

Mental Health

TOOLKIT



- How your team deals with stress
- How can I measure my team's mental well-being?
- How can I identify if someone's mental health is suffering?
- What's your role as manager?

Using The Doctors Clinic Group Mental Health Service

DO. LIFE. WELL.

Introduction

The CIPD calculates that absence per head costs **£522 per employee**, with the average absence being 6.6 days per annum (2017 data). Mental health is a key reason for absence from work. The Reward and Employee Benefits Association (REBA), issued a report called Employee Wellbeing Research 2018. It included some interesting statistics; **59.7%** of all Boardrooms stated that mental health was their key employee well-being concern, but only **15%** have a specific mental health strategy in place.



Mental well-being used to be a topic that was actively avoided at work, with employees being worried about admitting that they had mental health issues. Whilst this is still true today, some high-profile campaigns have given more focus to the prevalence of mental health issues and encouraged people to discuss and share their experiences.

There are a vast array of mental health disorders including schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, ADHD, depression, and anxiety. The severity of each illness may vary per individual.

Anxiety and depression are very common mental health disorders. They are often precipitated by a reaction to stress, a difficult life event, such as bereavement, or work-related issues. However,

they may also be chronic, longstanding issues that require, support from from psychologists, doctors, friends, and family, as well as colleagues. Companies do not carry responsibility for the general health of their employees, but they do have a “duty of care” for their employees. In simple terms, this means that a company should take steps to avoid putting their employees in a position where they could be made ill by their work.

Work can be a major stressor when people start to feel overwhelmed or stressed by their work or by being at work. Everyone is different, and enjoyable pressure for one person can be hugely stressful for another. Most people need an element of pressure to enjoy work, it’s when it turns into ‘stress’ that the issues start.

Boards are more concerned about mental well-being than any other form of wellbeing

data Mental health is a clear priority for our respondents' boards with almost three in five telling us this is the area of employee wellbeing their board is most concerned about. One in five (19.5%) are prioritising physical wellbeing and one in 10 (10.9%) are primarily concerned about long-term physical health conditions.

Boards most concerned about mental well-being 59.7%

insight Given the earlier finding showing the levels of concern about high-pressure working environments, it is not surprising to see mental health flagged up as a priority. Mentally healthy employees will be happy and healthy (and therefore more productive at work).

One in six have a defined mental health strategy in place

Just one in six respondents have a defined mental health strategy in place although over a third (36.5%) say they are planning to introduce such a strategy in the next 12 months. A further quarter (26.1%) plan to have a strategy in place by 2020.

Have a defined mental health strategy in place 15.8%

insight

We expect a huge increase in the number of employers going from addressing mental well-being to having a defined strategy in place.

How your body deals with stress

Stress is a biological and psychological response experienced on encountering a threat that we feel we do not have the resources to deal with.

There are 2 types of responses: *The short-term responses or The Fight or Flight Response*

When you encounter a perceived threat the body releases hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol.

Adrenaline increases your heart rate, elevates your blood pressure and boosts energy supplies.

Cortisol, the primary stress hormone, increases sugars (glucose) in the bloodstream enhances your brain's use of glucose and increases the availability of substances that repair tissues. Cortisol also curbs functions that would be nonessential or detrimental in a fight-or-flight situation. It alters immune system responses and suppresses the digestive system, the reproductive system, and growth processes.

This complex natural alarm system also communicates with regions of your brain that control mood, motivation, and fear.

The long-term response

Threats involving the fight or flight responses are rare nowadays, but that doesn't mean that life is free of stress. Modern life exposes us to mild-to-moderate, but chronic, stress constantly.

Ongoing, chronic stress can cause or exacerbate many serious health problems, including:

- Mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorders
- Restlessness and insomnia
- Difficulty focusing, concentrating
- Irritability
- Increasing intake of drugs or alcohol
- Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, and stroke
- Obesity and other eating disorders
- Menstrual problems
- Sexual dysfunction, such as impotence and premature ejaculation in men and loss of sex drive
- Skin and hair problems, such as acne, psoriasis, eczema, and permanent hair loss
- Gastrointestinal problems, such as GERD, gastritis, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon

Additionally, if people are working hard and become ill, physical burnout can be frequently accompanied by mental burnout; or the start of mental health problems. If someone is feeling ill and is still working, because they either feel forced to for fear of losing their job or fear of failing to achieve objectives, it will start to impact their mental health.

These negative feelings of stress and anxiety drive more symptoms of physical ill-health, and it can become a vicious circle where the person never fully recovers and feels well.

As a Manager, therefore, it's important to understand if any of your team are feeling stressed or anxious, and ensuring that you act to remove the stress for your employees if it is caused by work.

Life events such as bereavement, divorces, and family problems can cause significant emotional distress for employees.

We are all only human which means that there is an impact at work, people may be less focused, show visible emotions, or even dress differently.

Identifying symptoms of mental ill-health is crucial and offering confidential support through a private GP practice can have a significant impact on someone's health, and productivity and motivation at work.

Doctors can support physical and mental ill-health, identify any connections, and support the employee's recovery. If the person has depression/anxiety or stress, it is crucial to understand if work is one of the main issues. Using a doctor can help to unpick any underlying conditions and reasons.



How can I measure my team's mental wellbeing?

As part of The Doctors Clinic Group mental health service, we have provided online access to the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing survey, which you can access by clicking here. You can share this link with your team to take the survey anonymously and we will send you the data. Your team will be able to see their results instantly and be directed to a page which explains their results. This is not a mental health diagnostic tool, this will only show mental well-being.

What's your role as manager?

Asking someone if they are "OK" is an important part of any Manager's role, but you're not a mental health expert, or a counsellor or a doctor.

If you are able to talk to your team member, and they share that they are experiencing some issues, we can support in a variety of ways. If you're unsure of how to approach an issue you should always check with your HR department first.

Sometimes just listening to them, possibly changing their workload, or giving them time off, will sort the problem. However, if it is a longer-term issue, it's important to get professional help.

How can I identify if someone's mental health is suffering?

Has the person's behaviour suddenly changed?

Are they visibly upset at work (crying)?

Are they suddenly angry, and shouting at colleagues?

Are they withdrawn and quiet?

Do they look different?

Have they stopped washing/taking care of themselves?

Has intermittent absence increased?

Stress can have physical symptoms such as regular colds, or upset tummies.

Using the London Doctors Clinic Mental Health Service

The LDC mental health service is there to provide you and your teams with a full support system for managing mental health and wellbeing in workplace.



Mental health survey – The survey provides a way of benchmarking your team's mental wellbeing and a way of measuring the success of your mental wellbeing strategy.



Early prevention – The MI from the survey will highlight low wellbeing scores and allow for open discussions about recognising stress, anxiety and depression.



GP appointments – Our GPs provide the first point of call for any mental health issue. Whether it's a safe, confidential place to talk or discussing longer term treatment plans and onward referrals.



Onsite psychiatrist – Our Consultant Psychiatric Panel means we are equipped to provide specialist mental health support. Your team can choose between face to face appointments or video appointments, allowing for maximum flexibility and comfort.