

Guidance Notes for Employers Implementing the Guidance for Managing Stress and Mental Health at Work

Section 1: Promoting Good Mental Health in the Workplace

Promoting good workplace mental health is important. In 2007/2008 mental ill health was estimated to be responsible for more working days lost than any other health problem. (HSE, 2008). Researchers suggest that when staff are not supported, mental ill health in employees costs UK organisations around £26 Billion per year (The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2007). Further, psychological wellbeing is a strong predictor of performance in employees (Athanasias and Winthrop, 2007). This suggests that protecting the mental health of staff should be a priority for all organisations.

Steps	Advice and information on how to achieve steps
<p>1. A mental and emotional wellbeing policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of this, organisations could demonstrate innovative ways of addressing mental and physical wellbeing at work according to staff need. • It is expected that a mental and emotional wellbeing policy would incorporate stages 2-14 of this guidance.
<p>2. Stress risk assessments completed as per the HSE guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HSE guidelines can be found at http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/ There is guidance available for a range of different sized organisations.
<p>3. Encouraging a good work-life balance for all staff.</p>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers setting a good example regarding taking regular breaks, taking up holiday allocation and ensuring they do not work long hours. • Encouraging staff to take regular breaks, work only their allocated hours and take their holiday entitlement. • Flexible working practices should be made available where possible. Where this is not possible, employers should make every effort to accommodate staff needs within their shift patterns.

4. Promoting positive employee relationships.

- Supporting people with their caring responsibilities. This involves, where possible, accommodating staff needs. How this is carried out within the organisation will depend on the needs of the individual, the size of the organisation and flexibility of the work. Supporting people with their responsibilities could include: allowing time off when needed, allowing them to make phone calls or have a phone switched on in times of need and allowing them to work from home or work flexibly when necessary.

This includes:

- Ensuring employees have access to regular breaks with other staff.
- Organising staff team building events involving all staff.
- Ensuring that employees have access to a union or staff representative.
- Creating a buddy/support system for staff backed up by policies.

5. Improving employees and employers knowledge of the causes of stress and burnout in the workplace and ways of coping.

This includes:

- Promoting awareness of environmental factors (such as role ambiguity and lack of support) that lead to stress and of the early warning signs. See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/> for more information.
- Access to workplace training (or if not possible, information) for all staff on stress awareness and management. Leaflets on stress management and a variety of other issues can be found at: <http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/?p=selfhelp>
- Information on Burnout can be found at: http://www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout_signs_symptoms.htm
- Providing access to workplace training and information on techniques aimed at reducing stress such as: emotion management, problem solving, leadership skills, interpersonal skills and time management skills. (See <http://northumberland.floodlight.co.uk/northumberland/courses-classes-lessons/best-business-interpersonal-skills-courses/qualification/study/region/16180339/220706/100/domain.html>). Follow the links for details of courses outside Northumberland.
- Providing access to information and local resources for help e.g. carers groups, parenting support, Citizens Advice Bureau, self-help groups and counselling.
- Providing awareness raising activities and self-help materials via workshops/ seminars/information leaflets on domestic abuse, bullying, debt and housing help.

6. Adequate systems in place for all employees to gain feedback on their performance.

- Promoting the physical activity of staff. Research supports the link between physical activity and mental wellbeing (Friedli, Oliver, Tidyman and Ward, 2007).

Marmot (2004) recommends that employers, unions and relevant agencies do more to improve health through “good management practices which lead to increased levels of control, variety and appropriate use of skills in the workforce.” A good performance management system should incorporate the following:

- Management agreed, realistic, clear and achievable objectives for each employee, which are regularly reviewed.
- Encouraging the development of job roles that have some variety and are not monotonous or repetitive (research shows variety is an important part of job satisfaction, Warr, 2007).
- Employees having influence over job tasks where feasible and job tasks to include the aspirations of employees where possible.
- Recognition for work related achievements at all staff levels.
- Clear, realistic, assessment of workload capacity.
- Regular review of workload demands.
- Access to job related training.
- Clear career progression opportunities for all staff.
- Access to career information and advice.

7. Ensuring adequate provision to support staff with personal and emotional problems.

- You may wish to involve external agencies, such as counsellors, to help provide this support. You can find information on this at: <http://www.counsellingatwork.org.uk/>
- Self help books covering a wide variety of topics can be downloaded for free at: <http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/?p=selfhelp>

8. Giving employees information on healthy eating and providing access to healthy food where possible.

- There is a well documented link between food and mental health and wellbeing. For Further information and guidance on healthy foods go to: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/food-and-mental-health>
- This web address will also take you to a nutrients table showing which foods might be linked to negative mental health symptoms.
- For top tips on healthy eating visit: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/food-and->

9. Having an alcohol and drug policy that applies equally to all staff in the workplace and provides information on the effects of alcohol and drug misuse.

10. Good physical environment policies.

[mental-health/top-tips/](#)

The top tips include advice such as:

- Avoid adding extra salt and sugar to food and drinks
 - Make and eat meals made with fresh ingredients
 - Eat the 5 a day fruit and vegetables
 - Eat oily and fresh fish
 - Avoid takeaways and processed food
 - Ensure you wash and peel vegetables before eating them
- It would be good practice to include in this alcohol and drug policy, the kinds of support the organisation would offer staff having problems managing their alcohol or drug use. See <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074435951> for further information on developing a policy.

This includes:

- Ensuring employees are secure against physical threat.
- Having a clear policy on violence where appropriate.
- Considering workplace heating, lighting and noise levels.
- Having an area for staff to take breaks, away from the workplace.
- Providing adequate risk assessments and safety provision for all staff, especially in jobs that carry high risk of harm. Consider lone working policies within this.

11. Having transparent policies and practices that demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities, fair pay and work conditions and an environment free from bullying or harassment for all.

It is good practice, when developing policies to ensure that:

- Policies incorporate a transparent pay structure.
- All employees are aware of the policies.
- The organisation acts on bullying and harassment.
- There is an appropriate complaints and support procedure in relation to staff grievances.

12. Developing all policies in consultation with staff.

It is good practice to have regular consultations with staff to help develop policies; this could be done through questionnaires, focus groups or other means. You can find information on running focus groups at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/step3/index.htm>

13. Supporting and enabling line managers/supervisors to engage in working practices that promote good mental health.

- This relates to helping managers to manage organisational change well, especially ones that relate to job insecurities.
- This would also involve: monitoring, training and giving managers time to engage in positive practice.

14. All line Managers and supervisors attending management training or mentoring.

Good line management and supervisor training would be aimed at reducing workplace stress and would incorporate:

- Staff induction.
- Change management.
- Financial management.
- Time management.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Promoting good workplace mental health and recognising stress in employees.

There are organisations which provide line management training. Learn direct offers line management courses that can be completed over the internet. For more information visit:

<http://www.learn-direct-business.co.uk/qualifications/>

<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074400185&site=101&r.s=sl>

<http://www.acas.org.uk/>

<http://northumberland.floodlight.co.uk/northumberland/courses-classes-lessons/best-business-and-management-courses/qualification/study/region/16180339/220706/100/domain.html>

Section 2: Supporting People with Mental Health Problems in Employment

Researchers estimate that at any one time in the UK, 1 in 6 workers will be experiencing depression, anxiety or stress-related issues. Further, researchers note that replacing staff that leave their jobs as a result of mental ill health costs UK organisations £2.4 Billion per year (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2007), making it extremely important that workplaces have a policy in place to support workers with mental health problems.

Target	Advice and information on how to achieve target
<p>15. A mental health policy and practices that support people with mental health problems in the workplace.</p>	<p>It expected that a mental health policy would incorporate stages 16-19 of the guidance. In addition it would be good practice to ensure the policy is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed in collaboration with employees. • Has the commitment of both management and staff. • Includes objectives that are regularly evaluated. • Leads to a practice of continual improvement. • You can get further information and example policies at http://www.mindfulemployer.net/Working%20Minds%20Toolkit.pdf
<p>16. Line manager and supervisor training on supporting people with mental health problems and promoting working conditions which promote good mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are “Wellbeing Resource Packs for New Managers” available for employers in Northumberland from the Healthy People Healthy Business resource centre. Please see http://www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk/healthdev/resinfo.htm for details. • SHIFT (government agency) has produced a “Line Manager’s Resource — A practical guide to managing and supporting people with mental health problems in the workplace”. This can be downloaded at: http://shift.org.uk/~employers/line-managers-resource/line-managers-resource-contents.html • Free line manager training can be found at this e-learning site: http://www.mentalhealthatwork.cdd.nhs.uk/

17. Reducing stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems in the workplace.

This would include:

- Showing a commitment to support and respect employees with mental health needs (such as showing adherence to this guidance, which could be developed into an action plan that staff could have access to).
- Ensuring all staff receive information and where possible training to help them to recognise and be responsive to the mental health needs of others. Information can be found at <http://www.shift.org.uk/employers/employers/index.html>
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the risk factors and early signs of mental health problems and the importance of asking for support. Further guidance available at the SHIFT website, as above.
- Ensuring all staff have an awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act in relation to people with mental health problems. This can be downloaded at: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/index.htm>
- For a guide to the law and the disability discrimination act in relation to mental health, please visit: <http://www.shift.org.uk/employers/employers/law/index.html>

18. Effective sickness/absence management policies and practices.

This would include:

- Line managers working in conjunction with occupational health professionals and GPs to support people with mental health problems in work and in returning to work.
- Means of rehabilitating people on long-term sick leave back to work and ensuring return to work does not make problems worse. This could include liaising with external agencies providing support and allowing employees time to access this support.
- Clear procedures regarding contact with staff off sick (research suggests contact at least once every two weeks is helpful).
- Return to work meetings with employees, to establish their needs.
- Establishing reasonable adjustments from return to work interviews.
- Reviewing targets regularly with employees.

Further guidance can be found at

http://www.socialinclusion.org.uk/work_areas/index.php?subid=84 and e-learning on absence

19. Making reasonable adjustments to the work environment for people with mental health problems who wish to continue working.

management at: <http://www.mentalhealthatwork.cdd.nhs.uk/>

- Reasonable adjustments might include things like: starting the person off with part time work if necessary, allowing someone access to a quieter work area if needed, more frequent supervision and allowing person time to attend appointments with external supporting agencies (Thornicroft, 2006).
- Adjustments can be made to practice, policies, procedures as well as the physical environment. The duty applies to all aspects of employment, including recruitment and selection, training, transfer, career development and retention.
- For a guide to “reasonable adjustments for people with mental health problems” please visit: <http://www.shift.org.uk/employers/lmr/adjustments/index.html>
- See “Disability Discrimination Act” (2005) for a definition of reasonable adjustments. This can be downloaded at: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/index.htm>

Section 3: Taking Action to Reduce Stigma

There is still a lot of misunderstanding related to mental health problems, especially when it comes to employment. Surveys indicate 60% of people with mental health problems have been reluctant to apply for a job because they believe they will be treated unfairly (Thornicroft, 2006). Social support and positive community networks have also been found to help protect people from developing a mental health problem (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003). Further it is becoming a government priority to address the treatment of people with mental health in regards to employment (Black 2008).

Target	Advice and information on how to achieve target
<p>20. A positive attitude to the recruitment of those with mental health problems.</p>	<p>This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting positive statements about attitudes in all job advertisements. • Ensuring no-one is refused employment on the grounds of their mental health. • Supporting and not discriminating against those who disclose mental health problems in their job applications. • More information can be found at: http://www.mindfulemployer.net/guidance.html • Or see http://www.mentalhealthatwork.cdd.nhs.uk/ for a free e-learning course on recruitment and mental health.
<p>21. Organisations demonstrating ways in which they work to improve the health or wellbeing of the local community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could include supporting charity events, providing promotion materials and providing information at workshops/conferences about mental health promotion. Further, this could include supporting staff to undertake community roles (such as school governor) and promote links with local communities and organisations.
<p>22. Organisations passing on examples of good practice in relation to mental health and wellbeing, to other employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could include work-shadowing programmes, discussing work and wellbeing with other organisations at meetings or recorded sharing of written information.

23. Organisations showing how they involve the families of employees in promoting health and wellbeing.

- This could include providing employees with information on health and wellbeing they can take home, wellbeing days with staff and their families, or employing organisational services (such as counselling) that are open to the family members of staff.

References and Sources of Further Guidance

Athanasiades, C. & Winthrop, C. (2007) *The Importance of Employee Wellbeing*. The Psychologist Online Article. http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk/archive/archive_home.cfm/volumeID_20-editionID_154-ArticleID_1287-getfile_getPDF

Benach, Muntane and Santana (2007) *Employment Conditions and Health Inequalities*. Employment Conditions Knowledge Network, World Health Organisation, Health Inequalities Research Group.

Black, C. (2008) *Working for a Healthier Tomorrow: Dame Carol Black's Review of the Health of Britain's working Age Population*. London: TSO.

British Occupational Health research Foundation (2005) *Workplace Interventions for People with Common Mental Health Problems: A Summary for Employers and Employees*. BOHRF, First Assist.

Cooper, C. L., & Cartwright, S. (1997). *An Intervention Strategy for Workplace Stress*. Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 43 (1), 7-16.

Friedli, L., Oliver, C., Tidyman, M. & Ward, G. (2007) *Mental Health Improvement: Evidence based Messages to Promote Mental Wellbeing*. NHS Health Scotland.

Healthier Scotland and the Scottish Development Centre for mental health (2007) *Promoting Mental Health, preventing common mental health problems*. <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlandshealth/population/mental-health-indicators.aspx>

Health and Safety Executive, HSE (2005) *Making the Stress Management Standards Work: How to Apply the Standards in Your Workplace*. International Stress Management Association, HSE, ACAS.

Health and Safety Executive (2008) Health and Safety Statistics 2007/2008 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/>

Marmot, M. (2004) *Status Syndrome: How your Social Standing Directly Affects your Health and Life Expectancy*. Bloomsbury, London.

Her Majesty's Stationary Office (2005) *Disability Discrimination Act*.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001068

The Mental Health Foundation(2006) *Feeding Minds: The impact of food on mental health*.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/food-and-mental-health/>

The Mental Health Foundation (2000) *Mental Health in the Workplace: Tackling the effects of Stress*.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=38631&type=Full&servicetype=Attachment>

Mental health at work.org (2008) *What is a Health policy? (Mental Health Components)*.

<http://www.mentalhealthatwork.info/policy.htm>

Mentality (2002) *Mental Health Promotion Training: Key Course Readings*. Leicestershire: Trent Mental Health in the Workplace Project: The Work Foundation.

MIND OUT (2005) *Working Minds Toolkit: A Practical Resource to Promote Good Workplace Practice on Mental Health*.

Mindful Employer (2007) *Information Pack*. <http://www.mindfulemployer.net/>

NICE Review (2008, in press) *Workplace Interventions that are Effective for promoting Wellbeing: Synopsis of the effectiveness and Cost Effectiveness*. National Institute for Clinical Excellence).

Raise (2008) *A Consultation Regarding Employment, Education and Training*. Commissioned by Care Services Improvement Partnership

Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2007) *Mental Health and Employment: Briefing Paper 33*.

<http://website.scmh.org.uk/80256FBD004F6342/vWeb/wpKHAL6ZXJQF>

Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2007) *Mental Health at Work, Developing the Business Case*. Mental Health Policy 8.

SHIFT (2006) *Action on Stigma*. <http://www.shift.org.uk/employment/action-on-stigma-feedback-report.html> Department of Health Publication.

Skills North East: The Regional Skills Partnership (2006) *North East Mental Health and Employability Statement of Priorities*. <http://www.skillsnortheast.co.uk/>

Skills North East: The Regional Skills Partnership (2006) *Mental Health and Employment- a Review of the Literature*. North East Mental Health and Employability Statement of Priorities Supporting Information <http://www.skillsnortheast.co.uk/>

Thornicroft, G. (2006) *Actions Speak Louder... Tackling Discrimination Against people With Mental Illness*. Mental Health Foundation.

Wilkinson, R. & Marmat, M. (2003) *Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts (Second Edition)*. World Health Organisation (WHO), Europe.

Warr, P. (2007) *Searching for Happiness at Work*. London: The Psychologist, 20 (12) pp 726-729.

World Health Organisation (WHO) Geneva (2004) *Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence and Practice*. A Report of the World Health Organization, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse in collaboration with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and The University of Melbourne.