THRIVING AT WORK
MENTAL HEALTH STANDARDS

Version 1.0

Introduction

Each year, one in six workers in Britain experiences a mental health problem, making mental health issues the leading cause of workplace absence. With such high prevalence, it's clear that employers play a crucial role in supporting the mental wellbeing of their staff. The financial impact of poor mental health on employers is significant, estimated to cost between £33 billion and £44 billion annually. These costs stem from:

- **Presenteeism** — when employees come to work but are far less productive due to poor mental health.
- **Sickness Absence** — employees taking time off due to mental health struggles.
- **Staff Turnover** — employees leaving their jobs due to long-term mental health conditions.

Additionally, around 300,000 people with long-term mental health issues lose their jobs each year. Investing in mental health support has been shown to bring consistent, positive returns, benefiting both workplace productivity and employee retention.

In a time when productivity is a national priority, it's in the best interest of both employers and policymakers to prioritise and invest in mental health support.

How to Use This Guide

Effectively managing mental health is key to strong employee engagement, benefiting employees, employers, and organisational performance. A healthy and supported workforce is essential for business success, and employees who feel valued tend to be more productive.

Thriving at Work, recommends six core and four enhanced standards that organisations can adopt to better support mental health. By following these standards, organisations of any size can:
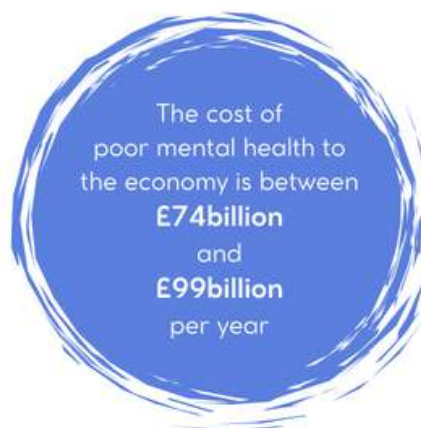
- Gain the awareness and tools needed to prevent and address work-related mental health issues
- Support employees with mental health conditions, from recruitment throughout their employment journey
- Access timely resources to reduce sickness absence related to mental health issues

We encourage all employers, regardless of sector, type, or size, to adopt the six core standards. This guide also includes information on the four enhanced standards, which are especially relevant for larger organisations and the public sector, though they are beneficial for any employer ready to implement them.

This guide is adaptable for employers across various industries and work environments. The standards can be tailored based on your organisation's unique needs, resources, and timeline. It is designed not as a "one size fits all" solution but as a toolkit to help create a more inclusive, supportive workplace.

For organisations new to addressing mental health, use this guide to take your first steps and commit to a long-term approach that benefits both individual well-being and business productivity. For organisations already implementing mental health initiatives, use this guide to refine your practices and measure your progress in supporting employee wellbeing.

The Current Picture in Workplace Mental Health

One in six
British workers are affected by mental health problems like anxiety, depression and stress every year

300,000 people
with a long-term mental health problem lose their jobs each year

Around **15 per cent** of people at work have symptoms of an existing mental health condition

The cost of poor mental health to the economy is between **£74billion** and **£99billion** per year

CORE STANDARD ONE

Develop, implement, and share a workplace mental health plan that promotes the wellbeing of all employees and fosters an open, supportive organisational culture.

Why Have a Mental Health at Work Plan?

More employers today recognise that supporting mental health is beneficial for both employees and business. Creating, implementing, and communicating a mental health plan is an effective way to promote wellbeing across the organisation.

Findings from Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index (2017/18) revealed that 6 in 10 employees experienced poor mental health, yet only 6% felt able to take time off for mental health issues, compared to over 20% who would take time off for physical health issues.

A mental health at work plan should clearly outline the support available for employees facing mental health challenges, whether these stem from work or personal life. Poor work-life balance, for instance, can lead to stress and burnout, contributing to increased sickness absence. Encouraging staff to maintain healthy work practices—such as working reasonable hours, taking lunch breaks, resting after busy periods, avoiding weekend work, and using their full annual leave—can help prevent burnout and support a healthier, more productive workforce.

Supporting Small and Large Organisations

Workplaces vary widely, yet creating a mental health plan is a foundational step toward improving mental health at work for any organisation—whether a small business or a multinational corporation.

For Larger Organisations

For larger organisations, this plan may take the form of a comprehensive, organisation-wide mental health policy or strategy. Smaller organisations, which may not have formal mental health policies in place, can integrate this plan into existing procedures, with designated representatives assigned to manage specific components. This flexible approach allows each organisation, regardless of size, to adopt mental health practices suited to its structure and resources.

What to Include in Your Mental Health at Work Plan

Your mental health plan should foster a supportive culture where employees feel comfortable discussing mental health. Documenting this plan shows both current and future employees that their wellbeing matters. Key elements to include are:

- Promotion of Wellbeing: Outline steps to actively promote the mental wellbeing of all staff.
- Addressing Work-Related Causes: Include strategies to identify and address work-related stressors and regularly assess staff wellbeing.
- Support for Mental Health: Describe how you will support employees who experience mental health challenges.
- Access to Resources: Provide guidance on internal and external resources for mental health information and support.
- Clear Objectives: Set specific goals aligned with your organisation's vision for mental health.
- Legal Considerations: Refer to the Equality Act 2010, recognising that mental health conditions may be classified as a disability.

Ensure that the plan is easy for staff to access at all times. Consider adding it to your staff handbook, intranet, website, or distributing hard copies around the workplace.

Involve Your Staff

Involving employees in designing your mental health plan increases engagement and helps you understand the specific support they need. For larger organisations, consider forming a smaller group for initial consultations and a separate group to provide feedback on the finalised plan. Gathering input from diverse team members not only strengthens the plan but also promotes a shared commitment to mental health.

Begin by explaining the purpose of the plan, its intended rollout, and the importance of employee input. Remember, feedback shouldn't stop once the plan is finalised—establish regular check-ins to assess what's working and adjust support as needed. Additionally, connecting with similar organisations for best practices can help enhance your approach. Supporting staff in this way builds trust and fosters a culture of loyalty and commitment, as employees feel valued and supported in their mental health journey.

Who's responsible?
Everyone in your organisation is responsible for putting your plan into action.

Human resources (HR): should take responsibility for providing advice and support to managers and employees. They should also lead on reviewing employee wellbeing and monitoring sickness absence across the organisation. If you are a SME or micro business that has no HR function, responsibility may need to be split between different representatives across your organisation. The owner must be most accountable.

Senior leaders: should play a key role in creating change by ensuring reliable processes, checks and action plans are in place which are regularly monitored.

Line managers: should take responsibility for assessing their teams' mental health. They can do this through regular team meetings, quarterly mental health audits and regular one-to- ones. Managers should seek and take any appropriate action from regular feedback on their approach.

Employees: are responsible for accessing support when they need it and raising any concerns with their line manager, HR or occupational health. All employees, irrespective of their seniority in the organisation, should also try to have a healthy work/life balance.

Wider organisational policies
Consider reviewing other policies and practices that impact staff wellbeing to ensure mental health is prioritised across the board. Make sure that mental wellbeing is integrated into policies related to health and safety, working hours, sickness absence, and return-to-work procedures. This comprehensive approach helps create a workplace culture that consistently supports employee mental health.

Core standard one: employer tool
What to consider when you are developing your mental health at work plan.

<u>**Promoting employee wellbeing**</u>

1. **Get senior leaders on board.**
They play a key role in progressing the mental health agenda within organisations. Colleagues take cues from how leaders behave. Senior leaders should promote employee wellbeing by:

• speaking out about mental health
• supporting a campaign to encourage all staff to take lunch breaks and work healthy hours
• signing the Time to Change Employer pledge.

2. Raise Awarness of Mental Health

In many workplaces, mental health remains a difficult topic to address, with employees often hesitant to speak up, allowing issues to escalate. Your action plan should focus on increasing awareness of mental health by:

- Including mental health education in employee induction and ongoing training
- Observing key dates in the mental health calendar to highlight its importance
- Running internal campaigns to promote mental health awareness
- Appointing Mental Health Champions to lead initiatives and support colleagues

These steps help normalise conversations around mental health and create a more supportive work environment.

3.Involve Staff in Dialogue and Decision-Making to Foster a Culture of Openness

When employees are actively involved and well-informed about organisational developments, it boosts motivation and helps them understand how their individual role contributes to the larger goals. Your action plan should outline ways to engage staff through various methods, such as:

- Staff surveys and focus groups
- Staff forums and diversity networks
- Engagement steering groups
- Monthly or quarterly performance reviews
- Improvement or planning 'away days'
- Regular group problem-solving meetings or innovation events
- Work-stream groups that connect different parts of the organisation
- Sharing board decisions with all staff
- Effectively utilising internal communication channels

By implementing these strategies, you create a transparent and inclusive environment where staff feel valued and involved in shaping the organisation's direction.

4.Promote a Healthy Work/Life Balance

A poor work/life balance can quickly lead to stress and burnout, negatively affecting productivity, performance, creativity, and morale. Your action plan should include strategies to encourage staff to:

- Work reasonable hours
- Take full lunch breaks
- Rest and recover after busy periods
- Avoid working weekends, particularly from home
- Use their full annual leave entitlement

Promoting a healthy balance helps prevent burnout and supports overall employee well-being, contributing to a more productive and engaged workforce.

5.Provide Opportunities for Learning and Development

Research shows that employees who feel valued, supported, and see their work as meaningful are more engaged. Your mental health plan should highlight how your organisation offers learning and development opportunities, such as:

- Coaching
- Training
- Job-shadowing

These opportunities not only support staff growth but also contribute to a positive, engaged workforce that feels empowered to succeed.

6.Offer Positive Working Relationships and Social Connections

Organisations should actively foster a supportive workplace where positive relationships and collaboration flourish. Your mental health plan should include initiatives to:

- Promote a culture of teamwork, collaboration, and information-sharing
- Encourage positive behaviors to prevent conflict and ensure fairness
- Ensure clear and well-communicated policies on bullying and harassment
- Support exercise and regular social events to enhance staff health, teamwork, and mental wellbeing
- Organise 'lunch and learn' sessions to encourage staff to take full lunch breaks away from their desks
- Offer mentoring and buddy schemes to help new employees integrate quickly and support all staff in building confidence and developing new skills

These actions help create a positive and supportive work environment that enhances both individual wellbeing and team cohesion.

Tackling the Work-Related Causes of Mental Health Problems

Regularly assessing your employees' mental wellbeing is crucial to understanding the true state of mental health in your workplace. Your action plan should outline how you will routinely evaluate staff mental health, allowing you to:

- Identify the factors that impact staff mental wellbeing in your workplace
- Review the current support measures in place
- Assess the effectiveness of your existing approach
- Plan improvements to boost morale and productivity
- Participate in Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index to gain insights and benchmarks

By regularly taking stock, you can better address mental health challenges and create a more supportive environment for your staff.

Routinely take stock.
If you don't take stock of your employees' mental wellbeing you won't have a clear picture of what's really going on. Your action plan should detail how you plan to routinely take stock of staff mental health allowing you to:

• understand the factors that affect staff mental wellbeing in your workplace
• identify what you're already doing to support it
• assess the impact your current approach is having
• plan further improvements, enhance morale and increase productivity
• take part in Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index.

Upskill Line Managers
The way line managers support staff experiencing mental health challenges can greatly influence how employees cope and recover. Your mental health plan should detail how you will equip managers to recognise and address mental health concerns within their teams. This can be achieved by:

- Providing training on mental health awareness and stress management, including how to identify the signs of poor mental health and engage in supportive conversations with staff
- Offering clear guidelines for managers on how to handle mental health issues effectively
- Encouraging and supporting positive behaviours from managers to foster a supportive environment

Investing in line managers' skills helps ensure they are prepared to offer the right support when it's needed most.

Regular One-to-Ones
Regular one-to-one meetings offer valuable benefits for both employees and employers, contributing to a healthier workplace and improved performance. Your mental health plan should include how you will support managers in conducting regular one-to-ones by:

- Encouraging managers to regularly check in with staff, discussing how they're doing and exploring factors that may affect their mental wellbeing
- Implementing appraisal and supervision procedures that address mental wellbeing and stress, allowing employees to share both work-related and personal concerns if they choose
- Ensuring consistent, open communication with all staff, particularly those working in isolation, through methods like monthly team meetings or regular phone check-ins

These practices help maintain strong connections with employees and ensure that mental health remains a priority in day-to-day management.

The Physical Work Environment
Factors like noise levels, space, temperature, and lighting can have a significant impact on staff wellbeing. Your action plan should outline how you will create a positive work environment by:

- Consulting with employees on ways to improve the physical workspace and taking action to ensure it meets their needs
- Providing space dividers and quiet areas where employees can focus without distractions
- Establishing guidelines for respectful behaviour to manage noise levels and reduce potential disruptions

These steps help create a comfortable and supportive environment that promotes both mental and physical wellbeing in the workplace.

Supporting Staff Experiencing a Mental Health Problem
Creating an open and supportive environment is essential in reassuring staff that their mental health matters, and that discussing it will lead to support, not discrimination. Your action plan should outline the support available to employees experiencing mental health issues, including:

- Signposting to medical services, such as NHS services or other healthcare providers
- Directing employees to mental health and/or wellbeing peer support groups
- Offering free or subsidized access to private medical insurance
- Providing the right for employees to request flexible working arrangements
- Establishing an internal wellbeing or mental health network for employees to share experiences and tips for managing mental health at work
- Setting up a formal or informal buddying system where employees can talk to someone outside of their direct management structure and be guided to additional support
- Encouraging staff to access online peer support communities, such as Elefriends
- Providing an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for further resources and support
- Promoting the use of Wellness Action Plans to help employees manage their mental health proactively

These initiatives ensure that employees know where to turn for help and foster a workplace culture where mental health is supported.

CORE STANDARD TWO

Develop mental health awareness among employees by making information, tools and support accessible.

How Stigma Impacts Staff Wellbeing
In many workplaces, mental health remains a taboo subject, with employees often hesitant to speak up about their struggles, which can lead to escalating problems. Raising awareness of mental health and encouraging open discussions helps challenge this harmful culture. By addressing the stigma surrounding mental health, you create a more supportive environment where employees feel safe to seek help and talk openly about their wellbeing.

Building People's Mental Health Literacy to Support Each Other
Building mental health literacy means enhancing employees' knowledge and skills so they can better manage their own mental health and effectively support their colleagues. Ensuring that both staff and managers understand mental health and the factors influencing workplace wellbeing is crucial for fostering a healthy, happy, and productive workforce.

You can achieve this by:
- **Embedding mental health in your induction and training:** Provide employees with information on how to manage their mental health and what support options are available. Include this in your action plan.
- **Raising the profile of mental health:** Consider inviting a mental health speaker to your events, as part of diversity, disability, or mental health awareness activities. Hearing firsthand experiences from those who have dealt with mental health issues can help dismantle negative stereotypes.
- **Maximising internal communications:** Use blogs, myth-busters, factsheets, tips for managers, useful web links, and FAQs to raise awareness. You can also use posters, noticeboards, staff newsletters, magazines, and intranet or internet pages to disseminate key messages.

Five Ways to Tackle Stigma in Your Organisation

1. **Help People Understand Mental Health**- Improving awareness is key to combating stigma. Provide employees with reliable information to help them understand mental health better. Start by utilising trusted resources, such as our website, to educate staff.

2. **Talk About Mental Health**- Many believe that there's no appropriate time or place to discuss mental health, but the more openly we talk about it, the better life becomes for everyone. Encourage open conversations to normalise mental health discussions.

3. **Share Your Experience**- Sharing personal experiences can help increase understanding and change attitudes. Leaders set the tone by their actions, so lead by example and show your support for mental health.

4. **Support Co-Workers and Colleagues** - Be actively involved in developing and shaping mental health programs and policies at work. When you take an active role in supporting mental health, others will be encouraged to do the same.

5. **Recruit Mental Health Champions**- Mental Health Champions are self-appointed employees at any level who take it upon themselves to challenge stigma and influence attitudes around mental health in the workplace. These champions help lead the way toward a more supportive environment.

CORE STANDARD THREE

Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling, during the recruitment process and at regular intervals throughout employment, with appropriate workplace adjustments offered to employees who require them.

Offering Mental Health Support

Supporting staff mental health is an ongoing commitment, not a one-time action. Open conversations and offering consistent mental health support should be a part of your approach from recruitment through to employees returning to work after absence.
As an HR manager or senior leader, consider the following:

- What support is provided for staff experiencing a mental health issue? Ensure there are clear resources and assistance available for employees facing mental health challenges.
- Do employees understand how mental health is managed in the workplace and what support options are available? Make sure staff are aware of the mental health policies and the support mechanisms in place.
- Do you offer stress coaching? Providing coaching or other forms of support to help employees manage stress can be beneficial in maintaining their mental wellbeing.

Offering the Right Support at Different Stages

Stage One - Recruitment

Supporting mental health begins with ensuring a good fit between the candidate and the job. A mismatch between a new recruit, your workplace culture, or their skills and the job's requirements can lead to unnecessary stress. During the recruitment process, it's important to be clear about the role and select candidates based on their skills, competencies, or realistic potential.

Offering the Right Support at Different Stages

Here are some tips for a mental health-friendly recruitment process:

- Communicate your commitment to equal opportunities: Clearly express your organisation's dedication to equal opportunities in your job advertisements.
- Provide recruitment guidelines and training: Ensure those involved in recruitment understand how to avoid discrimination at any stage.
- Show your commitment to mental health: In your job adverts and interviews, highlight your organisation's commitment to mental health, signaling that disclosure won't lead to discrimination. For example, you could include a statement like: "As an employer, we are committed to promoting and protecting the physical and mental health of all our staff."
- Offer reasonable adjustments: Clearly state that reasonable adjustments can be made for interviews and the job itself, so candidates feel comfortable disclosing their needs.
- Ensure confidential disclosures: Provide a confidential process for disclosing health or disability information, ensuring that such details are kept separate from the main application so the recruitment panel does not see it.

Stage Two - Induction

An effective induction programme is crucial for supporting new employees. Starting a new role can be overwhelming, and without clear expectations and guidance, it can undermine confidence and exacerbate existing mental health issues. During induction, ensure you provide clear information about the mental health and wellbeing support available to employees. This approach demonstrates that mental health is a priority for your organisation and helps create a supportive environment from the outset.

Stage Three - Responding to Disclosure

When an employee discloses a mental health issue, or when a manager suspects that an employee may be struggling, it's crucial to have an early conversation to understand their needs. Line managers should find a quiet, private space to discuss how the employee is feeling and what support or adjustments may be necessary.

Strong people management skills, along with empathy and common sense, are key in this process. Managers should ensure they are approachable and create an environment where employees feel comfortable seeking help. It's also important to consider whether the workplace feels safe for employees to disclose their mental health concerns.

Stage Four - Supporting an Employee When They Are Unwell and Off Sick

When an employee is unwell and requires time off to recover, how sickness absence is managed can greatly impact their recovery and return to work. Supporting the employee effectively during their time off and maintaining communication can help them feel valued and supported, which can accelerate their return to health and work readiness.

Stage Five - Supporting People to Return to Work
Return-to-work interviews are a vital tool for identifying ongoing mental health challenges and ensuring employees are supported. To be effective, managers should approach these interviews with the goal of building trust and engagement. Before the interview, managers should inform the employee about what to expect, reassuring them that the meeting is intended to support their successful return to work and address any ongoing health needs.

Workplace Adjustments
Workplace adjustments for mental health are typically simple, practical, and cost-effective. These changes might include offering quiet spaces for focused work or implementing a buddy system. Often, the adjustments are not physical, but rather involve shifts in attitude, expectations, or communication styles.

It's important to remember that, once an employer is aware that a work-related issue is impacting an employee with a disability, there is a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to support that individual's needs.

Ten Tips for Supporting an Employee Who Is Off Sick with a Mental Health Problem
- **Send a Get Well Soon Card:** Just as you would with a physical illness, send a thoughtful message to show your support.
- **Reassure Job Security:** Make it clear that the organisation will support them during their absence and that their job will be waiting for them upon their return.
- **Maintain Regular Communication:** Agree on how often to communicate early on and confirm this in writing to ensure clarity.
- **Ask for Their Preferred Communication Method:** Find out how they would prefer to stay in touch, whether by phone, email, text, or face-to-face, and reassure them they can change their preference at any time.
- **Open-Door Policy:** Encourage the employee to approach management with any concerns they might have, creating a safe space for dialogue.
- **Focus on Wellbeing:** During check-ins, prioritise the employee's wellbeing and ask how they are doing without rushing the conversation.
- **Avoid Pressure to Return Too Soon:** Reassure the employee that they should not feel rushed to return to work before they are ready.
- **Offer Home Visits (With Consent):** If appropriate and with the employee's consent, consider visiting them at home to offer support.
- **Respect Privacy:** Agree on what information they would like to share with colleagues, ensuring their privacy and dignity.
- **Keep Them Informed:** Share important updates about the workplace so the employee feels connected and informed, even while off sick.

Employer Guidance on Supporting Gymnastics Professionals with Mental Health Needs

Below are recommended adjustments to help support gymnastics professionals in managing their mental health at work. These suggestions are flexible, and it's essential to center each individual's preferences and feedback. This list can be used as a guide for team leaders and gymnastics professionals as they discuss symptoms, accommodations, and support needs together.

- **Flexible Scheduling** — Adjust start and finish times or introduce part-time work hours if needed.
- **Workspace Adjustments** — Provide options for quieter or less crowded workspaces, use dividing screens, or allow for adjustments to create a calmer environment.
- **Role Modification** — Consider temporary or permanent changes in duties or responsibilities to better align with the individual's needs.
- **Frequent, Shorter Breaks** — Instead of fewer long breaks, provide the same total break time divided into shorter, more frequent intervals.
- **Additional Training or Coaching** — Offer on-the-job training or coaching to help manage specific tasks or build resilience.
- **Enhanced Supervision** — Increase support with workload management, through more frequent check-ins or guidance.
- **Natural Light Solutions** — Arrange seating near natural light sources or consider light therapy boxes if needed.
- **Conflict Mediation** — Provide mediation services if interpersonal difficulties arise between team members.
- **Mentorship or Peer Support** — Establish formal or informal mentor or buddy systems for ongoing peer support.
- **Quiet Spaces** — Ensure access to designated quiet rooms or calm areas for decompression during the workday.
- **Phased Return to Work** — Facilitate a gradual return, allowing reduced hours initially with a plan to increase over time.
- **Role Reassignment** — Offer temporary or permanent redeployment to a role better suited to the individual's current capabilities.
- **Adapted Absence Policy** — Allow flexibility in absence policies, especially for disability-related absences.
- **Temporary Task Reallocation** — Reassign certain tasks temporarily to help with workload management.
- **Flexible Appointment Leave** — Permit time off for health appointments, with short notice if necessary.
- **Remote Work Options** — Provide work-from-home arrangements as appropriate.

These adjustments are intended to be flexible, reflecting the unique needs of each gymnastics professional. It is always beneficial to discuss these options openly to find the best approach to supporting mental well-being in the workplace.

CORE STANDARD FOUR

Provide your employees with good working conditions and ensure they have a healthy work/life balance and opportunities for development.

What Makes Work a Positive Experience?

For some, it might be the free treats in the break room on Fridays. For others, it's the camaraderie among colleagues who bring a smile even on challenging days. Positive work conditions foster loyalty and motivate employees to perform at their best. They also play a vital role in preventing mental health issues and supporting those managing existing challenges to thrive.

A fulfilling job offers stability and security, empowering people to plan for the future and maintain financial well-being. Research highlights that a positive workplace is one where individuals feel a sense of autonomy, can build strong social connections, and have a healthy work-life balance. Opportunities for personal and professional growth also contribute to making work a truly positive experience.

The following section provides ideas for creating a more supportive and enjoyable workplace.

Five Strategies for Building a Positive Workplace

1. **Encourage Open Communication**

Managers should regularly check in with team members to see how they're doing and identify any sources of stress. Dedicating part of team meetings to discussing stress and well-being openly fosters a supportive and transparent team environment.

2. **Use Clear, Two-Way Communication**

Miscommunication can lead to significant stress, especially when employees are:

- Overloaded with excessive or confusing information,
- Left out of important updates and conversations, or
- Lacking opportunities to express their concerns to managers.

Clear, open, and responsive communication allows employees to access essential information without feeling overwhelmed, contributing to a more harmonious workplace.

3. Promote a Healthy Work/Life Balance

While long hours may be manageable for a short period, ongoing pressure and an imbalanced work-life dynamic can lead to stress and burnout, which reduce productivity, creativity, and morale.

To help foster balance, managers can encourage staff to:

- Maintain reasonable working hours,
- Take full lunch breaks,
- Rest and recharge after high-demand periods,
- Avoid weekend work—especially from home, and
- Use their full annual leave.

4. Offer Flexible Working Options

Allowing employees some control over where, when, and how they work can significantly improve well-being and productivity. For instance, permitting a later start time a couple of days a week may help an employee manage stress by allowing time for morning exercise. A flexible working policy can also serve as an early intervention to prevent mental health issues from worsening and leading to extended absences. Additionally, flexible options can ease the transition for employees returning to work after time off. Whenever possible, senior leaders and managers should model healthy work habits to inspire similar practices in the team.

5. Provide Opportunities for Growth and Development

Research shows that employees who feel valued, supported, and see their work as meaningful are more likely to stay committed and productive. A positive culture that invests in skill-building and development fosters trust, motivation, and engagement. Encourage managers to provide growth opportunities whenever possible. Even on a budget, organizations can promote learning through internal coaching, knowledge-sharing, training, and job-shadowing programs.

Quick Guide: What Makes a Good Job?

The Job
- Workloads that align with employees' skills and experience.
- Realistic and mutually agreed-upon deadlines.
- Job security and stability.
- A comfortable working environment, considering factors such as noise, lighting, and equipment.
- Clear and well-defined job roles.
- Opportunities for employees to participate in planning and managing their workload.
- The freedom to raise concerns and offer feedback.
- Plans for ongoing employee training and career development.
- Financial security and stability.

The Organisation
- Fair and supportive management structures.
- Transparent and accessible supervision and support policies.
- Encouragement of mental health openness in the workplace. Employees need to feel comfortable discussing mental health issues, knowing they will be treated with respect and seriousness.
- Clear guidelines for managers on handling mental health concerns.
- Detailed records of sickness absences, used to identify and address underlying causes.
- Easily accessible and well-publicised policies to challenge inappropriate behaviour, such as racism, sexism, and bullying.

This framework highlights the essential elements that contribute to a positive and supportive work environment for all employees.

Relationships in the Workplace
- Supportive Environment: Encourage and celebrate examples of strong, productive teamwork. Recognising good collaboration helps foster a positive and supportive workplace culture.
- Inclusive Atmosphere: Ensure that no employee feels isolated or excluded due to the nature of their role, or because of their cultural or religious beliefs, race, sexuality, disability, age, or gender.

Career and Personal Development
- Clear Supervision and Appraisal Systems: Implement well-defined supervisory and appraisal structures that involve the employee in their development and feedback process.
- Opportunities for Growth: Provide employees with ample opportunities for training, skill development, and career progression through promotions.
- Employee Feedback: Actively consider employees' perspectives on job satisfaction, career development, and their training needs to support their professional growth.

Personal Issues Affecting Employees
- Awareness of Personal Challenges: Managers should be aware of personal issues that may affect employees, such as illness, bereavement, financial stress, or other factors that might impact their well-being or ability to perform at work.
- Supportive Policies: Establish clear policies for addressing and supporting employees who face personal challenges.
- Manager Training: Provide training for managers to ensure they are equipped to handle personal issues with understanding and professionalism, offering the right support when needed.

These guidelines promote a caring, inclusive, and supportive workplace where employees feel valued and are given opportunities to thrive personally and professionally.

CORE STANDARD FIVE

Promote effective people management to ensure all employees have a regular conversation about their health and wellbeing with their line manager, supervisor or organisational leader and train and support line managers in effective management practices.

Why Good Management Matters

Managers play a crucial role in fostering workplace well-being. Research shows that effective line management is directly linked to better health, well-being, and performance. Conversely, poor leadership can contribute to stress, burnout, and depression among employees.

Investing in good management doesn't have to be complex or costly; it often involves managers taking straightforward actions to support their teams. Developing a management style that is open, approachable, and self-aware can make a significant difference. Managers can foster this by asking simple, open, and non-judgmental questions about mental health.

Some ways to implement this include:
- Regular check-ins with staff to understand their well-being.
- Setting clear priorities to help manage workloads and reduce stress.
- Celebrating individual and team achievements to boost morale.
- Involving staff in decision-making to enhance engagement and ownership.
- Adapting management styles to meet the unique needs of individual employees.

Training Line Managers

The way managers support employees dealing with mental health issues can significantly impact their ability to cope and recover.

To enhance the effectiveness of management, organisations should:

- Provide training on mental health and stress management, including how to recognise the signs of mental health issues and engage in supportive conversations.
- Establish clear guidelines for managers on how to address mental health challenges in the workplace.
- Encourage and support positive managerial behaviours that prioritise well-being and mental health.

Checklist for Managers

1. **Lead by Example**

Encourage your team to adopt healthy working habits by demonstrating them yourself. This includes working sensible hours, taking full lunch breaks, using your annual leave, and ensuring you rest after busy periods. Your behavior sets the tone for your team.

2. **Build Your Confidence on Mental Health**

Familiarise yourself with your organisation's mental health policies and support resources. Know how employees can seek confidential advice and assistance, so you are equipped to guide them appropriately.

3. **Normalise Mental Health**

Regularly check in with employees to see how they are doing and understand what might be causing them stress. Create a safe space for them to raise concerns, and give them permission to discuss both work and personal issues if they choose to.

4. **Take Stock**

Incorporate well-being as a regular agenda item in team meetings. Discuss what factors may be affecting everyone's health and well-being. Consider organizing planning sessions to address these issues and develop a team action plan. If your organization conducts staff surveys, use the feedback to guide your discussions.

5. **Be Available for Your Staff**

Maintain regular one-on-one meetings and catch-ups with your team. These interactions help to build strong working relationships and foster mutual trust, ensuring employees feel supported and heard.

6. **Treat People as Individuals**

Show respect for each employee, recognizing their unique contributions and needs. Praise good work, offer support where skills gaps exist, and adopt a coaching style of management. Regularly ask for feedback on the support you provide and what additional assistance they need to achieve their personal and professional goals.

7. **Foster Employee Engagemen**t

Encourage a culture of open communication by involving employees in decisions about team operations and their roles. Help them understand how their individual contributions align with the broader organizational vision and goals, reinforcing the importance of their work.

8. **Create Opportunities for Coaching, Learning, and Development**

Ensure that employees are equipped with the skills and confidence to perform their jobs at a high standard. Offer opportunities for development through coaching, skill-building, and regular feedback. Support both formal training programs and informal work-related conversations to help employees grow.

9. Promote Positive Work Relationships

Cultivate a culture of teamwork, collaboration, and information-sharing within the team and across the organisation. Lead by example, modeling positive behaviors that encourage employees to work together effectively and support one another.

10. Raise Awareness

As a manager, you have the power to challenge stigma and prejudice within the workplace. Use your position to raise awareness of mental health issues and ensure that mental health remains a priority in discussions with senior leadership. By leading these conversations, you can help create a more inclusive and supportive work environment for all.

CORE STANDARD SIX

Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing by understanding available data, talking to employees, and understanding risk factors.

Monitoring Mental Health and Wellbeing

Developing a clear understanding of your organisation's mental health and wellbeing allows you to assess what affects staff and how well you're supporting them. It also helps you evaluate whether your current strategies are working and identify areas for improvement.

While this might sound complex, if you're already gathering feedback from staff about their experiences, wellbeing, and challenges—whether formally or informally—you likely already have much of the data you need.

Consider adapting the tools you currently use—such as staff surveys, HR data, and appraisals—to include relevant questions about mental health. This way, you can build a comprehensive picture without adding extra work. If you're part of a small or micro business that doesn't use traditional HR data, focus on team audits as a practical way to assess mental health at the organisational level.

Using Different Types of Data

Staff Surveys

Your staff survey is an excellent tool for gathering information about employee wellbeing. It's likely already capturing data on factors like workload, management quality, opportunities for growth, and communication. However, it may not always connect these aspects to their impact on mental health.

Consider adding questions that link these factors directly to employees' mental wellbeing. For example, include questions that ask staff about their mental health, while reassuring them that their responses will remain confidential. If you run a staff satisfaction survey, use it as an opportunity to understand how workplace factors affect mental wellbeing.

Team Mental Health Audits

It's crucial for managers to regularly assess the mental health of their teams, identify the pressures staff are facing, and consider how to alleviate them. Conducting regular mental health audits can help by providing a platform for employees to share challenges, identify stressors, and collaborate on potential solutions. This audit approach encourages open communication and proactive problem-solving within teams.

By integrating mental health considerations into existing systems, managers can effectively monitor wellbeing and take meaningful action to support staff.

HR Data

HR data can be a valuable source of information about employee wellbeing. Key sources include absenteeism records, staff turnover, and exit interviews, all of which can offer insights into mental health trends within the organisation.

Absenteeism data—such as how often staff take sick leave and the reasons provided—can provide useful clues about potential mental health concerns. However, it's important not to make assumptions based solely on this data.

Be cautious when interpreting sickness absence data, especially if mental health isn't openly discussed within your workplace. Just because employees don't cite mental health issues as the reason for their absence doesn't mean these challenges aren't present. Employees may hesitate to disclose mental health struggles due to fear of stigma or negative reactions.

A Mind survey revealed that 95% of employees who called in sick due to stress gave a different reason for their absence. This highlights the importance of managers proactively checking in with staff about their wellbeing. Regularly asking employees how they're doing and discussing mental health helps foster a supportive environment where employees feel more comfortable seeking help when needed.

Encouraging openness and confidence in discussing mental health not only improves the support employees receive, but it also ensures more reliable and accurate HR data, which is essential for identifying patterns and addressing wellbeing needs.

How to Take Stock
How to Take Stock at an Organisational Level

At an organisational level, it's important to assess both the approach to workplace wellbeing and how employees perceive it. Tools like the Workplace Wellbeing Index, which includes both staff and employer surveys, can help identify gaps between organizational practices and staff perceptions. This helps provide a clearer picture of where improvements can be made.

How to Take Stock of Wellbeing at a Team Level
To better understand the wellbeing of your team, regularly conduct mental health audits. If your organisation uses a staff survey that covers employee experience, culture, and mental health, you can gather valuable insights about your team's wellbeing. You can take this a step further by holding a dedicated session during a team meeting.

During this session, ask your team the following questions:
- What does a mentally healthy team look like to you?
- What do we already do well to promote good mental health, and how can we build on this?
- Are there any factors currently affecting the team's mental wellbeing in a negative way?

Encourage team members to categorise these issues into three groups:
- What do we have control over?
- These are issues that can be addressed immediately and should be included in your action plan.
- What can we influence?
- These issues may not be fully within the team's control but can be influenced. They should also be part of the action plan.
- What issues are beyond our control or influence?
- These are matters that need to be acknowledged but cannot be mitigated at present. While they may not be actionable immediately, they could become areas to address in the future as circumstances change.

Workplace Triggers of Poor Mental Health
Common workplace triggers for stress and mental health challenges include:
- Long hours with no breaks
- Unrealistic expectations or deadlines
- High-pressure work environments
- Unmanageable workloads or lack of control over work
- Inability to take annual leave
- Poor physical working conditions
- High-risk roles
- Lone working
- Poor relationships with managers
- Difficult relationships with colleagues
- Ineffective internal communication
- Lack of managerial support
- Job insecurity or poorly managed organizational change
- Bullying
- Financial stress

Understanding these potential triggers is essential for identifying and addressing stressors that can negatively impact mental health in the workplace.

How to Take Stock at an Individual Level: One-to-Ones
Regular one-to-one meetings are an excellent opportunity to check in with your team members and understand how they're feeling. These conversations help build trust, create a safe space for employees to raise issues early, and enable managers to offer timely support.

Ask your team how these one-to-one meetings can be tailored to meet their needs. Employees should feel comfortable requesting a meeting outside the regular schedule if they have important matters to discuss.

Regular catch-ups are beneficial for both employees and employers. They offer employees the chance to raise concerns before they escalate, and they allow managers to provide guidance and support, fostering a more positive work environment and improving overall productivity and well-being.

ENHANCED STANDARD ONE

Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting to include a leadership commitment and outline of the organisation's progress on mental health

Creating and Promoting a Mental Health at Work Plan

Throughout this guide, we've highlighted the importance of creating and promoting a mental health at work plan for supporting employee wellbeing. By developing a plan with input from your employees, you can align the core standards with the specific needs of your organisation. However, setting up the plan is just the beginning. It's crucial to regularly assess your progress and identify areas for improvement, both for your current staff and for future employees. This demonstrates your ongoing commitment to mental health and reinforces the message that you value your workforce.

Producing an Annual Wellbeing Report

In core standard six, we discussed how to consistently monitor mental health and wellbeing by utilising both HR data and team feedback. The data collected can be used to produce an annual mental health and wellbeing report, which can be shared internally with staff and externally with key stakeholders and potential recruits. This report serves as a tool to increase accountability and foster open dialogue around mental health in the workplace. Confidentiality is paramount, as the data is sensitive. Be sure that surveys and feedback forms don't ask for personal identifying information, such as names, addresses, or emails. Establish strict policies to protect anonymity, ensuring employees feel comfortable providing honest and candid feedback. Emphasise that responses are confidential, which will help generate more genuine input. For guidance on data protection, refer to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Your report could include the following:

- A statement reaffirming your organisation's commitment to adopting the mental health core standards.
- An overview of current initiatives and a look at priorities for the future.
- Evidence of the effectiveness of your mental health initiatives, including case studies, staff survey results, data on sickness absence, and employee engagement in mental health-related activities.

ENHANCED STANDARD TWO

Demonstrate accountability by nominating a health and wellbeing lead at Board or Senior Leadership level, with clear reporting duties and responsibilities

Developing and Communicating a Mental Health at Work Plan

Core standard one focuses on creating, implementing, and communicating a comprehensive mental health at work plan. Having a designated lead at the Board level ensures that mental health is prioritized across the organization and receives attention from senior leadership. In larger organisations, this responsibility may fall to senior leaders in Human Resources or Health and Safety departments.

It's essential that the designated lead has clear accountability for protecting and supporting mental health throughout the organisation. This role should also seek out opportunities for increasing collaboration across departments to enhance overall wellbeing support.

One way to strengthen accountability is by including mental health support as part of senior leaders' performance objectives. This would involve holding them accountable for ensuring the adoption of both the mental health core standards and enhanced standards. Performance reviews could include metrics such as:

- Sickness absence rates
- Staff survey results
- Engagement with Employee Assistance Programs or Occupational Health Services
- Mental health disclosure rates

For smaller organisations that may not have a large senior leadership team, consider nominating a manager to take ownership of this responsibility and demonstrate leadership commitment. If the scope is too broad for one person, consider sharing the role among a group of senior staff members to distribute the workload and enhance collaboration.

Supporting High-Risk Staff

Certain groups of employees, such as those working in high-risk sectors like emergency services, face an elevated risk of stress and trauma. These employees require extra support for their mental health, and clear accountability must be in place to ensure their wellbeing is consistently prioritised. Having a dedicated mental health strategy for these teams is crucial for protecting them from burnout and other mental health challenges.

ENHANCED STANDARD THREE

Improve the disclosure process to encourage openness during recruitment, ensuring employees are aware of why information is required and make sure the right support is in place to facilitate a good employer response following disclosure

Core standard three emphasises that it's important to be open about mental health. However, to encourage this open culture, employees must be confident how information they share will be used when talking about their mental health. Policies must be clear and fair to avoid discouraging them from sharing sensitive issues. For example, employers should explain why people are being asked to share information about mental health problems and what will happen with that information.

Handling disclosure effectively

Someone applying for a job at your organisation may be worried about sharing information about their mental health. They might be anxious their mental health problems will lead to them being rejected, or that the interviewer will view them in a negative light. Therefore, it is important that organisations provide a fair and unbiased recruitment process. Since the Equality Act 2010 came into force, it is unlawful for employers to ask questions about health before making a job offer, including about mental health. However, there are ways to support people to disclose their mental health problems lawfully. This helps ensure they have equal access to job opportunities and are offered the support they need without discrimination. Recruitment decisions should be based on whether candidates have the necessary qualifications and competence for the job, without making assumptions about health or disability. If you do have concerns about whether health or disability will affect their ability to do the job, you must assess these with your legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

Five Ways to Enhance Your Recruitment Processes

1. Highlight Your Commitment to Equal Opportunities

Clearly communicate your organisation's commitment to equal opportunities at every stage of the recruitment process, including within the job advert. This ensures candidates understand your dedication to fair treatment.

1. Provide Recruitment Training and Guidelines
2. Offer guidelines and training to all staff involved in recruitment. This helps to ensure candidates are not subject to discrimination or bias at any stage of the process, promoting a more inclusive and fair recruitment environment.
3. Emphasize the Importance of Mental Health
4. Explicitly state in job advertisements and during interviews that you value your staff's mental health. This reassures candidates that their mental health status will not negatively impact their chances of being hired. Consider adding a statement such as:
5. "We are committed to promoting and safeguarding the physical and mental health of all our employees."
6. Clarify the Availability of Reasonable Adjustments
7. Clearly inform candidates that reasonable adjustments are available for both the interview process and the job itself. This ensures candidates feel comfortable disclosing any health or disability-related needs, knowing it will not affect their job prospects.
8. Ensure Confidential Disclosure
9. Create a process that allows candidates to disclose health or disability information confidentially. Ensure that any such information is kept separate from the main application, so it is not visible to the recruitment panel when assessing qualifications, preventing any potential bias.

ENHANCED STANDARD FOUR

Ensure provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help and signposting to clinical help, including digital support, employer-purchased Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programmes, or NHS services, amongst other sources of support

Supporting Employees with Mental Health Needs
Some employees may face mental health challenges and require support from either internal resources or external mental health services. These support systems should be clearly outlined in your organisations mental health at work plan, as described in Core Standard One.

Organisations can provide support internally or partner with external services to assist employees. This support could include services such as:
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (including through digital platforms)
- Counseling services through Access to Work
- Occupational Health services
- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) and other tailored mental health and wellbeing support.

Some employers may also extend this support to companies within their supply chain, particularly smaller employers, to help improve the mental health of their workforce.

Different Ways to Support Staff
Below is a breakdown of various internal and external support options available to employees:
Internal Support:
- Internal mental health or wellbeing groups
- Peer support groups
- Internal wellbeing or mental health networks for sharing experiences and managing mental health and wellbeing at work

- Formal or informal buddying systems to provide employees with someone to talk to, outside of their direct managers
- Mental health first aiders or Mental Health Champions who employees can approach when struggling
- Opportunities to talk to someone other than their managers

External Support:
- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)
- Occupational Health services
- Signposting to local voluntary sector providers such as peer support groups
- Free or subsidized private medical insurance
- Signposting to medical services, such as NHS services or other healthcare providers
- Access to online peer support groups

Get Expert Training and Consultancy
- Tailored Training: We offer cost-effective training to support your staff's mental health. We can collaborate with you to create a program specifically designed for your organisation, which can be delivered at your workplace.