



# WORKING TOWARDS

**An aid for businesses signing up to  
The Charter for Employers who are Positive  
about Mental Health**

Produced in association with b4, East Berkshire MIND,  
Met Office & Devon Partnership NHS Trust

**MINDFUL EMPLOYER**  
*WorkWAYS* King Street Business Centre 7-9 King Street Exeter EX1 1BQ  
01392 208833 info@mindfulemployer.net  
www.mindfulemployer.net



## Working Towards

The aim of *Working Towards* is to help you look after your staff and to run your business by

- ✓ Recognising the good practice you already have in place
- ✓ Identifying areas where there is need for improvement
- ✓ Planning how you can work towards the aims of the Charter

*Working Towards* is laid out in such a way that it takes you through the individual elements of the Charter and facilitates a practical response to each one. It's up to you how you use it. It may be useful to address one section at a time rather than complete it all in one go. Plan your practical responses in realistic ways within realistic timescales.

You are under no obligation\* to share this with anyone – although it would be important for it not to be something that gathers dust on a shelf...

You don't have to tackle the issues it raises on your own. The MINDFUL EMPLOYER™ initiative is all about helping employers to help each other – other managerial, HR and Occupational Health expertise is available to you as will be support from *WorkWAYS* which facilitates the initiative.

We would also invite you to send a copy, in complete confidence, to *WorkWAYS* so, if you wish\*, we can offer any additional support and assistance to you in achieving the aims laid out in the Charter. We would also be pleased to work with you in reviewing your progress as times goes on.

The Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health is a tangible display of commitment to improving the working lives of staff. It's different from liP, the 'two ticks' Disability Symbol, Chartermark and other accreditations. The Charter recognises that policies and good practices are not necessarily currently in place – it's a set of aims: *something to work towards*.

The Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health is just one part of MINDFUL EMPLOYER. It's a voluntary agreement which seeks to support you in working within the spirit of its positive approach. It is not legally enforceable and doesn't negate the need for you to get the right person with the right experience, qualifications and skills for the job. Whether you are a small, medium or large employer, the Charter fully respects there will be many different priorities, policies and practices which influence the way you recruit and retain staff – you are the expert on your business.

The Charter is about *working towards* the principles of it not the immediate fulfilment of them – signing up is a step along a journey not the end of it.

*\*However, please note that you will be asked to complete and send this document as part of the two-year and subsequent reviews of your commitment to the Charter.*

**For the purpose of this exercise, the term 'mental health' includes harmful levels of stress, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, psychosis and other recognised diagnoses. You may feel it appropriate to include alcohol and drug abuse and eating disorders.**

# Where We Are Now

To start off with, take a look at what's happening in your business now – the good things, the pressures, the areas which need improving.

## Our Mental Health

1. What factors, both internal and external, can you identify in your organisation that might influence the level of stress/mental health issues among employees?

2. Which of the following applies to your organisation (please tick):

- Mental health is addressed within distinct, separate policies
- Mental health is addressed within existing, generic policies
- Mental health is not addressed within any of our policies

List the policies you have that address mental health in the workplace and summarise their content

3. Do you have existing employees who you know have a mental health issue?

Yes – if so, how many? ..... No

Are you aware of anybody who has left the company, or changed their position within the company, due to mental health issues in the last year?

Yes  No

4. How many days sick leave have employees taken for all reasons during the last year? .....

What % of these was for stress/mental health issues? .....%



# Working Towards the Charter

Reflect on the previous section and then bring in the following statements:

## As an employer we recognise that:

- ✓ People who have mental health issues may have experienced discrimination in recruitment and selection procedures. This may discourage them from seeking employment.
- ✓ Whilst some people will acknowledge their experience of mental health issues in a frank and open way, others fear that stigma will jeopardise their chances of getting a job.
- ✓ Given appropriate support, the vast majority of people who have experienced mental ill health continue to work successfully as do many with ongoing issues.

How true is that of your company?

What do you know to be specific areas of good practice...?

... and areas of difficulty?

The following section uses a framework based on the elements of the Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health to enable you to:

- ✓ Recognise the good practice you already have in place
- ✓ Identify areas where there is need for improvement
- ✓ Plan how you can work towards the aims of the Charter

One page is devoted to each of the individual aims outline in the Charter enabling you to decide which ones to address. You may decide to look at them all now. You may decide to address just one now and put others in your diary for later. Be realistic. These things take time.

You may like to use the following planner to think through how and when to address each aim and who else to involve in the process

<b>As an employer we aim to:</b>	<b>When to start</b>	<b>Who to involve (internal &amp; external sources)</b>	<b>How best to do it (e.g. meeting, telephone, e-mail)</b>	<b>Date to identify action to be taken</b>
Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues. This will include positive statements in local recruitment literature.				
Ensure that all staff involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the DDA, and given appropriate interview skills.				
Make it clear in any recruitment or occupational health check that people who have experienced mental health issues will not be discriminated against and that disclosure of a mental health issue will enable both employee and employer to assess and provide the right level of support or adjustment.				
Not make assumptions that a person with a mental health issue will be more vulnerable to workplace stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant.				
Provide non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff who experience mental health issues.				
Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.				

## As an employer we aim to:

- ✓ **Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues. This will include positive statements in local recruitment literature.**

In relation to the above aim, we already have the following good practice in place:

The following areas require improvement:

We plan to take the following action:

We have identified the following assistance from internal & external sources which is required to work towards achieving this aim:

We will review progress in ... weeks/months

## As an employer we aim to:

- ✓ **Ensure that all staff involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the Disability Discrimination Act, and given appropriate interview skills.**

In relation to the above aim, we already have the following good practice in place:

The following areas require improvement:

We plan to take the following action:

We have identified the following assistance from internal & external sources which is required to work towards achieving this aim:

We will review progress in ... weeks/months

## As an employer we aim to:

- ✓ **Make it clear in any recruitment or occupational health check that people who have experienced mental health issues will not be discriminated against and that disclosure of a mental health issue will enable both employee and employer to assess and provide the right level of support or adjustment.**

In relation to the above aim, we already have the following good practice in place:

The following areas require improvement:

We plan to take the following action:

We have identified the following assistance from internal & external sources which is required to work towards achieving this aim:

We will review progress in ... weeks/months

## As an employer we aim to:

- ✓ **Not make assumptions that a person with a mental health issue will be more vulnerable to workplace stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant.**

In relation to the above aim, we already have the following good practice in place:

The following areas require improvement:

We plan to take the following action:

We have identified the following assistance from internal & external sources which is required to work towards achieving this aim:

We will review progress in ... weeks/months

## As an employer we aim to:

- ✓ Provide non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff who experience mental health issues.

In relation to the above aim, we already have the following good practice in place:

The following areas require improvement:

We plan to take the following action:

We have identified the following assistance from internal & external sources which is required to work towards achieving this aim:

We will review progress in ... weeks/months

## As an employer we aim to:

- ✓ **Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.**

In relation to the above aim, we already have the following good practice in place:

The following areas require improvement:

We plan to take the following action:

We have identified the following assistance from internal & external sources which is required to work towards achieving this aim:

We will review progress in ... weeks/months

## A Next Step?

You are welcome to send a copy of *Working Towards* to *WorkWAYS*, who facilitate MINDFUL EMPLOYER. This could be done stage by stage if you wish or as a complete document. This is not an obligation\* but *WorkWAYS* may be able to support you in working towards the Charter aims and enable you to receive the assistance you have identified. The information you have given will be treated in complete confidence. If *WorkWAYS* identifies another employer or organisation or individual who may be able to assist you, we will not pass on your details to them. Instead, we will contact you to discuss how you would like to proceed.

*\*However, please note that you will be asked to complete and send this document as part of the two-year and subsequent reviews of your commitment to the Charter.*

To help in that response please could you complete the following:

Name

Position

Company

Address

Tel No

E-mail

How many employees do you have? (number of people not posts) .....

How many people have you recruited in the last year? .....

How many people have left the organisation in the last year? .....

Please give a brief description of your business and the range of tasks it undertakes

## Send to:

MINDFUL EMPLOYER

WorkWAYS, King Street Business Centre, 7-9 King Street, Exeter EX1 1BQ