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## Mental health at work – for managers Guide

### Creating a mentally healthy workplace

The University wants employees to feel confident that they can be open about mental health issues and that those who disclose mental health problems will be supported.

Line managers can help support wellbeing by creating a mentally healthy workplace and spotting the warning signs when an employee is not coping. The following information and documents provide a toolkit for managers in supporting staff.

#### Open and honest communication

Develop a culture where open and honest communication is encouraged, and support and mutual respect are the norm. Regular one-to-one meetings enable a regular discussion about work and personal development issues. Encourage an ethos where employees know it's okay to talk about mental health, and that it is safe to disclose their own mental health problems.

#### Engage employees in their work

Employees will feel more involved if they know where the University and their faculty/service is heading. Monthly team meetings provide the opportunity for upwards and downwards communication.

#### Be approachable and interested in your staff

Managers who regularly ask staff how they are and take an interest in their team's lives are more likely to build trust. Be aware of what is happening in people's personal lives and stress outside of work, which might be contributing to them struggling to cope in the workplace.

#### Check the work environment and eliminate potential stressors

Noise, temperature and light levels can all have a big impact on wellbeing. Space dividers, quiet spaces or music may improve the environment or could be part of the problem, leading people to feel isolated and disconnected.

#### Ensure employees have a good work/life balance

Encourage exercise and social events, including those available at the University. Ensure workload is regularly assessed and work priorities, breaks encouraged and annual leave is taken.

Staff can take part in activities at the [Centre for Sport \(/people-groups/Service/centre-for-sport\)](#) or [Centre for Music \(/people-groups/service/centre-for-music\)](#) during their lunch break or after work. Physical activities boost employee health, mental wellbeing and team work.

### Supporting mental health at work

#### Supporting mental health at work guidance

Download the [supporting mental health at work guidance \(https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/\\_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx\)](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx) (Word). It includes advice for managers on the following topics:

- Supporting the wellbeing of employees.
- Spotting the signs when an employee is not coping.
- Supporting employees with mental health problems.
- Wellness recovery action plan (WRAP).
- Formal procedures.
- Guidance for managers in supporting the rest of the team.

#### Additional documents for managers

- [Action to be taken by managers concerned about employees \(https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/\\_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Appendix%203%20-](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Appendix%203%20-)

- [Reasonable adjustments policy](#) (/ou/hr/Documents/Reasonable%20Adjustments%20policy%20FINAL%20April%202015.docx) (Word).
- [Advice on workplace adjustments for mental health conditions](#) ([https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/ layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Appendix%204%20-%20advice%20for%20employers%20on%20workplace%20adjustments%20for%20mental%20health%20conditions.docx](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Appendix%204%20-%20advice%20for%20employers%20on%20workplace%20adjustments%20for%20mental%20health%20conditions.docx)) (Word).
- [Wellness recovery action plan \(WRAP\) template](#) (<https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/ layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Appendix%205%20-%20WRAP%20template.docx>) (Word).
- [Legal considerations](#) (<https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/ layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Appendix%206%20-%20legal%20considerations.docx>) (Word).
- [Promoting positive mental health in the workplace – top tips](#) ([https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Mental health top tips table.pdf](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Mental%20health%20top%20tips%20table.pdf)) (PDF).
- [Stress risk assessment form](#) (/tasks-guides/Guide/risk-assessment#part6).

Mental health awareness for managers training course

Attend the [mental health awareness for managers training course](#) (/tasks-guides/TrainingCourse/Mental-Health-Awareness-for-Managers) (duration: 3 hours, 15 minutes). This half-day session aims to provide managers with information and guidance on responding to emotional and/or mental health issues that can occasionally arise in the workplace.

We also have a [mental health awareness video](#) (/tasks-guides/TrainingCourse/Mental-Health-Awareness-video) available, which is a useful resource for managers, and colleagues. s also a Mental Health Awareness video.

The [Charlie Waller Memorial Trust](#) (<https://www.cwmt.org.uk/>) (external link) have also developed an [e-learning package](#) (/tasks-guides/TrainingCourse/Raising-awareness-fighting-depression) on raising awareness of depression.

### Workplace triggers for mental health

Mental health fluctuates along a spectrum from good to poor. Work can have a huge impact on mental health by promoting well-being or triggering problems.

Potential workplace triggers for distress can include:

- Long hours and no breaks.
- Unrealistic expectations or deadlines.
- High-pressure environments.
- Poor working environment.
- Unmanageable workloads or lack of control over work.
- Negative relationships or poor communication.
- Workplace culture or lack of management support.
- Job insecurity or change management.
- High-risk roles.
- Lone working.

### Spotting when an employee is not coping

Managers and colleagues may observe a colleague not coping at work. Spotting the signs at an early stage means that managers can intervene before the problem escalates into a sickness absence or crisis. A key part of spotting the signs is managers and colleagues observing what they see as they walk around the workplace or in one to ones or team meetings.

Managers who know their staff will be better placed to recognise any changes in usual behaviour. Some of the key things to look out for include:

- Changes in usual behaviour (eg poor performance).
- Tiredness.
- Increased sickness absence.
- Change in working patterns (eg arriving late, arriving early or working later).
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs or smoking.
- Tearfulness
- Headaches
- Loss of humour or changes in emotional mood.

Managers who have spotted the signs of a member of staff not coping, or when another employee has raised concern about a member of staff, should arrange an informal meeting to discuss their concerns.

Managers are responsible for maintaining contact with absent staff and should refer to the [contact absent staff during sickness](#) (/tasks-guides/task/contact-absent-staff-during-sickness) task.

### Discussing mental health with an employee

#### Preparation

- The content of meetings will vary depending on whether there is a mild, serious or very serious level of concern.
- Be certain how you will open the discussion. Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and state the purpose as positively as possible.
- Dialogue is best encouraged through presenting oneself as genuinely concerned, empathic and warm.
- Give examples of the behaviour/conduct witnessed and articulate your concern. Be clear about expected standards of conduct. Be specific about what is and what is not acceptable.
- Wait patiently for the employee to respond to the concerns raised and reflect back to the employee what you think you have heard them say.

## General tips

- Avoid clichés like 'cheer up' and 'I'm sure it'll pass'. Be open minded and non-judgemental.
- Think about your body language: try to be relaxed and open. Looking uncomfortable won't go unnoticed and may perpetuate the taboo.
- People will want support at different times in different ways, so ask how you can help.
- Try not to ask too many questions: offer many more reflections than questions.
- Be prepared to give them time: some people may not be able to tell you everything there and then. They may need time to get back to you when they feel ready.

## Holding the meeting

Ask open questions about what is happening, how they are feeling and what the impact of their condition is:

- How long have they been feeling unwell? Is this an ongoing issue or something that an immediate action could put right?
- Are there any immediate support needs? You could suggest the employee seeks advice from their GP or NHS Direct.
- Are they receiving any support? Ensure they are aware of the employee assistance programme – refer to appendix 1 of the [supporting mental health at work guidance](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx) ([https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/\\_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx)) (Word).
- Has work contributed to their distress? Are there any problems outside of work?
- Ask whether an occupational health appointment would be useful.
- Is there any aspect of their medical care that it would be helpful for you to know about (for example, side effects of medication that might impact on work)?
- Do they have ideas about any adjustments to their work that may be helpful? Short or long term.
- If they have an ongoing mental health problem, would it be useful to discuss their established coping strategies and how the organisation can help?
- Establish communication of their situation to colleagues, if necessary.

## Decide what needs to happen next

- Seek the opinions and suggestions of the employee.
- Decide whether a review meeting is helpful and when.
- Let the employee know who will be informed about the outcome of your discussion.

## Keep notes of the meeting

Managers should keep a note of the discussion at the meeting for future reference. Health information is classified as 'sensitive personal data' under the Data Protection Act and should, therefore, be held in accord with the legal requirements. See appendix 6 of the [supporting mental health at work guidance](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx) ([https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/\\_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx)) (Word).

## First part of the guide

## You may also need

Mental health at work (/tasks-guides/Guide/mental-health-at-work) Guide

Employee assistance programme (/tasks-guides/Guide/employee-assistance-programme) Guide

Supporting mental health at work ([https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/\\_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/_layouts/15/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Supporting%20mental%20health%20at%20work%20guidance.docx)) Word

Mental Wellbeing Staff Network (/people-groups/staff-networks/mental-wellbeing-staff-network)

Support for disabled staff (/tasks-guides/Guide/support-for-disabled-staff) Guide

Mental Health Awareness (/tasks-guides/TrainingCourse/Mental-Health-Awareness-video) E-learning

Raising Awareness - Fighting Depression (/tasks-guides/TrainingCourse/Raising-awareness-fighting-depression) Training Course

Mindful Employer publications (<http://www.mindfulemployer.net/support/publications/>) External link

Mindful Employer line manager resource ([https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/MINDFUL\\_EMPLOYER\\_Line\\_Managers\\_Resource\\_Revised.pdf](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/MINDFUL_EMPLOYER_Line_Managers_Resource_Revised.pdf)) PDF

Keeping well at work ([https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Keeping\\_well\\_at\\_work\\_rev\\_2014.pdf](https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/Keeping_well_at_work_rev_2014.pdf)) PDF

## Category

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## Topics

Mental health and wellbeing (<https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides#Default=%7B%22k%22%3A%22%22%2C%22r%22%3A%5B%7B%22n%22%3A%22owstaxIdTaskTopic>

Staff wellbeing and support (<https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides#Default=%7B%22k%22%3A%22%22%2C%22r%22%3A%5B%7B%22n%22%3A%22owstaxIdTaskTopics>

Managing people ([https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides#Default=%7B%22k%22%3A%22%22%2C%22r%22%3A%5B%7B%22n%22%3A%22owstaxIdTaskTopics%22%2C%22t%22%3A%5B%22string\(%5C%22%6ee4-4493-800c-feeb72e64493%5C%22\)%22%5D%2C%22o%22%3A%22and%22%2C%22k%22%3Afalse%2C%22m%22%3Anull%7D%5D%7D](https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides#Default=%7B%22k%22%3A%22%22%2C%22r%22%3A%5B%7B%22n%22%3A%22owstaxIdTaskTopics%22%2C%22t%22%3A%5B%22string(%5C%22%6ee4-4493-800c-feeb72e64493%5C%22)%22%5D%2C%22o%22%3A%22and%22%2C%22k%22%3Afalse%2C%22m%22%3Anull%7D%5D%7D))

Maximising performance ([https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides#Default=%7B%22k%22%3A%22%22%2C%22r%22%3A%5B%7B%22n%22%3A%22owstaxIdTaskTopics%22%2C%22t%22%3A%5B%22string\(%5C%22%6ee4-4493-800c-feeb72e64493%5C%22\)%22%5D%2C%22o%22%3A%22and%22%2C%22k%22%3Afalse%2C%22m%22%3Anull%7D%5D%7D](https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides#Default=%7B%22k%22%3A%22%22%2C%22r%22%3A%5B%7B%22n%22%3A%22owstaxIdTaskTopics%22%2C%22t%22%3A%5B%22string(%5C%22%6ee4-4493-800c-feeb72e64493%5C%22)%22%5D%2C%22o%22%3A%22and%22%2C%22k%22%3Afalse%2C%22m%22%3Anull%7D%5D%7D))

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