

What is the impact of work on mental health?

We are currently facing an epidemic of mental health illness in the UK, and people's work, and working environment is a major factor in this.

According to the HSE stress, depression or anxiety accounted for around half of all work-related ill health cases. Furthermore, about two-thirds of people suffering from mental ill health believe that long hours, unrealistic workloads, or bad management either caused or exacerbated their condition.

What is the scale of the mental health epidemic in the workplace?

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England
- 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England
- 1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts
- 1 in 14 people self-harm

It is getting worse. Analysis of the 'Labour Force Survey' by the Health Foundation shows that mental ill health accounts for an increasing share of work-limiting conditions across the working age population, especially those under 50. Rates of depression rose during the pandemic and during the cost of living crisis.

Important contact info:

HSE mental health website:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mental-health.htm>

ACAS Mental Health Support:

www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace

NHS Mental Health Support:

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/

GM Hazards Centre Fact Sheets

www.gmhazards.org.uk/index.php/fact-sheets/

Hazards Magazine Resources

www.hazards.org/suicide/
www.hazards.org/stress/

Trade Union health and safety web pages



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Act Now

On
Occupational
Mental
Health

We can we improve work place mental health through the PSP approach

A PSP approach is:-

- Working proactively to Prevent work-related stress and mental ill health.
- Supporting individuals with mental ill health
- Establishing a Positive mental health work environment

Employers Should be Working Proactively to Prevent work-related mental ill health

Employers should:-

- Set up a stress steering group with trade union health and safety reps consulted and involved.
- Carry out key training to all staff on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) management standards approach, and mental health awareness.
- Set out to conduct organisational stress risk assessments.
- Gather information, analyse results, and evaluate the main cause of work-related harm.
- Decide how the risks will be eliminated/reduced
- Implement changes and continually review.

Supporting Individuals with Mental Ill Health at Work

To support individuals:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

- Signpost and access to suicide information and organisations.
- All work-related stress incidents recorded in the accident book are investigated, and the risk assessment is reviewed.
- Preventative measures could include recruiting and training Mental Health First Aiders as part of PSP approach.

Establish a Positive Mental Health Work Environment

This can be done by:-

- Mental health awareness training
- Encourage open conversations without reprisals
- Ensure victimisation/inappropriate behaviour on mental illness stops
- Ensure Management Stress Standards risk assessments are discussed and implemented

What can a Trade Union do to Improve the Mental Health of a Workplace?

When organising around health and safety as a recognised Trade Union you have much more rights than you do without one.

A Trade Union Health and Safety rep is legally allowed to carry out inspections of the workplace which can be on work related stress, and to view information such as sickness absence data.

Trade unions can represent and support members at meetings with management on issues such as capability or sickness absence and to press for 'reasonable adjustments'.

Legal and Other Standards for Prevention and Control

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

- Section 2(1) states: It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees.

Safety Representatives & Safety Committees Regulations 1977

- Gives Safety reps the right to be consulted, to carry out investigations and inspections, and to be involved in the risk assessment process.

Management of Health and Safety At Work Regulations 1999

- Every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work.

Equality Act 2010

- People with a mental health condition are covered under the Equality Act 2010 if it "has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". That means they are 'protected' from discrimination and can request 'reasonable adjustments' to do their job, such as having a more flexible work pattern, and being given specific support.