



Managing and supporting mental health at work

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Employee outlook and the recession



- 42% of employees say they are under excessive pressure either every day or once or twice a week
- 57% of employees say there is more stress at work as a result of the recession
- About a third of employees say they are concerned about being made redundant, while two thirds think that finding a new job would be difficult or very difficult
- Six in ten respondents say they are worried by the future

Mental health and performance at work



- More than a quarter of employees describe their mental health as moderate (21%) or poor (6%).
- More than 90% of those that say their mental health is poor state that it affects their performance at work.
- Although more than half (56%) of employees with poor mental health say they have taken time off as a result, almost all (98%) continue to attend work regularly.
- Among people with poor mental health, 12% say this is the result of problems at work, 32% believe it is a result of problems outside work in their personal lives and 56% think it is a combination of the two.
- Only a third of workers say their organisation supports people with mental health problems well.

Mental health and performance at work



- Nearly four out of five employees (78%) with poor mental health find it difficult to concentrate at work as a result of their illness.
- Exactly half of respondents say that they put off challenging tasks as a result of going in to work with poor mental health
- Almost half (46%) report they are less patient with customers and clients, affecting customer service
- 41% think poor mental health interferes with their ability to make decisions and 36% believe they are more likely to get into conflict with colleagues

Managing stress at work



- Stress, depression and anxiety are, behind musculoskeletal conditions, the biggest cause of time lost to ill health
- HSE figures show that stress increased significantly between 1990 and 2000 – current recession suggests that there could be another surge
- Average length of time off associated with stress 21 days
- Presenteeism associated with mental ill health costs an estimated £605 per employee per year

Working life: Employee attitudes and engagement 2006



Research breaks down engagement into three elements:

- Emotional – being involved in one's work
- Cognitive – focusing very hard
- Physical – being willing to go the extra mile

Findings:

- Engaged employees:
- Take less time off sick
- Are less likely to quit
- Are more likely to recommend the organisation to others

What key factors influence engagement?



- Good quality line management
- Opportunities for feedback
- Good communication from management at all levels
- Fair and just processes for dealing with problems
- Flexible working opportunities
- Effective management of bullying and harassment

Why line management is so critical to employee engagement and wellbeing



- Line managers are most likely to be bullies in organisations
- Poor management is a main cause of conflict at work
- Management style is one of the top causes of stress in the workplace
- Managers are key to flexible working practices being embedded effectively
- Line managers increasingly play a key role in developing, supporting and accelerating learning at work
- Line management behaviour is key to individuals making successful and supported returns to work
- Line managers are central to effective implementation of absence management practices

Managing stress at work



Managing stress at work
A competency framework for line managers



Managing stress



- Managing and communicating existing and future work
- Reasoning/Managing difficult situations
- Managing the individual within the team
- Respectful and responsible: Managing emotions and having integrity

Stress: spotting the signs



Work performance:

- Inability to concentrate
- Loss of enthusiasm
- Declining performance
- Failing to take leave
- Accidents

Withdrawal:

- Reluctance to give support
- Poor time-keeping
- Extended lunches
- Absenteeism

Emotional behaviour:

- Aggressive behaviour
- Over-reaction to problems
- Sudden mood changes
- Irritability/moodiness

Relationships

- Criticism of others
- Lack of co-operation
- Marital or family difficulties
- Poor employee relations

Managing absence



- The average level of absence is 7.4 days per employee per year (public sector 9.7 days; private sector 6.4 days)
- Absence costs on average £692 per employee per year
- Nine out of ten respondents to the CIPD absence management survey report that absence is a significant or very significant cost to the business.

Most effective approaches for managing absence



Most effective approaches to managing short-term absence

- Return to work interviews
- Trigger system to review attendance
- Use of disciplinary procedures for unacceptable levels of absence
- Restricting sick pay
- OH involvement

Most effective approaches to managing long-term absence

- OH involvement
- Return to work interviews
- Flexible working
- Rehabilitation programme
- Changes to working patterns or environment

The new Med 3 'fitnote'



- More than 40% of HR practitioners rate the support they get from GPs in supporting the return to work of people with mental health problems as poor or very poor (LMO survey 2007)
- 77% of respondents thought the development of a revised medical statement providing more information on phased return to work would be effective in improving successful and timely return to work

The new Med 3 'fitnote'



The new medical statement will mean GPs can advise employees that they are

- Unfit for work; or
- May be fit for work

New note has section that states, if available and with the agreement of your employer, you may benefit from:

- A phased return to work
- Amended duties
- Altered hours
- Workplace adaptations

The new Med 3 'fitnote'



- Employer and employee will have to agree on any phased return to work – if employer cannot provide necessary flexibility, employee will be deemed unfit for work
- If people are determined to persuade their GP to categorise them as unfit for work they will – new note will have little impact on 'malingerers'
- However majority of employees with health problems will welcome opportunity of phased return to work as part of their recovery and rehabilitation
- GPs to receive improved training and guidance on fitness for work issues

Most important things line managers can do to support an employee's return to work



- Remain in contact with the employee during their absence
- Understand the nature of the employee's illness and how the symptoms may impact on their return to work
- Discuss possible adjustments to work with the returning employee
- Have regular one to one discussions to discuss progress
- Set realistic objectives to help the employee get up to speed
- Provide flexibility over hours
- Find ways of welcoming the employee back into the team

Resources



- [Absence management survey](#)
- [On-line absence management tool](#)
- [Managing organisational stress guide](#)
- [Managing stress at work: a competency framework for line managers](#)
- [Managing conflict at work: a guide for line managers](#)
- [Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work survey and guide](#)
- [Working with cancer survey report and guide](#)
- [Employee Outlook survey](#)