Everything we do is to help your people stay in the best of health.

We're trusted experts in employee benefits and health and wellbeing, with a long history dating back to 1877, dedicated to supporting the health of workers. Today, almost 4,000 organisations trust us to help their people lead healthy, happy lives.

If you're looking for health benefits that your employees will love, look no further. Our health cash plans give money back for costs associated with everyday healthcare, helping prevent health niggles turn into health nightmares. So, if you want to make it easy and affordable for your people to keep their health on track, and show them you value their wellbeing, we can help!

Our services include

Company-paid health cash plans

Voluntary-paid health cash plans

On-site health checks

Wellbeing consultancy

Wellbeing training

Digital health platform

Employee engagement resources

**Perfect for businesses of all sizes,
whatever your needs or budget.**

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Let's talk

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we'd love to hear from you.

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The best of health