10 ways employers can address mental health at work

Work-related mental ill health is preventable and, whatever their cause, employers should support employees with mental health conditions. Your employer should:

1. Carry out a stress risk assessment

Employers should prioritise the prevention of mental ill health. They have a legal obligation to assess and manage harmful organisational and job factors like workload and badly-managed change.

2. Create a mental health policy

This should commit to promoting mental health, and removing or minimising harmful work practices. It should link with other policies like harassment, sickness absence, diversity and inclusion, and health and safety.

3. Monitor employee mental health

Surveys and other sources of data, such as sickness absence, will help employers to spot risks to employee mental health and effectively intervene.

4. Make workplace adjustments for people with mental ill health

Simple changes, made after discussion, will often be all that are required. Employees on sick leave must not return to circumstances which made them ill.

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5. Introduce workplace adjustment passports

These documents, which detail an employee's workplace adjustments, prevent them having to reassess adjustments when they get a new supervisor or change teams.

6. Train and support line managers to address mental health

Line managers should be trained and supported to spot signs of distress, help people with conditions and understand how their behaviours affect others' mental health.

7. Train employees in mental health awareness

Training will make staff more aware of the causes of mental ill health, be more confident in supporting colleagues and help destigmatise the issue.

8. Address mental health on the joint health and safety committee

Mental health is a workplace health issue. Trends, interventions and strategies concerning mental health should be monitored and scrutinised by the joint committee.

9. Develop effective return to work procedures

Employees should feel supported when returning to work after sick leave, ideally with a phased return, and must not be pressured into coming back before they're ready.

10. Provide employees with access to psychological therapies

Employee assistance programmes and counselling services can help employees who are struggling. The provider should be SEQOHS (Safe, Effective, Quality Occupational Health Service) accredited.

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