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Managers Guide to

Recognising and Managing Mental Health and Wellbeing Issues

Clear, Simple, Smart

V2.0

Managing your own and a colleague's mental health and wellbeing

Work and other personal issues can have a detrimental impact on many people's lives.

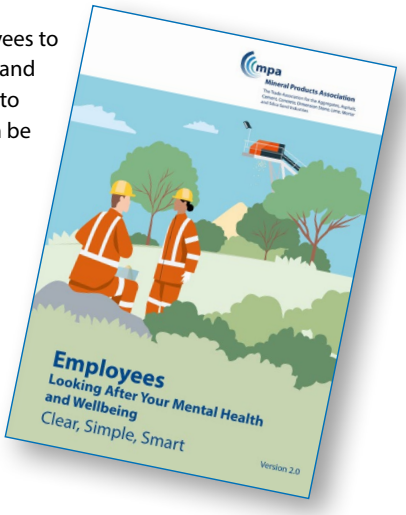
These may be experienced as feelings of isolation, anxiety, financial insecurity, emotional issues within your family, concerns about the future or changes in one's ability to enjoy the company of friends and other forms of relaxation. These pressures can lead to mental health and wellbeing issues which can be experienced by anybody.

Maintaining one's mental health and sense of wellbeing when coping with these stresses can be challenging and many individuals within the industry are struggling with this. Sadly, mental ill-health and suicides are particularly prominent in the construction sector. Within the industry, two workers take their own life every working day.

MPA member companies are keen to ensure that managers, supervisors and others have the basic information that will help them to recognise behaviour that may indicate that one of their colleagues is experiencing mental health or wellbeing issues and to outline how they may be able to support them.

MPA has produced an Employee Guide to help employees to recognise the signs of mental health issues, to understand some simple coping strategies and, most importantly, to appreciate that there are many ways in which they can be provided with support.

As a manager you may also find information to assist you in the MPA guidance document entitled 'How to conduct a work-related stress risk assessment'.



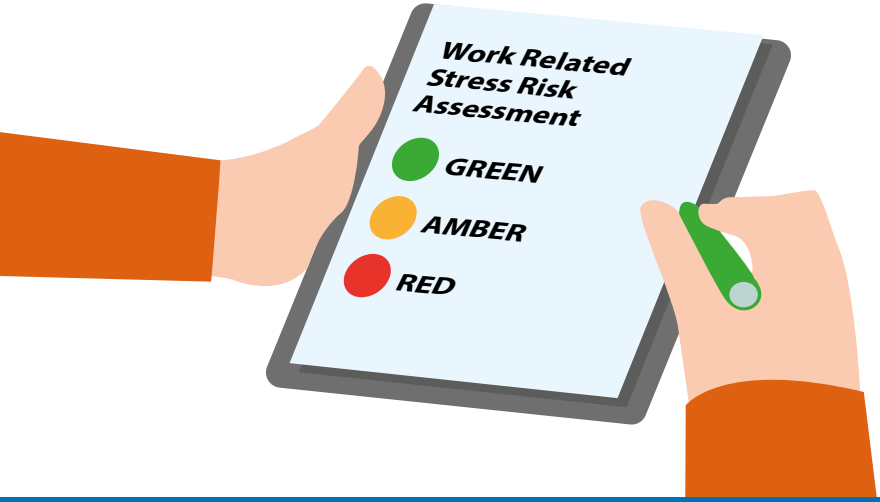
What kind of line manager are you?

As a line manager or supervisor, you are best placed to understand the demands on your team members, as well as their personal needs and circumstances. You are therefore in a unique position to identify and deal with potential triggers for stress. As you interact with your team regularly you are also likely to be the first port of call if a team member is feeling stressed and needs support.

Build good relationships with your team members, get to know them and check in with them regularly. Building strong relationships will enable employees to feel they can talk to you about any concerns they have or support they need.

Ways in which you can improve your interactions with team members and reduce the risk of workplace stress include:

- Get to know your team better – proactively ask what support they need from you.
- Lead by example to promote healthy working habits – support your team members in monitoring their workload and encourage healthy working hours and a positive work/life balance.
- Review workloads, duties and responsibilities - regularly ask team members how they are and how well they feel their work is going. Review deadlines to ensure they are reasonable and that work is clearly defined.
- Identify potential conflict and people issues and handle them early and effectively, involving HR where necessary.
- Reflect on your own management style and tailor it to suit your team members needs.



Line Managers and Supervisors need to think about their behaviour and how it can either add to the stress their team experience or help alleviate the problem. Management behaviour is often highlighted as a major factor by those suffering from work related stress and is one of the main reasons why employees change employers. A manager may be doing something that affects their staff but be unaware of it.

The Health and safety Executive (HSE) and the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) have created a Line Managers competency tool which can help you to assess whether your management style and behaviour is effective for preventing and reducing stress at work. It helps to be able to reflect on your behaviour and management style and gives tips on what you can work on to become a more effective manager in reducing workplace stress for your teams. You can complete the tool and revisit it over time to improve your management style.

The tool looks at how you perform against the following competencies:

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

Read more about the tool and learn how to use it here: https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm

How to recognise that a colleague may be experiencing mental health issues

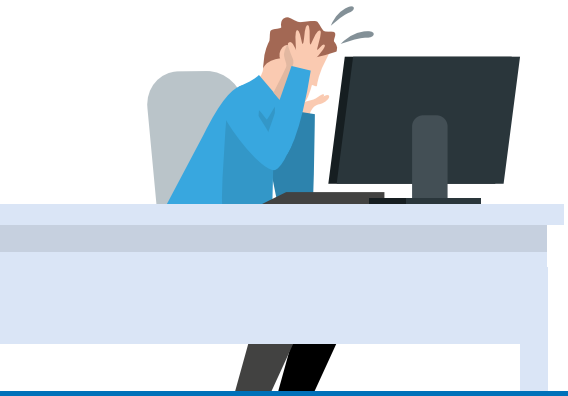
It can be difficult to recognise that a colleague needs support coping with mental health issues, even though you may have noticed changes in their behaviour or work performance. Mates in Mind have identified the list below of behaviour that can provide an indication of this.

Mates in Mind list of behaviour that may be a sign of mental health issues:

- Appearing restless and agitated.
- Appearing tearful.
- Not wanting to talk to or be with people.
- Indications they may be using alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings.
- Not replying to messages or being distant.
- Not wanting to do things they usually enjoy.
- Indicating they are finding it hard to cope with everyday things.
- Recent inability to concentrate on their work or in meetings.
- Recent inability to complete any of their work.
- New pattern of unexplained lateness or absence.

If you recognise these signs in a colleague what should you do?

- Remember that early intervention and support can be important in facilitating a quick recovery and return to a normal, healthy and positive life.
- Engage with the individual to help you better understand what is causing the change in behaviour and help them understand they are not alone.
- Advise them of the support that is available through your company, NHS or other organisations.
- Consider whether changes can be made in the way they are being managed.
- Understand what resources are available to support them and you in dealing with this.



Why might it be hard for colleagues to come forward?

Many workers feel that admitting to mental health problems will make them appear weak or unable to cope with job demands. This stigma prevents them from seeking the help they need. Stigma in mental health refers to the negative attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that society holds about mental health conditions and those who experience them.

Talking about mental health can be challenging for anyone, but there are specific factors that might make it particularly difficult for someone in the construction industry:

- **Work Culture:** The construction industry has historically had a male dominated culture where discussing personal struggles hasn't been the norm. This can make it hard for individuals to open up.
- **Job Security:** Concerns about job security might prevent workers from discussing mental health issues, fearing it could affect their employment status or opportunities for advancement.
- **Transient Workforce:** The often-transient nature of construction work can lead to a lack of stable support networks, making it harder for workers to seek help.

As a line manager or supervisor, it's important to create a supportive environment to encourage your colleagues to speak up about mental health. Making it a habit to ask colleagues how they are feeling and sharing your own experiences openly and honestly can help to address mental health challenges.

Starting the conversation

If you believe a colleague is struggling, it is important to approach them with care and empathy. Here are some steps you can take:

1. **Choose the Right Time and Place:** Find a quiet, private setting where you can talk without interruptions. Ensure the timing is appropriate and the colleague is not under immediate stress.

2. **Express Concern:** Start the conversation by expressing your concern in a non-judgmental way. You might say, "I've noticed that you don't seem yourself lately, and I wanted to check in to see how you're doing."

3. **Be Supportive:** Let them know that you are there to support them. You can say, "I'm here to help and listen if you need to talk about anything."

4. **Encourage Open Communication:** Ask open-ended questions to encourage them to share their feelings. For example, "How have you been feeling recently?" or "Is there anything that's been particularly challenging for you?"

5. **Listen Actively:** Pay attention to what they are saying without interrupting. Make sure you have switched off your phone so that they get your full attention. Show that you are listening through nodding and maintaining eye contact. Use phrases like, "I understand that must be difficult," to validate their feelings.

6. **Offer Resources:** Inform them about available support options, such as counselling services, employee assistance programs, or other resources from the employee guidance booklet.

7. **Follow Up:** Check in with them regularly to see how they are doing and if they need any further support.

Here is some advice from Mates in Mind on active listening:

Show you care: Focus on the other person, make eye contact, put away your phone.

Have patience: It may take time and several attempts before a person is ready to open up.

Use questions: Use open questions that need more than a yes/no answer, and follow up with questions like 'Tell me more'.

Say it back: Check you've understood, but don't interrupt or offer a solution.

Have courage: Don't be put off by a negative response and, most importantly, don't feel you have to fill a silence.

For managers, implementing Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) can be a powerful way to support your team's mental health. A Wellness Action Plan (WAP) is a personalized tool designed to help individuals manage their mental health and well-being at work. Here is a guide to help you get started:

1. **Understand the Purpose:** WAPs are designed to help employees manage their mental health and well-being at work. They identify what keeps them well, what might trigger stress, and what support they need from their manager.

2. **Introduce WAPs to Your Team member:** Explain the benefits of WAPs. Emphasise that they are a proactive tool for everyone, not just those currently experiencing mental health issues.

3. **Collaborate on the Plan:** Work with them to develop their WAP. This ensures the plan is tailored to their specific needs and that both of you understand the support that can be provided.

4. **Use a Template:** Utilise a WAP template to guide the conversation. The template should cover areas such as:

   - What helps the employee stay well at work.
   - Early warning signs of poor mental health.
   - Triggers that can lead to stress or poor mental health.
   - Actions and support that can help the employee stay well.
   - Steps to take if the employee is experiencing poor mental health.
   - Here is a template developed by MIND: mind-guide-for-line-managers-wellness-action-plans_final.pdf

5. **Ensure Confidentiality:** Assure employees that their WAPs will be kept confidential and only shared with those who need to know to provide support.

6. **Regular Reviews:** Schedule regular check-ins to review and update the WAPs. This ensures they remain relevant and effective as circumstances change.

7. **Provide Resources:** Make sure employees are aware of available resources, such as counselling services, employee assistance programs, and mental health training.

Supporting your colleagues

Alongside directing a team member to immediate support resources that are available to assist them (such as those mentioned in the employee guidance booklet), you may need to consider work related support measures to facilitate an employee's recovery back to full health. This could also apply if an employee is absent from work owing to poor mental health and needs support with their return to the workplace.

If your organisation has an HR department, it is advisable to involve them early, take advice and work with them to develop a plan on how to best support the employee. Many organisations have occupational health services who can assess the employee specifically in relation to their role and responsibilities. They can provide advice on measures that can be taken to support the employee, such as counselling, amended duties, reduced hours or in the case of absence, a phased return to work. Ultimately, the aim is to provide support over a period of time to facilitate a return to work in full.

Signposting additional help

For individuals experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues, their GP is the most appropriate initial point of contact to seek support and referral to other services. However, detailed below is information on other routes that an individual can follow.

NHS Mental Health Services (UK)

Emergency
Call 999 or go to A&E

Urgent Support
Call your GP or 111

Online support: Check your mental health symptoms - NHS 111

Company EAP Schemes
Many companies provide an employee assistance programme, intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their health and wellbeing. These generally include assessment, short-term counselling and referral services for employees and their immediate family. These are usually accessible 24/7 by phone. Ask your Manager of HR Department for details.

Charities
There are a wide range of charities offering a wide range of free services:

Samaritans
Samaritans are open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk. You can visit some Samaritans branches in person. Samaritans also have a Welsh Language Line on 0808 164 0123 (7pm – 11pm every day).

https://www.samaritans.org
24/7 Helpline: 116 123
Email: Jo@samaritans.org

Lighthouse Charity
Support for emotional, physical and financial wellbeing for those in Construction and their Families.

24/7 Helpline: UK 0345 605 1956;
ROI 1800 939 122
Text HARDHAT to 85258 (in the UK)
or 50808 (ROI)
Live Chat (9am – 6pm)
www.constructionindustryhelpline.com

Hub of Hope
UK-wide mental health service database. Lets you search for local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS mental health support. You can filter results to find specific kinds of support.

hubofhope.co.uk

Mikeysline (Scotland)
https://mikeysline.co.uk
Evening Text Service: 07786207755
Telephone and Online support One to One sessions.

MIND
Helpline for Support (not crisis)
0300 102 1234 (9am – 6pm, Mon – Fri):
Email: info@mind.org.uk
https://www.mind.org.uk

Staying Safe (from suicidal thoughts)
https://stayingsafe.net

Making a Safety Plan
https://stayingsafe.net/safetyplan

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)
Provides a helpline and online chat, as well as information and support, for anyone affected by suicide or suicidal thought.

thecalmzone.net
0800 58 58 58

National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK. Helpline offering a supportive listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide. Open from 6pm to midnight every day.

spuk.org.uk/national-suicide-prevention-helpline-uk/
0800 689 5652 or 0800 689 0880

Remember to take care of your own mental health

As Managers and Supervisors it is important that you are taking care of your own mental health so that you can be in a position to support others. Here are some simple tips:

1. **Set Boundaries:** It's important to have a clear line between work and personal time. Make sure to switch off work emails and notifications after hours to truly unwind.
2. **Enjoy Self-Care:** Find activities that make you happy and relaxed, whether it's a hobby, a walk in the park, or spending time with friends and family.
3. **Reach Out:** If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't hesitate to talk to someone. Whether it's a friend, a colleague, or a professional, sharing your feelings can make a big difference.
4. **Keep Learning:** Stay informed about mental health. The more you know, the better you can take care of yourself and your team.
5. **Lead by Example:** Show your team that it's okay to take breaks and prioritise mental health. They'll follow your lead and feel more comfortable doing the same.
6. **Check In with Yourself:** Take a moment regularly to ask yourself how you're doing. Reflect on what's going well and what might need a little adjustment.

Taking care of your own mental health not only benefits you but also sets a positive example for your team.

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The Mineral Products Association is the trade association for the aggregates, asphalt, cement, concrete, dimension stone, lime, mortar and industrial sand industries.

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