

GOOD WORK

Norfolk

GUIDE 3

Supporting Employees with Mental Health Conditions



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Understanding individual needs and creating a supportive workplace

Mental health can affect people in very different ways, and an employee's needs may change over time. Employers do not need to be mental health experts, but creating a culture where people feel safe to talk, supported to manage their wellbeing and able to ask for help can make a significant difference. The following practical guidance can help managers and colleagues provide appropriate, respectful and consistent support.



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Removing barriers

- Recognise that mental health affects everyone differently. Avoid assumptions and take time to understand each person's individual needs and preferences.
- Foster a workplace culture built on trust, respect and open communication.
- Create opportunities for employees to discuss their wellbeing in a safe, private and supportive environment.
- Listen without judgement and avoid rushing to solutions. Ask what support would help them most.
- Be patient and show empathy. Understanding and inclusivity can help prevent isolation and stigma.
- Encourage manageable goals and celebrate achievements to help build confidence and self-esteem.
- Consider tools and strategies that support organisation and workload management, such as regular check-ins, clear priorities or planning tools.
- Where appropriate, offer flexibility around deadlines, workload and working arrangements.



Helping people build confidence, skills and independence

- Allow employees to take short breaks or time away from stressful situations when needed to help manage anxiety or wellbeing.
- Avoid putting individuals under unnecessary pressure, particularly in high-stress situations such as large presentations or public speaking, unless these responsibilities are an essential part of the role.
- Recognise and build on individual strengths, skills and interests.
- Be consistent, supportive and clear in your expectations and communication.
- Respect professional boundaries while ensuring employees know where they can access support.
- Understand that some people may need additional time to process information, make decisions or contribute to discussions.
- Be aware that mental health conditions can affect energy levels, concentration and productivity, and that these may fluctuate over time.
- Encourage employees to seek appropriate support from healthcare professionals, employee assistance programmes or other specialist services where needed.
- If you are concerned about someone's wellbeing, have a supportive conversation and follow your organisation's wellbeing or safeguarding procedures.
- Take any indication of self-harm or suicidal thoughts seriously and seek immediate professional support in line with organisational policies and emergency procedures.



Mental health is a normal part of overall health. Employers do not need to be mental health experts. The most effective support comes from listening, understanding individual needs and creating a workplace where people feel safe, valued and able to ask for help.