Mental health and the workplace: understanding where we are now and how to respond

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mind
for better mental health

We're Mind, the mental health charity

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect

Current picture

The impact of COVID-19 on us all

- Outbreak cuts across all areas of wellbeing – physical, mental, social and financial

- Impact on individuals – different for everyone (most likely in multiple ways and at different times)

- Impact on mental health – health anxiety, uncertainty, isolation, limiting our access to the things that keep us well, bereavement, trauma

Where are we now

Local and national lockdowns across England, Wales, Scotland and N. Ireland – nearly a year of restrictions

Unequal impact of COVID – BAME community, industries and roles

Same storm, different boat – working parents, people in the shielded group etc

Increased concerns about loneliness and isolation

Impact of winter – darker and shorter days with lack of sunlight, flu season

Recession and financial difficulties – redundancies, job losses etc

Other key considerations

Impact on mental health of children and young people – home schooling, school results

Impact of NHS on pause – not being able to access treatment

Murder of George Floyd and the increased prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement

Growing divisions – Brexit, Transphobia

News consumption – "doomscrolling"

Impact of concerns around climate change

Supporting your people

Organisational context

- Some staff who are attending a workplace?

- Some staff who are working from home?

- Some staff who are on furlough/flexible furlough? Managing impact on other staff?

- Some staff who are going through change management processes or have been through one?

- Increased/decreased demand? Unable to operate?

Guiding principles

- Wellbeing – needs to be the priority, need to understand people's individual circumstances

- Clarity – priorities, policies, processes, focus on simplification

- Community – regular updates, two-way dialogue, social connection

- Reflective – take stock, 'test and learn', seek feedback

Wellness Action Plans

Our tool helps develop a tailored action plan for:

what keeps you well at work

triggers and early warning signs

impact of mental health problems on performance

steps you and your line manager could take

steps you can take yourself

Employees who are key workers

Issue	Solution
Exposure to COVID-19	Ensure adequate safety measures are in place and clearly communicated
Exposure to trauma	Ensure appropriate support is available
Challenging situations	Encourage peer support and debriefing
Impact on resilience	Encourage self-care – before, during and at the end of a shift
Burn-out	Manage staffing levels and have regular check-ins

Employees who are WFH

Issue	Solution
'Always on'	Support clear boundaries for the working day
'System overload'	Agree ways of working including systems and platforms to be used, manage email traffic
Access to support	Schedule regular check-ins
Burn-out	Clarity about priorities and offer flexibility especially for working parents
Isolation	Encourage social connection and peer support

Employees who have been furloughed

Issue	Solution
Transition point	Provide reassurance where you can and keep people updated as you prepare to bring them back
Reintegration	Carry out wellbeing check-ins and develop return-to-work plans – routine, caring responsibilities
Impact on self-esteem	Be transparent about decision-making process and provide reassurance
Feelings of distrust, anger or anxiety	Repair the impact of any decisions or actions taken during lockdown through two-way dialogue
Financial concerns	Signpost to support available

Employees who have got long COVID

Issue	Solution
Isolation	Maintain communication – frequency and channel to be defined by the individual
Impact on mental health	Signpost to internal and external support
Returning to work	Carry out wellbeing check-ins and develop return-to-work plans – phased return, adjustments
Ongoing support	Offer flexibility and regularly review the support measures that have been put in place
Long-term impact on mental health	Signpost to internal and external support

Employees who are going through

Issue	Solution
Managing uncertainty	Ensure clear communication – needs to be correct, detailed and streamlined
Feeling powerless	Seek staff input - explore all options and counter-proposals
Impact of job loss	Signpost to internal and external support
Individual response to change	Adopt tailored support and approach for each employee
Survivor syndrome	Repair the impact of any decisions or actions taken during process

Find out more by visiting:
mind.org.uk/workplace

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