Mental health in the workplace
Foreword

Community believes good mental health should be a priority for every workplace.

We know that mental health is a workplace issue — work can be a contributor to mental health conditions and mental health conditions can impact on people’s working lives.

Around 15 per cent of people in work have symptoms of a mental health problem. However, unlike physical hazards to health and safety, mental health is not easily identified, is often misunderstood and can be difficult to talk about.

Over recent years, mental health has become a hot topic, and something more openly talked about. However, there are still too many people struggling with a mental health condition, and without the support they need at work.

At Community, we are working with our members, reps and employers to change workplaces for the better. We’ve been running mental health first aid training for our members, created a mental health in the workplace charter for employers to sign up to and have been working with employers to implement mental health policies.

If we are going to tackle the mental health crisis in this country, we all have a role to play. This guidance is here to help you with information on; the law, how to get help from Community, tips to help you create a positive workplace culture and the role of your employer.
What is mental health?

‘Mental health problem’, ‘mental illness’ and ‘mental ill health’ are all common terms that are used to refer to conditions such as depression, anxiety, psychosis, bipolar and schizophrenia.

It is important to recognise that mental health is just as significant as physical health and can have a huge impact on our ability to participate in education, work and society. Just like physical health, mental health can change over the course of a person’s life.

The facts

• Around 300,000 people lose their jobs each year because of long term mental health problems.

• Of those who have mental health conditions, nine out of ten are discriminated against because of their mental health conditions.

• The annual cost to our economy is between 74 billion and 99 billion each year.

• 19% of staff feel that they can’t speak to managers about stress at work.

• 1 in 5 people take a day off work due to stress.
What does the law say?

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from being discriminated against due to disability. Under the Act, a person is deemed to have a disability if they have physical or mental impairment which has “a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

It is illegal under the Act to:

• Discriminate against a worker because of a mental disability.

• Fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a worker with a disability.

Check out Community’s guidance on discrimination by clicking here and on reasonable adjustments by clicking here.
Getting support from Community

Community is here to support you through any issues in your working life, and that includes with mental health. These are the ways we can help you:

**Mental health first aid courses**
You can access mental health first aid courses through our learning team. If your colleagues want to take the training too, we can arrange for a session to be run in your workplace. Contact us at learn@community-tu.org to find out more.

**Other mental health learning opportunities**
We also offer other mental health learning opportunities. You can find out about them by clicking here.

Our learning offer is flexible to meet your needs with a variety of online and in person learning, bite-sized courses as well as longer CPD accredited courses. If you can’t find something that suits your needs. Get in touch at learn@community-tu.org.

**Flexible working or reasonable adjustment requests**
We are on hand to help you make a flexible working request or a request for reasonable adjustments. If you work somewhere where Community are recognised and you have a workplace rep, you can contact them for support. If not, get in touch with our member service centre.

**Signposting to specialist support**
If you need urgent support with your own mental health, our team can signpost you to specialist mental health services. Take a look at the back of this guide for some organisations you can reach out to for help.
Creating a positive workplace culture

We all have a role to play in tackling poor mental health in our workplace and creating a supportive, positive environment at work. These are some tips to help you:

**Talk openly**
Talking openly about your own mental health and wellbeing may encourage your colleagues to open up.

**Reach out and stay in touch**
Try and reach out to your colleagues and talk about things not relating to work — you could talk to them about; pets, sports or hobbies.

**Listen**
Try and reach out to your colleagues and talk about things not relating to work — you could talk to them about; pets, sports or hobbies.

**Encourage your colleagues**
Try and reach out to your colleagues and talk about things not relating to work — you could talk to them about; pets, sports or hobbies.
**Be aware**
Your colleagues might not recognise that they have a mental health condition, or might not be ready to talk about it, or they might be getting support from someone else. Don’t force them to talk if they don’t want to.

**Tackle stigma**
Challenge colleagues who use discriminatory language or make jokes at the expense of others. You might want to do this away from the situation and on an individual level if this is what you are more comfortable with.

**Raise awareness**
Work with your rep or colleagues to support mental health events like mental health awareness day.

**Become a mental health champion**
Following the steps above, you are well on your way to being a mental health champion. Keep trying to create a positive workplace environment for you and your colleagues.
The role of employers

Workplace adjustments
Your employer should review their sickness absence, disciplinary procedures, and recruitment processes and make adjustments to support those experiencing mental health conditions.

Reducing stress
Workplace stress is one of the biggest causes of mental health conditions. It’s important for your employer to remember stress isn’t just caused by a heavy workload, and different things can cause different people stress.

Your employer should work with employees to find out what is causing them to be stressed at work and put in practices, policies and procedures to reduce stress where possible.

Reasonable adjustments and disclosure
Under the law, employers are liable for discrimination if they knew — or ought to have known — about a disability and do not make reasonable adjustments.

The Equality Act says that employers must consider these three broad forms of reasonable adjustment:

• Changing the way things are done
• Overcoming physical features
• Providing extra equipment
These could include things like:

- Changing your working hours
- Reserving a parking space
- Consideration for job sharing
- Reallocation of workload.

For more specific guidance on reasonable adjustments and how to make a request, take a look at our guidance on reasonable adjustments by clicking here.

**Providing support**
Your employer has a duty of care for their employees. They should provide support to you around your mental health. That could involve; working with an external company, providing counselling or signposting to support you can access.

**Training for managers**
Your employer should provide mental health awareness training for anyone who manages others in the organisation. This will help managers to know how to spot the signs, understand your policies, practices and procedures around mental health and know how to help colleagues.
Further information

For more information and guidance on mental health at work, you can reach out to the organisations below:

Mind

SANE

Rethink

Samaritans

The Campaign Against Living Miserably

Find a local mental health charity