

Supporting mental health at work

If an employee has a mental health issue, it's important their employer takes it seriously. For example, it's a good idea to talk to the employee to find out what support they might need at work.

There are many types of mental health issue. An issue can happen suddenly, because of a specific event in someone's life, or it can build up gradually over time.

Common mental health issues include:

- stress (this is not classed as a medical condition but it can still have a serious impact on wellbeing)
- depression
- anxiety

Less common ones include:

- bipolar disorder
- schizophrenia

The law

Employers have a 'duty of care'. This means they must do all they reasonably can to support their employees' health, safety and wellbeing. This includes:

- making sure the working environment is safe
- protecting staff from discrimination
- carrying out risk assessments

Discriminating against someone with a disability

A mental health issue can be considered a [disability under the law](#) if all of the following apply:

- it has a 'substantial adverse effect' on the life of an employee (for example, they regularly cannot focus on a task, or it takes them longer to do)
- it lasts at least 12 months, or is expected to
- it affects their ability to do their normal day-to-day activities (for example, interacting with people, following instructions or keeping to set working times)

A mental health issue can be considered a disability even if there are not symptoms all the time, or the symptoms are better at some times than at others.

If an employee has a disability, employers:

- must not discriminate against them because of their disability
- must consider making [reasonable adjustments](#)

It's a good idea to work with the employee to make the right adjustments for them, even if the issue is not a disability. Often, simple

changes to the person's working arrangements or responsibilities could be enough. For example:

- allowing them more rest breaks
- working with them each day to help prioritise their workload

Why talking openly about mental health is important

If staff feel they can talk openly about mental health, problems are less likely to build up. This could lead to:

- less time off for a mental health issue
- improved morale in the workplace

Creating a supportive environment

It's helpful if employers create an environment where staff feel able to talk openly about mental health.

For example:

- treating mental and physical health as equally important
- making sure employees have regular one-to-ones with their managers, to talk about any problems they're having
- encouraging positive mental health, for example arranging mental health awareness training, workshops or appointing mental health 'champions' who staff can talk to

Employers can find out more about [promoting positive mental health at work](#), including:

- understanding mental health
- creating a mental health strategy
- educating the workforce

Supporting someone with signs of a mental health issue

Find out how to [support someone at work with signs of a mental health issue](#).

If an employee needs time off

Find out about [managing absence caused by a mental health issue](#).

Training and other support

You can book [Acas training on mental health at work](#).

You can get help and information about mental health in the workplace from:

- [Mental Health at Work](#)
- [Time to Change](#)

The following provide help for people with disabilities:

- [Access to Work](#)
- [Remploy](#)

You can use 'Wellness Action Plans' to put steps in place to support your mental health. If you're a manager you can use them with your team members. [Find out more about Wellness Action Plans from Mind.](#)

If you're a member of a trade union, you can also get help and information on mental health from them.

If you're unhappy with how your employer has dealt with your issue

You can [raise the issue](#) with your employer.

More on mental health in the workplace

You can read:

- the [Acas framework for creating positive mental health at work](#), involving employers, managers and employees
- guides on how to [deal with stress](#) or [anxiety](#) in the workplace