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Mental health toolkit for employers

Your journey to a workplace that leads on good mental health starts here

Contents

Mental health key numbers

Mental health problems at work cost employers in the UK a total of

£35 billion a year

That's the equivalent of **£1,300** for every worker in every UK business.

The cost includes:

£21.2 billion
cost of 'presenteeism': where people go to work while unwell

£10.6 billion
cost of sickness absence

£3.1 billion
cost of staff turnover

Source: **https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/mental-health-work-business-costs-ten-years**

Actions for employers for good mental health in the workplace

1. Make a commitment to mental health:

- ☐ Appoint a senior Mental Health Champion
- ☐ Become a member of the Greater Macnhester Good Employment Charter
- ☐ Listen to employees' views and experiences

2. Build your approach:

- ☐ Understand the law
- ☐ Assess your needs
- ☐ Update your policies
- ☐ Create a mental health plan

3. Create a positive culture:

- ☐ Promote healthy activities
- ☐ Reduce work stresses
- ☐ Communicate about wellbeing

4. Provide support and training:

- ☐ Share information and policies
- ☐ Offer mental health training
- ☐ Support line managers

5. Manage mental health:

- ☐ Make it safe to disclose mental health difficulties
- ☐ Tackle causes of work-related stress

6. Provide the right support:

- ☐ Know how to respond when someone asks for help
- ☐ Signpost to external support
- ☐ Provide a confidential support service

7. Help people to recover:

- ☐ Support employees back to work
- ☐ Use Access to Work support

8. Go further:

- ☐ Measure success
- ☐ Keep reviewing your approach
- ☐ Share your learning with other employers

Welcome

Mental health is an integral part of how we feel about our jobs.

With 1 in 6 employees currently experiencing mental health problems, mental health is an essential business concern. There is a strong relationship between levels of staff wellbeing and motivation and performance. Taking a positive, proactive approach to mental health at work can help you grow your staff and your organisation.

Your journey to a workplace that leads on good mental health starts here. The ambition of this toolkit is to help your organisation – whether business, public sector or charitable – support the mental health and wellbeing of your employees. It will help you take positive actions to build a culture that champions good mental health and provides a greater understanding for how to help those who need more support.

There has been a lot written about how to tackle mental ill health and promote wellbeing in the workplace. This toolkit will make knowing how to act simple; it will help you pick out the best free resources that are most useful to you and your team, and help you develop an approach that fits the needs of your staff and organisation.

Every organisation has an opportunity to support and develop a mentally healthy workforce and thankfully it doesn't need to be complicated or expensive – this toolkit will help you understand and act, step by step.

How to use this toolkit

i **Hover your cursor over the relevant box below to see more information:**

Foreword

The need to look after employees' mental health has never been more prevalent. All employers have a responsibility to support the health and wellbeing of their staff.

In Greater Manchester, businesses are seeing first-hand how staff who have positive mental health are more productive. This means that workplaces that promote a progressive approach to mental health benefit from a significant impact on productivity and performance.

As a city-region, we're showing the rest of the country that when we have good mental health, we have a stronger sense of purpose and direction, benefitting not only employers and families but the wider community.

In this Greater Manchester Mental Health and Work Toolkit, we're highlighting Greater Manchester employers who actively prioritise supporting the mental health of their staff. Whether that is by offering additional financial support, flexible working, or focusing on improving employee physical wellbeing. I'm delighted to see included orgnisations who are members of the Good Employment Charter.

I want to encourage all employers across the city-region to consider, use, and share this toolkit and to sign up to the GM Good Employment Charter.

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester

Looking after and valuing the people who make your organisation what it is on a day-to-day basis underpins success in business. Let's aim for supportive, happy and productive workplaces.

Checklist

Step 1: Make a commitment

- There is a clear commitment from the senior level of the organisation that mental health matters.

- A good place to start is signing up to he Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter , a voluntary membership and assessment scheme. It was created to improve employment standards across Greater Manchester employers, regardless of size, sector or geography.

Step 2: Build your approach

- The senior team understands and acts on all its legal requirements and employees know their rights.

- The organisation has assessed the mental health needs of its employees, understands where improvements are needed and has identified clear objectives for development.

- Mental health is reflected in all relevant workplace policies and a plan for delivering better mental health is in place, with clear actions that can be achieved and reported back on regularly.

Step 3: Positive culture

- There are effective management standards in place that ensure employees feel supported and valued.

- The organisation ensures that the workplace environment is conducive to supporting good health and limiting the potential for it to cause ill health.

- Job design and roles are reviewed to ensure they are appropriate and conducive to productive work.

- Social activities, volunteering and out-of-work activities are actively encouraged and supported by the organisation.

Step 4: Support & training

- Information is freely shared and every employee knows how to get support.

- All line managers receive training in mental health

- Employees get good mental health information, including induction programmes.

Checklist

Step 5: Managing mental health

- The organisation identifies workplace factors that could contribute to stress, such as bullying, job insecurity or unrealistic expectations. Mental health is discussed openly in team and company meetings as well as 1:1s and performance reviews.

- Organisational changes are made when risks are identified .

Step 6: Providing the right support

- Managers are confident in how to handle sensitive conversations about mental health.

- The organisation is prepared to make adjustments to work patterns and structures for anyone experiencing difficulties, to keep them in work.

- The organisation provides a confidential support service, in-house or externally.

Step 7: Helping people recover

- Employees who experience ill health and have to take time off work are supported to return and adjustments are made for their successful return to work, through regular contact with their manager.

- The organisation is equipped to provide support through such government initiatives as Fit for Work and Access to Work.

Step 8: Going further

- The organisation regularly evaluates its approach to mental health and identifies areas it can develop in, reporting back on its progress with all employees.

- It also shares its approaches with other organisations to share best practice and learn ideas for new approaches.

About mental health

What do we mean by mental health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.

It affects how we think, feel, and act. Staying in positive mental health allows people to:

- **Realise their full potential**
- **Cope with the pressures of life**
- **Work productively**
- **Have positive relationships**
- **Make good choices**

Being in good mental health is important to individuals, organisations and society, and adopting approaches that help keep us in good health, and being resilient to the pressures of life, is essential.

Mental health, like physical health, can fluctuate on a spectrum from good to poor. Most of us move across that spectrum throughout our lives as a result of our experiences, both at work and in the rest of our lives.

But our mental health can be difficult to talk about. It can seem too personal or complex. There is still a stigma associated with mental health problems, through a lack of understanding. You might feel very happy to tell a colleague about a physical injury you've sustained, but when it comes to changes in your mental health, people can keep this to themselves through fear of being treated differently or judged.

It is important to create a culture in every business that promotes positive mental health and helps prevent people from experiencing mental ill health or helps them

better manage mental health problems. As you will see, one of the key ways to do this is to ensure everyone can talk about mental health (see **Step 5**) but maintaining good mental health is also assisted by many factors, including having clear job roles, responsive line managers, a healthy approach to diet and exercise, and many other factors.

However, even with the most robust preventative plans, it is likely some people will still experience mental health problems, for a range of factors, so it is also essential for every business to know how to provide support. This might include knowing how to spot the early warning signs, being confident to signpost colleagues to appropriate support, how to make adjustments to someone's work or role, and ensuring there is a process to help people return to work smoothly after a sickness absence, see **Step 6** and **Step 7**.

Understanding key terms

Mental Health

Mental health is a state of mental and psychological wellbeing in which everyone realises their own potential, and can cope with the normal stresses of life.
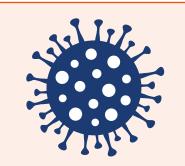
Mental ill health

Mental ill health describes a state in which a person's emotional or psychological wellbeing is poor and they may be unwell as a result. For some people this might lead to a diagnosis of a mental health condition such as depression, anxiety or psychosis.

Work-related stress

Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with demands and pressures that are not matched to their abilities, leading to an inability to cope, especially when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and little control over work processes.

The impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has placed extra pressure on mental as well as physical health across the world. This is due to the direct effects of the virus (for example where people have suffered loss and bereavement, or the trauma of severe illness), the lockdown (for example for those who have been shielding or living in unsafe homes due to overcrowding or violence), and the loss of livelihood or the fear of losing employment. Some of these effects may be short-lived, but for many the mental health impacts will be long-lasting. They may take some time to come to the surface and for some they will be very serious.

What different types of mental health problem are there?

One of the biggest challenges we face is the need to make conversations about mental health more common. A good starting point for this is to learn more about mental health, and particularly mental health problems.

There are a number of different types of mental health problem, and they each have a different impact on the individuals who experience them, as well as their friends and families. Problems can range from anxiety and depressive disorders to much more complex and severe mental health illnesses.

i ## Why this is important to you

Bust some myths by hovering your cursor over the statements below:

Organisations that take a positive, proactive approach to mental health can benefit from:

- **Attracting the best talent**

- **More engaged and motivated staff**

- **Retaining staff, less turnover**

- **Reduction in absence, presenteeism**

- **Improved professional reputation**

Under stress or feeling the pressure?

A certain level of pressure in a business environment is desirable. Pressure can help to motivate people and may boost their energy and productivity levels. But when pressure is associated with unfair treatment or it exceeds people's ability to cope – and particularly when there is no respite – it can become a negative rather than a positive force. In other words, it can lead to unmanageable stress.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them'. It is important to understand what pressures your employees are under and ensure this doesn't lead to stress.

The mental health charity Mind has a range of useful resources on this issue:

Step 1:
Make a commitment

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Lead from the top

Prevention and early intervention are the most effective ways to support workforce mental health, rather than tackling problems after they arise. The steps needed to encourage this cultural shift are, in the majority of cases, simple – but they need to be driven at a senior level to help implement lasting change.

Every business must understand that driving a culture where mental health is prioritised cannot be achieved where it is an add-on but only when it is a fundamental part of how the business is run. Unless leaders within your organisation visibly act to promote good mental health then any efforts to affect an organisational change will be undermined.

By leading from the top and agreeing actions at a senior level, employees who will drive the changes will feel that they have the support and authority to tackle stigma and promote positive mental health. Employees are also more likely to open up about their own mental health if there is a clear signal from the business leader or senior management.

In this **NHS Employers' podcast**, listen to Deborah Lee, chief executive of Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, on why it's essential that senior leaders encourage open and honest conversations about mental health.

Action

Appoint a senior 'Mental Health Champion' who is responsible for your mental health policy

- If your organisation is large enough, they should be supported by a working group that develops ideas and seeds them through the organisation. And they might want to build up a wider group of 'champions' at all levels of the organisation to work with them.

- The Mental Health Champion can create a Mental Health Plan (See **Step 2**) by following all steps in this toolkit and making regular updates on progress.

- Ensure mental health is raised as part of each Board meeting or at least every six months with senior team reviewing progress.

- Ensure mental health is communicated across your company to normalise the topic and promote positive, preventative approaches to good mental health (see more on this in **Step 5**).

Make a commitment

If you can't talk openly about something, you can't manage it. This is why we need to see more organisations speaking publicly and across the business to help normalise discussions around mental health and end stigma around mental health at work.

Every plan to promote good mental health and tackle mental health problems requires a public facing commitment that people can buy into and for which organisations can hold themselves responsible for.

About the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter

The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter is a voluntary membership and assessment scheme. It was created to improve employment standards across Greater Manchester employers, regardless of size, sector, or geography. The Charter seeks commitment and excellent practice across seven key characteristics of good employment:

- Secure Work
- Flexible Work
- Real Living Wage
- Engagement & Voice
- Recruitment
- People Management
- Health & Wellbeing

Being a member of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter helps to:

- Improve people's lives by supporting employers to provide better opportunities
- Place importance on the value and quality of work
- Treating people well is not simply 'right' to do, it enables employers to achieve more, contributing to a thriving economy

Action

> **Sign up to the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter to identify what immediate actions you can commit to as a business**

The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter has three tiers:

1. Advocates
2. Members
3. Supporters

If you are interesting in joining our movement as a Supporter, you can find our Electronic form **here**.

For further information, please visit our **website**.

Please note the first stage of joining the charter is to become a Supporter, Member and lastly Advocate.

Engage for Success

The leaders of any organisation play a vital role in affecting the culture and helping to ensure everyone can live the values. The way senior leaders behave influences how everyone else does through the organisation.

Engage for Success is a growing movement, promoting employee engagement as a better way to work that benefits individual employees, teams and whole organisations.

It has identified four key drivers for engagement:

- having a strong narrative about the organisation from the senior team

- engaged managers

- employees given a voice

- organisational integrity

Did you know?

A study by Mind found that fewer than half of employees told their bosses after being diagnosed with a mental health condition. This suggests that most employees fear that admitting a mental health condition will jeopardise their position at work. 1 in 3 employees also reported that they had received support in response to informing their bosses of a mental health condition, but that no further adjustments were made as a result.

Perhaps most significantly, less than half of employees (41%) said they would feel able to talk openly with their line manager if they were experiencing stress. Another Mind poll showed that 1 in 5 workers would not disclose stress or mental health problems to their manager for fear of being placed first in line for redundancy.

Step 2:
Build your approach

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Understand the law

Putting plans in place isn't just a good thing to do; it helps ensure you are following your legal obligations as an employer. It is important to understand the law and ensure you are compliant.

If someone has a mental health problem that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities, they are considered disabled and will be protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

The Act makes it unlawful for an employer to treat a disabled person less favourably for a reason relating to their disability, without a justifiable reason.

It also requires that businesses make reasonable adjustments to ensure that a disabled person is able to carry out their job.

Employers also have duties under health and safety legislation to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and to take measures to control that risk.

Action

Understand your legal obligations as an employer

- Read up on the Equality Act 2010 and make a note of any areas you have concerns about, before developing your understanding further and making changes in your approach.

Useful resources

GOV.UK has more information on the Equality Act 2010:

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published a range of guides for employers to help them understand their obligations under the Act:

ACAS lists a number of suggested adjustments, from page 21 of the guide below:

Read and understand the **Health and Safety Executive's (HSE)** 'Management Standards for Stress':

Deciding where to start

It is important to understand the requirements within your business so you can set meaningful objectives. The size of your business, along with such factors as the type of industry you work in and the services you provide will all affect the approach you need to take.

It is important to understand your employees and how they can benefit from a better approach to mental health, along with the pressure points you and your employees currently face. It is also worth seeing how much benefit your business could receive from investing in mental health, to help assess the scale of the programme you want to create and help you to prioritise your options.

Tools

Tools to help you understand your employees needs better:

Survey Monkey provides a range of free employee satisfaction feedback templates

Happy People offers a free staff survey tool to find out how your staff feel

Useful resources

A resource for bosses, line managers and HR professionals:

HSE stress risk assessment

Audit the mental health risks of your employees as well as the physical ones and develop a plan for minimising them.

Actions

Understand your employees

- Undertake a survey with your employees to understand their pressures and aspirations.

- Staff surveys should be confidential, and ideally conducted independently, to ensure everyone is able to speak truthfully and share their experiences and perspectives without fear.

- If you already run a survey with your employees, build in questions on mental health and wellbeing.

- Survey results should be discussed by your board and shared with staff members – where possible with a discussion about what actions should be taken to address any concerns that arise.

Carry out a Health Needs Assessment

- A process to determine the health and wellbeing needs of specific groups so that interventions can be planned. **Public Health England's workplace health needs assessment** provides a useful model.

Assess your approach so far

- If you have already introduced initiatives to promote mental health, assess how far these efforts are going by taking Time to Change's **mini healthcheck**. This will help you to review your practices and then plan for the next steps.

Set your goals

- The three steps above will help you to set clear objectives for your mental health programme that you can measure against over time. You can decide which actions need to be done quickly and which will take longer. It might be helpful to agree timescales for each: when you'll start and when you want them to be done by.

Build your programme

Once you have identified and prioritised your objectives, they can be put together into a plan for the year ahead for your business. The remaining sections of this toolkit will help you to build your actions, and they do not need to be complicated. As you will see, there is a lot that doesn't cost money and can be adapted for any business (from free toolkits to piggybacking on national awareness days).

Once you have built the plan, it is important everyone knows about it – the communication of your initiatives is key to their success. If employees are not aware of them or do not participate in them, they have failed.

Actions

Make sure mental health and wellbeing are included in your policies covering areas such as:

- Absence and sickness

- Health and safety

- Working time / TOIL / overtime

- Performance management and personal development

- Recruitment, change management and redundancy

- Equality, diversity, inclusion, bullying, harassment, whistle blowing

(For smaller organisations, it may be that a statement of intent serves the purpose of a specific mental health policy).

Create a positive mental health plan

- Develop a scheduled programme of activity to promote good mental health and introduce measures to assist those with poor mental health by analysing the results of your need and assessing your strategic priorities.

- Use elements from the rest of this toolkit to help build this plan and make use of the framework for your approach (or adopt the BITC Workwell model if you are larger business).

- Ensure your senior team is fully bought into the plan and feel confident they can help implement it.

Communicate this programme to your employees

- Consider 'launching' your programme with an event with employees or by ensuring the approach is communicated in team / company meetings and in line manager catch-ups.

Working groups

Some aspects of your plan may need to be taken forward by HR or the senior management team – such as reviewing policies or setting up new systems. Other areas may need staff input, so you could set up a staff working group to explore possible solutions.

Useful resources

The Health and Safety Executive has a range of case studies of businesses that have implemented changes to help improve their approach to mental health:

Did you know?

60% of employees say they'd feel more motivated and more likely to recommend their organisation as a good place to work if their employer took action to support mental health and wellbeing.

(Source: Mind)

Thriving at Work: the Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers

Commissioned by the UK Prime Minister, this review looked into how employers can better support all employees, including those with poor mental health or wellbeing, to remain in, and thrive, at work.

Here you can find the key documents to help you understand the core and enhanced standards, consider how they could apply to your workplace, and check and demonstrate how you're doing.

Step 3:
Positive culture

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Set up the culture

A workplace environment and working culture that promotes wellbeing can reduce the risk of mental health problems. This is reinforced by cultivating an open, supportive organisation where people are treated fairly, feel safe at work, and know that their wellbeing is protected.

Many of the factors that support workplace wellbeing are simply good management practices, including:

- Actively and transparently engaging and communicating with employees

- Preventing bullying and discrimination

- Ensuring your staff are able to use their skills and perform their work to the best of their abilities

Work overload, job insecurity, poor career progression, poor quality of work and poor communication all have a strong negative influence on employee mental health. Supportive supervision, whether from managers or co-workers, as well as positive interactions with customers/clients has positive benefits.

Useful resources

> Mind and the Federation of Small Businesses have put together simple, low-cost, common-sense actions your small business can take to **manage mental health**

> Mind's **guide** 'How to promote wellbeing and tackle the causes of work-related mental health problems' sets out simple, practical and inexpensive steps you can take to build a working culture that supports wellbeing

> Centre for Mental Health and the City Mental Health Alliance have produced a **guide** to help employers support staff recovering from the after-effects of the pandemic

Action

Ensure you have effective and positive management standards in place. This includes:

- Regular reviews – structured appraisal systems (as well as informal catch-ups) help you see if employees are happy in their job, to discuss any issues and determine what support they might need.

- Setting objectives – having clearly defined goals, roles and responsibilities supports mental health and wellbeing. Employees should be involved in setting their own objectives.

- Work hours – everyone needs a healthy work-life balance. Reasonable hours, agreed deadlines, offline time and flexible working can all reduce stress and boost wellbeing.

- A safe and fair place to work – we all need to feel safe at work. Preventing unfair treatment and bullying is essential at every level in every workplace. No one should be treated less well or be afraid to come to work. And everyone should be confident about how to report any concerns and know they will be dealt with safely and fairly.

Encourage healthy activities

Simple steps like taking a lunch break, exercising (including going for a walk), getting enough sleep, taking time out to relax and eating a healthy balanced diet can help our mental health.

Health and wellbeing programmes, events, activities and awareness campaigns can all help make your staff happier and healthier. They can also help to build emotional resilience – which helps people deal with difficult or stressful situations both in and out of work. These initiatives are always most successful when senior management are involved, and act as role models. Many people find the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' helpful to take simple everyday steps to improve their mental health.

Actions

Get physical:

- Encourage walking and cycling to work
- Organise sports events
- Subsidise gym memberships (you may be able to negotiate something with your local gym so that it doesn't cost your business)
- Provide advice and information on sleep, sensible drinking and how to quit smoking
- Encourage employees to take the One You quiz – **see page 27**

Be sociable:

- Organise company events and activities, with or without a health element, to strengthen relationships between staff.

Provide a healthy environment:

- Wellbeing can be influenced by factors such as:
  - Air quality
  - Lighting
  - Temperature
  - Noise
  - Layout
  - Food offer

Give back:

- There's strong evidence that volunteering and being involved in the community is good for wellbeing and mental health. Encourage staff to volunteer year round, and consider taking part in BITC's Give & Gain Day.

Develop wellbeing activities

- Healthy eating (and look at food provision for meetings)
- Activity classes
- Talks from mental health professionals about prevention and getting support
- Show videos about mental health
- Organise wellbeing days
- Piggyback on public awareness days – see Plan Ahead on **page 26**
- Take part in national physical exercise initiatives, such as Cycle to Work day

Useful resources

The Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit brings together the practical tools and guidance to help you look after yourself, support those around you, and navigate through the offers available across Greater Manchester.

Mind has put together top tips and an interactive template to help employees create their own Wellness Action Plan to stay well at work.

We are undefeatable provides information and advice on physical activity for anyone living with a long-term condition.

Studies have shown that introducing a workplace cycling scheme can significantly reduce staff turnover. Encourage employees to cycle to work by registering with cycle to work schemes.

How to look after your mental health: 10 tips from the Mental Health Foundation.

Actions

Improve financial wellbeing

- With financial concerns affecting many of the workforce, employee benefits are an important part of good work. Find out more through this **BITC toolkit**

Develop a knowledge resource for all employees

- Host all relevant free resources in one easily accessible place for all employees (including web links to trusted sites) and regularly communicate this resource to your employees.

One You is a NHS campaign to help everyone make simple changes towards a longer and happier life.

It provides tools, support and encouragement. Start by taking the 'How Are You' online quiz, which will assess the person's health.

After completing the quiz you be directed to a series of online tools and programmes around seven key behaviours:

- moving more
- being smoke free
- drinking less
- eating well
- checking ourselves
- stressing less
- sleep better

Every Mind Matters can help your employees discover simple steps to achieve good mental health in their work and personal lives. It's full of expert advice and practical tips. It also has a free NHS-approved online tool which provides users with an action plan to help them deal with stress, boost their mood, improve their sleep and help them feel more in control.

Things you can do for your employees:

- Ensure your staff are aware of the support available to them by promoting the tool via internal communications and staff briefings. You can use the printed and digital resources available on the **PHE Campaign Resource Centre** to do this.

- Embed the Every Mind Matters tool on your digital intranet (guidelines available on the **PHE Campaign Resource Centre**).

  Every Mind Matters provides **advice and tools for parents and for young people**. Staff members may be especially worried about their children's mental health after the recent lockdowns and school closures.

- Include Every Mind Matters messaging in staff training and inductions with information about the tool and simple steps they can take to look after their mental health. Promote your existing staff wellbeing programme alongside Every Mind Matters.

To access the campaign website and online tool Search Every Mind Matters

Step 4:
Support and Training

A structure that works

To implement your approach to mental health, it is important to have structures in place that allow for information on mental health to be shared with all, for feedback to be passed back up to the top and for everyone to feel there is a structure in place that will promote their health and protect them if they become unwell.

The structure needs to ensure that everyone can access all the organisation's information on mental health, and allow them to easily find what their rights and responsibilities are.

The importance of training

An essential part of making this work is training employees so they have the competence and confidence to bring the mental health policies and programmes to life.

Training for line managers is particularly important as they are the ones who balance the aims of the organisation with staff health and wellbeing. They are critical in driving change and may well be the first point of contact to notice when an employee is experiencing difficulties. They should be equipped with skills in effective leadership, workplace health, stress risk assessment, mental health awareness and the management of sickness absence. Intervention at an early stage may allow adjustments to be made to the workplace to enable the employee to continue with their work. In the aftermath of Covid-19, this will be especially important to help people to return to 'normal' ways of working, cope with the pressures many have faced, and feel safe at work.

Training can take many forms: induction processes, staff handbook modules, specialist supervision, intranet hosted or even lunch and learns. Training can be internal but there are also a range of options for bringing in effective external support to deliver training to be better at understanding and responding to their own and others' mental heath issues.

Organisations such as Mental Health First Aid England, Mind and Rethink Mental Illness have a number of options. (More information can be found in the 'Tools' section on the following page).

Managers also have a vital role in making sure your approach reaches beyond members of the immediate team – it is important to ensure care is also given to remote workers, support staff, volunteers and ancillary workers.

Action

Get the right structures in place

- ■ Ensure there is a clear structure within your organisation for sharing of sensitive information on mental health and that everyone is aware of who they can speak to about their own mental health.
- ■ Make sure any new employees are aware of your mental health policies and procedures by making positive references to them during their induction.

Offer training on mental health

- ■ Train all existing and new managers on mental health, your plans and to build their confidence in supporting staff with mental health problems.
- ■ Ensure that supporting employee mental health is embedded within the line managers' job descriptions at every tier of the organisation and that they are aware it is a central part of their role.
- ■ Ensure training is inclusive – record training sessions to share with remote workers.

Getting it right

Good leadership

Leaders who get it right are confident in communicating about mental health in their workplace. They take responsibility to commit to cultural improvements, participate in training themselves and break stigma about mental health and career progression. Some good senior leaders are even open about their experiences, their coping mechanisms and tips for resilience, which can help to normalise the conversation and reduce stigma.

Good management

Good managers don't try and do too much and do not try to be therapists. They are conscious of the signs of poor mental health, clear on the support available and 'check in' with individuals at appropriate times. They encourage safe disclosure and employee led ideas for adjustments. Managers who show empathy, compassion, fairness and consistency have been found to be respected, and have kept more valued talent at work. This includes undertaking basic manager duties such as 1-to-1s, appraisals and catch-ups.

(Source: Time to Change)

Tools

Training options to help you understand your needs better:

Living Life to the Full provides free online courses for Greater Manchester staff and residents covering low mood, stress and resiliency. Work out why you feel as you do, how to tackle problems, build confidence, get going again, feel happier, stay calm, tackle upsetting thinking and more. Visit **www.gmlifeskills.com**. There is also an opportunity for a member of your organisation to be trained at no cost as a Living Life to the full trainer. For more information **contact gmcvo@gmcvo. org.uk**.

Connect 5 training aims to improve population health by changing the way people have conversations about mental wellbeing. The train the trainer course is free to attend and will allow an employee to be trained to deliver the Connect 5 course within your organisation freely to staff. For more information and to book a place visit: **Connect 5 | Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind**.

Suicide Prevention: Learn to save a life in 20mins. It aims to give the skills and confidence to help someone who may be considering suicide. It focuses on breaking stigma and encouraging open conversations.

Psychological First Aid takes around 90 minutes to complete and is also available in three sessions for the learner to complete at their own pace. It builds understanding on how emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic can affect us, recognising people who may be at increased risk of distress and understanding how to offer practical and emotional support.

Tools

Mind offers a range of courses on mental health including how to build emotional intelligence and resilience, how to support someone, managing mental health at work and general mental health awareness. Mind can also provide in-house training to your teams or organisation.

Rethink Mental Illness

Training packages are built around helping people to feel more comfortable and confident to talk about mental health and respond in helpful ways when problems arise. They offer bespoke courses for your organisation.

Acas has a range of training packages that include developing interpersonal skills or improving how you deal with specific issues like health and wellbeing, absence or managing change. It also offers an online course in mental health awareness.

Mental Health First Aid

Training helps people to define mental health and some common mental health issues, identify stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health issues, relate to people's experiences, support people in distress, help someone recover faster and look after their own mental health. MHFA England run courses around the country including a 'Lite' course that provides an introductory three-hour awareness course. Train the trainer options are also available which might be considered by larger organisations.

Useful resources

The Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit brings together the practical tools, and hands-on guidance to help managers and team leaders navigating the challenges of working during the pandemic, and support the people's recovery in the workplace.

Mental Health First Aid's line manager's resource provides helpful guidance and advice to employers who would like to improve how they support employees experiencing mental health issues and how they can improve mental health within the workplace.

CIPD's factsheets include guidance on performance appraisal and how individuals and line managers should engage in a dialogue about their performance and development and the support they need in their role.

NHS Employers has compiled a list of key themes that managers may want to consider when promoting a healthy approach within the workplace.

The Health and Safety Executive have produced a tool to check on your line manager's abilities to deal with stress.

Centre for Mental Health and the City Mental Health Alliance have produced a guide for employers to help staff recovering from the pandemic at work.

Step 5:
Managing Mental Health

Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter

End the silence

Making sure everyone can talk about mental health is an important step your business can take to help people manage it.

Much progress has been made in reducing the stigma of mental health, but we still need to do more.

Despite many employees feeling their employer or line manager would be supportive if they shared a mental health issue, a significantly smaller number of people actually do disclose concerns. Some say this is because they fear discrimination.

A progressive approach to mental health encourages employees to be alert to their own health and to flag concerns and to share their concerns and issues before they become serious. This works best when staff feel they can do this without fear of judgment by colleagues. In turn this can have a positive impact on business performance. (See more on developing a statement tackling the stigma in Step 1).

Employees need to feel confident that they can be open about their mental health problems, to know that support is there if they need it and that anything shared would be in confidence.

Royal Mail created the programme **'Feeling First Class'** to help promote good mental health throughout the business. Watch staff members of Royal Mail sharing their experiences and talking openly about mental health problems:

Click here to watch the video

Open the conversation

Communication is key when it comes to mental health. Employee perceptions about attitudes towards mental health and available support may be as important as having the support there in the first place.

Address the topic of mental health in team meetings and individual performance reviews. Regular one-to-one meetings are a chance to ask people how they're doing, which helps to build trust and creates an opportunity to address any problems at an early stage.

Manage common problems

Feelings of stress and anxiety can be common but it is possible to manage them without them having an impact on an employee's ability to do their job. There are steps your business can take to provide the support that employees need. These include:

i Hover your cursor over the boxes below for more information:

Standards on stress

The Health and Safety Executive Management Standards for managing work-related stress define how organisations successfully manage the risks of poor mental health and wellbeing. They cover the six main causes of stress in the workplace:

i Hover your cursor over the boxes below for more information:

Read "Management Standards for work related stress" here

Step 6:
Providing the right support

Provide the right support in work

The steps outlined so far will all help to promote the positive mental health of your employees. But even the most supportive workplaces can't prevent some people from experiencing mental health issues. Just as some people experience physical ill health, some will experience mental ill health.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put extra pressure on everyone's mental health, and many people have experienced trauma, loss and isolation that could cause lasting harm. For some, it might be their first experience of poor mental health. In some cases, the effects of traumatic experiences might be felt months or even years after the pandemic.

You can take steps to make sure you are engaged and ready to provide support when it is needed.

Spot the signs

Early intervention is important. You can help by equipping all employees – but especially management and senior staff – with the knowledge to spot the signs that either they themselves, or someone they know, may be struggling, and to signpost them towards appropriate sources of support.

Not everyone will want to be open about their mental health with their colleagues: some may not feel safe or comfortable. Making sure people can seek help confidentially is important.

Remember, though, that there are often no obvious outward signs that somebody is experiencing a mental health problem. It's vital to maintain close contact and good communication so you know how people are really feeling.

Mind has compiled a list of possible signs here:

Handling sensitive conversations

It is important to make sure everyone knows what to do, and what not to do, when an employee or colleague begins to talk about their mental health.

Build the skills and confidence to be able to approach someone who may be experiencing difficulties. Focus on the person, not the problem. Ask if they need any short-term adjustments to their work environment. They are the experts on their mental health, so they are best placed to know what they need.

Useful resources

Actions

Start by having an informal chat – but if there's a problem, plan a more formal meeting with the employee:

- Find a private place where you won't be interrupted – perhaps a neutral space outside work or through remote communications.

- Switch off your mobile!

- Ask open questions: "How are you doing at the moment?", "You've seemed a bit withdrawn lately. Is anything the matter?".

- Give them time to answer, and listen to what they say – don't make assumptions.

- Offer support and signpost where appropriate to sources of help such as an EAP if you have one or local NHS services.

- Agree a plan of action and schedule a follow-up meeting.

You may not reach this stage in a single meeting – people may not open up straight away. Don't worry – reassure them that you will be ready to listen when they're ready, and that support is there if they need it.

Remember, once a conversation has taken place about someone's mental health, it should be returned to later to see how the employee is progressing.

Knowing what support to offer

If an employee is living with a medical condition, you have a legal responsibility to consider making "reasonable adjustments" to enable them to remain in work.

These might include:

- Flexible hours or home working
- Adjusting their job description and reassigning tasks
- Moving their workplace
- Providing extra training or mentoring

Most reasonable adjustments are simple and inexpensive, and are really just good people management and part of your general duty of care to your employees. But in some cases employees with a mental health condition may need further professional support.

The Mind Infoline provides confidential information on mental health, including where to get help, medication and alternative treatments, and legal issues. Call **0300 123 3393** or text **86463**.

Note that given the changing nature of mental health problems, these adjustments must be reviewed periodically to see if they are still appropriate or indeed necessary any longer.

If you haven't already, it may be appropriate to consider equipping your organisation with an Employee Assistance Programme or EAP. (See **page 40** for more information).

It may be appropriate to suggest contacting the NHS. This could be via the person's GP, who can refer to NHS talking therapy services. In some areas, it's possible to refer yourself to an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies service without seeing a GP. If more urgent help is needed, people can call 111 any time 24/7.

Note: much of the advice given in **Step 5** will help anyone who has revealed a mental health concern.

Actions

Spot the signs

- Ensure the senior team and all line managers are equipped to spot the signs that someone is experiencing a mental health problem or that they may need help.
- To do this, explore the training options outlined in **Step 4**.

Manage sensitive conversations

- Ensure you and all your managers are prepared with the knowledge for how to respond to employees that express concerns for their mental health.
- Also be able to facilitate these conversations when signs of distress are spotted, to open the conversation on what support can be provided.

Provide the right support

- Ensure you have the support mechanisms in place to help anyone who is experiencing mental health, whether this is making adjustments to their workload, signposting them to your resources or even directing them to professional support.

Spotting signs

Here are some of the signs that you or someone you work with might be having difficulty:

- If you are experiencing **high levels of distress**.

- If you are **unable to focus** at work or home or are unable to perform daily activities.

- If you have significantly **increased your use of alcohol** and/or substances.

- If those around you are very **worried about you**.

- If you are worried about your ability to **keep yourself safe**.

You may recognise and experience some of these at some points and that can be fine from time to time. However, when they become more regular, or you feel like it's a little bit harder to get through day to day challenges, that's when you may need to ask for help.

Useful resources

Support staff experiencing a mental health problem

Mind has produced an in-depth resource for line managers and HR professionals, setting out practical steps employers can take to support at every stage of the mental health spectrum – whether they're stressed or have a diagnosed mental health condition.

Employee Assistance Programmes or EAPs

An EAP is a benefit programme intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their job performance, health, and wellbeing. This includes issues such as relationship problems, money worries and other pressures.

Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by telephone, although increasingly EAP providers are also providing their services through the internet. They also generally include short-term counselling and referral services for employees and their household members.

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) is the professional body for EAPs. Its website contains details of providers and consultants as well as news and information on employee wellbeing. You may also find that your insurance provider can provide an EAP as part of your package.

Watch this

Royal Mail worked in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation to produce the below videos to help workplace mental health. They include Royal Mail staff sharing stories about their mental health. Share them with your employees:

Useful resources

- **Supporting staff who are experiencing a mental health problem** – advice and links from NHS Employers

- **FAQ from line managers on managing mental health** – real questions from a Mind webinar, answered by a panel of experts

- **What works for you** – a guide for helping colleagues through tough times, from the Mental Health Foundation

- **This Acas guide** provides further guidance on spotting signs and knowing how to respond (from page 10)

- CIPD and Mind have produced this guidance – **Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers**. This also contains information, practical advice and templates to help managers facilitate conversations about stress and mental health problems and put in place support so employees can stay well and in work

Step 7:
Helping people recover

GREATER MANCHESTER
GOOD
EMPLOYMENT
CHARTER

Absence and return to work

Sometimes employees who experience mental health problems will need to take time off work to get better. Employers should provide the support people need while they're off sick and on their return to work.

Adopting supportive policies will help you to reduce sick leave, retain valued employees and also meet your legal obligations.

Your approach will be informed by the nature of the problem and the number of days spent away from work recovering.

It is important to maintain close contact with anyone off sick, but not to put pressure on them to return before they are ready.

Tell your employees what they can expect from you to help them return to work. Make sure they understand their own contractual duties to you, including what procedures you require for absences from work. It is important to have a fair and consistent approach to return to work. The sooner you take positive action, the more likely it is that your employees can return to work successfully.

There are a number of free resources out there to help you manage absence.

One useful resource is the **Access to Work programme,** which provides grants to employees who are in work or accessing work, to ensure their illness does not stop them from being able to work.

It's worth knowing now what resources are available so you are prepared for any mental health sickness absence, if it occurs.

Actions

Understand your obligations as an employer

- Ensure you are familiar with all your legal obligations under the Equality Act (see **Step 2**).

Understand what resources are out there to help

- Ensure you are aware of the range of support that Access to Work provide.
- Turn to these support frameworks when an employee is off sick.

Follow the recommended support protocols

- Follow the tips on the following page, developed by the HSE.

Record sickness absences

- It is important to know the cause of sickness absence, in case it is work-related.
- If it is, you can put in place organisational measures, i.e. modified work, including reasonable adjustments that will help them and those who are sick in the future to return to work.

Managing sickness absence

i   **Hover your cursor over the boxes below for some general rules that you should follow:**

Source HSE

Access to Work

Access to Work provides support to employees with disabilities or long term health conditions who are already in work or about to start work.

There are grants to help cover the cost of workplace adaptations that can help the employee to carry out their job.

Grants can be used to pay for:

- Adaptations to equipment used by the employee
- Special equipment
- Fares to work if the employee cannot use public transport
- A support worker or job coach to help in the workplace
- Disability awareness training for colleagues
- A communicator at a job interview

Is there any other available support?

- Local authority public health teams can offer advice and support to employers looking to take the first steps on implementing workplace health programmes.

- Engagement with the local Jobcentre Plus will enable local employers to take part in schemes to find work for people with health issues or disabilities.

- Organisations like the local Chamber of Commerce or the Federation of Small Businesses may be able to offer advice and support. Some trade associations and professional bodies, such as CIPD, also have advice and support on workplace health.

- If you work as a supplier for a large business then talk to them about the potential to access their staff health and wellbeing support.

- Remploy runs a free and confidential **'Workplace mental health support service'**, delivered in partnership with Access to Work.

Step 8:
Going further

Actions

Measure success

- Note any differences in company approach to issues since implementation of the programme.

- Develop mechanisms for feedback and use existing wellbeing data through staff surveys, turnover and absence data. Larger organisations should use anonymised data on gender, ethnicity and other demographic factors to identify whether the benefits are shared equally and if any groups are missing out.

- Assess levels of participation in wellbeing activities: what's working well and what is less successful?

- Ensure that talking about and supporting mental health becomes a normal way of working by reviewing whether mental health conversation and management are part of everyday working practices.

- Make use of the GM Good Employment Charter Standards to see how you have progressed against the plan you established in **Step 2**.

Refine your approach

- Adjust programmes as needed: Do you need more training for staff, more frequent communication, more regular initiatives such as wellbeing days?

- Include everyone: ensure your approach to mental health is inclusive of remote, temporary and contract workers.

- Ensure that everyone is enabled to contribute and feel that their views are listened to and acted on.

- Ensure commitment from all parties (senior management, employees and their representatives).

- Ensure there are arrangements to identify those aspects of the work, organisation or environment that are known to be risk factors for work related stress, and place initiatives alongside these to protect your employees.

Celebrate achievements

- Share the success with your employees. This will give them a feeling of collective responsibility for the programme and will add to staff morale and retention.

- Include your mental health programme when recruiting new staff. It could give you the edge over the competition to attract the best candidates and presents your company as a caring and progressive employer.

- Ask employees to share their experiences and make suggestions for the future. This will allow the programme to grow and develop with your company.

This is the final step in the toolkit, the following section contains case studies from some of the organisations which helped contribute to the development of this toolkit.

Case Studies

Rowlinson

Rowlinson Knitwear is a leading supplier of school uniform to the retail market. As an employee-owned company, we are committed to looking after our team.

We are a proud member of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and in 2020 we were delighted to become the highest-scoring Certified B Corporation across the North of England and Scotland.

Throughout the pandemic, the holistic well-being of our 58 staff members, based at our Stockport headquarters, was our continued focus.

Kindness is intrinsic to our culture, demonstrated by our comprehensive benefits package. This includes interest-free crisis loans; generous annual leave; profit share for all; 8% non-contributory pension scheme; and a healthcare cash scheme for physical and mental well-being services. Our colleague happiness surveys gauge the "emotional temperature" of the workforce so leaders can detect and respond, even if they relate to matters outside of work.

Before the first lockdown, Rowlinson delivered a mental health training course to 75% of colleagues.

As the restrictions were introduced, we created a range of support strategies. The first was to protect the most vulnerable, immediately placing those reliant on public transport, with health issues, or caring responsibilities, on furlough.

We foresaw the financial and mental health impact of the pandemic. Leaders volunteered for a salary reduction, enabling the business to top up pay to 90%, relieving financial pressure on the lowest paid. Those required to self-isolate received full salary, meaning Rowlinson experienced lower incidents of self-isolation and positive Covid-19 cases than local and national statistics.

Strict health and safety working practices were enforced and two managers continue to work from the office daily, supporting colleagues in the workplace. We make weekly check-in calls to furloughed employees and video updates are shared on the company's chat platform, keeping colleagues informed of developments.

Our actions and dedication in supporting our teams' mental health have enabled us to demonstrate care for all colleagues as we navigate through the ongoing pandemic.

> "We are a proud member of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and in 2020 we were delighted to become the highest-scoring Certified B Corporation across the North of England and Scotland."

The Growth Company

The Growth Company is an award-winning social enterprise with a mission to enable growth, create jobs and improve lives. We employ around 1,200 people nationally, and our headquarters are in Greater Manchester.

We have always recognised and championed the importance of supporting colleagues' mental health and well-being. This is why we're a proud member of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.

In 2019, our journey of building a support programme for our team began by hosting a health and well-being session. This event included training managers to help identify colleagues displaying poor mental health and creating Mental Health First Aider roles. We introduced a weekly well-being update and committed to the Time to Change pledge to encourage open conversations and reduce stigma associated with mental health. This is central to our dialogue and an item on our team meeting agendas.

With the arrival of the pandemic and lockdown in March 2020, we realised we needed to do more. Our health and well-being courses were updated to help employees adapt to a virtual environment and we introduced weekly protected well-being time.

Senior management soon recognised the strain of home-schooling; one element of this being limited numbers of devices to allow work for adults and simultaneous online learning for children. Our solution was to introduce a lockdown device loan scheme to ease the burden. Employees had greater flexibility around managing work responsibilities and home-schooling as they had enough devices to do so.

Staff were very appreciative and conveyed their thanks, making the transition to home working and schooling much more bearable.

The challenge we face now is to maintain the improved working practices we've adopted during the pandemic while creating a high performing inclusive culture with engaged colleagues.

We continuously measure the impact of our actions using employee surveys, an external assessment (IIP) and anecdotal feedback, and so far, this has been positive in terms of the ongoing support we have provided our people.

> "*We have always recognised and championed the importance of supporting colleagues' mental health and well-being. This is why we're a proud member of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.*"

GM Moving Case Study

GreaterSport aims to reduce inactivity and support active lives across Greater Manchester. As an organisation, the mental health and well-being of our staff has always been a priority. 'Our Great Place to Work' group focuses on just this; we have an in-house plan and charter for mental health, and we are currently writing a mental health and well-being policy.

Staff are encouraged to do the Daily Mile; they can use scooters to travel to meetings and often discuss work whilst doing laps of the Etihad track.

Before the pandemic, our 38 strong team were predominantly office-based.

When lockdown was announced, no employees were furloughed, and everyone shifted to working from home.

In early 2021, we saw an increase in employees reaching out for wellbeing support. With shorter days and poor weather, individuals were missing the comradery and usual daily conversations with their colleagues. Getting outside and staying active was harder during the winter months, so support and encouragement from colleagues was key.

The most powerful thing for us to help remote working employees was promoting the messages to keep moving and encouraging the team to stick to our active work ethics.

Normally we offer employees 45 minutes each week to encourage them to do an activity or sport during work time. During lockdown, we reminded staff to stay focused on how they usually work when in the office and regularly encouraged them to get outside in the day. We found that people were working long hour and were more sedentary than usual, with meetings all taking place at their kitchen tables or desks. We encouraged a flexible approach, advocating that people made sure they took breaks and worked this around childcare, caring or homeschooling demands.

The biggest benefit for the GreaterSport employees' mental health was about giving them a greater sense of permission to be able to get out for a walk or do some activity whenever they could fit it in, rather than just being sat at their computers all day every day.

We designed our **Active Workplaces Toolkit** for employers to help encourage staff to move more during their working day in a bid to improve mental wellbeing. Over the last 12 months, it has proved extremely popular.

During the lockdown, the team have benefitted from their own skills by role modelling the behaviour they advocate for across Greater Manchester. They have seen first-hand the difference that physical exercise can have on own their mental health and wellbeing, more so than ever."

> *" During the lockdown, the team have benefitted from their own skills by role modelling the behaviour they advocate for across Greater Manchester. They have seen first-hand the difference that physical exercise can have on own their mental health and wellbeing, more so than ever. "*

Hayley Lever, Exec Lead GM Moving CEO

Wigan and Leigh College

Wigan & Leigh College is a general Further Education College and University Centre based in five Greater Manchester locations. Our team of 560 dedicated staff support the 10,000 students who attend.

As members of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, we are committed to creating a strategy for our workplace where health and well-being are intrinsic.

Working within the changes that the pandemic brought to the education sector, our attention has been to maintain a staff community with a focus on mental health and healthy lifestyle advice.

To enable the College and University to function as smoothly as it needed to, we updated our IT offer to make sure it supported flexible working. We ran sessions on remote working and offered information on keeping active.

Working from home has fed into our long-term plans for capital projects with more agile administration space and less fixed workstations. This also links into the College sustainability agenda, reducing pressures on car parking and space across the estate helping reduce our carbon footprint.

Where roles can be carried out at home, this will continue as the lockdown ends, offering greater blended working opportunities. Flexible working hours have enabled staff to balance their work/home commitments, assisting staff greatly with challenges such as home-schooling during lockdown periods.

We engage with staff regularly through focus groups, full staff surveys including the Times Best Not for Profit Organisations Survey and Stribe, an employee engagement app.

A recent pulse survey asked, 'How happy are you with the resources shared during the last lockdown?' We received positive responses and a 90% positive response to the specific question.

We're proud the College has also seen a reduction in its turnover during the last 12 months from 17.2% to 11.4% and absence rates remain in line with the sector benchmark despite the impact of the coronavirus.

As members of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, we are committed to creating a strategy for our workplace where health and well-being are intrinsic.

Rochdale Connections Trust

Rochdale Connections Trust is a community-based charity that supports young people, adults and families who are finding life difficult in some way.

Our 18 employees are usually based in the office and the local community. When lockdown was announced the team were either furloughed or moved to working from home.

Thankfully we were able to continue to offer our essential services online. However, we soon realised that we had to adapt how we work and we wouldn't be able to mirror all the exact same services we offer virtually. A little frustrated but committed as always, we coined the phrase that it was just 'a casualty of Covid' and adapted swiftly.

Whilst working from home, the team weren't expected to stick to the usual 9 to 5 hours. To help fill the void of not chatting and sharing news in the office, we set-up an internal WhatsApp group. This has proved to be a great way for the team to support each other if someone feels down or is struggling with something.

In order to support both the physical and mental health of the team, we allocated a budget to pay employees 30 minutes per day to do some form of exercise and share what they had been doing on the team WhatsApp to inspire fellow colleagues.

To help boost morale and to have some fun, we had afternoon tea delivered to all the staff and organised online games.

For team members requiring a little more support, we offered external counselling to all employees. This was to enable them to feel they could talk openly about concerns or issues they were facing as a consequence of the pandemic and any other areas of life. Four people opted to use the service and have benefitted from it.

When the lockdown restrictions are lifted, the team is looking forward to getting back in the office alongside their colleagues.

"In order to support both the physical and mental health of the team, we allocated a budget to pay employees 30 minutes per day to do some form of exercise and share what they had been doing on the team WhatsApp to inspire fellow colleagues."

Pozzoni Architecture

Pozzoni Architecture is an innovative architecture practice delivering award-winning projects throughout the UK from offices in Altrincham and London.

As a member of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, maintaining and improving the well-being of our 55 employees is key. : We provide a holistic approach; offering a stimulating and positive environment, whilst supplying accessible support and resources.

Pre-pandemic, we committed to the Time to Change pledge, offering mental health awareness training to all directors and associates. Our annual conference had a health and mindfulness theme, placing well-being at its core. The team learnt about empowering people towards resilience, creativity and self-optimisation through techniques encouraging self-expression and renewed confidence in creative output.

In March 2020, we quickly mobilised home working. Keeping the team engaged and together was crucial so we launched 'The Pozz Post'; an internal weekly newsletter covering business updates as well as promoting healthy behaviours such as home workouts and virtual coffee mornings. Signposts

to our Employee Assistance Programme - impartial guidance on matters which may prove challenging to raise internally - were also included.

Our 'Covid Staff Survey' was circulated to all employees in May 2020. Following the survey, protocols and procedures were established alongside a 'Covid Return to Work Guide' ensuring safe working arrangements focusing on health, safety and welfare.

Physical and mental health are closely connected so we offered subsidised weekly boot camp and yoga sessions as well as self-defense classes with British, European and World champion Kickboxer, Joshua O'Connor. Since lockdown, weekly yoga continues via Zoom.

Our 'Walk & Talk' initiative gives our employees the opportunity to chat through anything on their minds while taking a welcome break from the office. We look forward to returning to this when current restrictions allow.

Since prioritising mental health, our people are finding it easier to talk to one another or any of our seven mental health first aiders. This way we can address potential issues before they build.

> *As a member of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, maintaining and improving the well-being of our 55 employees is key. : We provide a holistic approach; offering a stimulating and positive environment, whilst supplying accessible support and resources.*

Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we work at Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. As a team, we have been doing a range of things to support staff wellbeing. Right from the outset, we acted quickly to ensure team members had access to funds to make sure they had the correct equipment to allow them to continue to do their role successfully from home. Working virtually has taken us all on a learning journey that got easier over time.

We carried out risk assessments very early on, which continued throughout the various lockdowns, as we were keen to understand how each employee was feeling about every aspect of their life. Whether that was about the pressure from increased childcare, dealing with bereavement or living with the symptoms of long covid. It was crucial that we offered everyone the individual support they needed.

Working remotely, we felt it was a good time to reassess our working hours to better suit the team, giving staff more flexibility and improve work/life balance.

Using everything we've learnt and experienced over the last 12 months; we created the Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit. This interactive online resource brings together lots of great practice and initiatives. It was developed for the benefit of our health and care workforce, including colleagues in the NHS and social care, as well as those in the voluntary sector, those delivering health and care services in the private sector and our unwaged workforce too. However, we hope the toolkit can support anyone navigating the challenges of working during the pandemic.

We're using our response to the pandemic as an opportunity to examine internally what good looks like and how we can maintain the new approaches and changes we now have in place to make a healthier working culture going forward.

"The last twelve months have been challenging for our team, and it is more important than ever that we prioritise good wellbeing in everything we do. We're using our response to the pandemic as an opportunity to examine internally what good looks like and how we can maintain the new approaches and changes we now have in place to make a healthier working culture going forward."

Sheni Ravji-Smith, System Organisational Development & Leadership Lead