

A menu of resources available to employers to promote mental health in the work place: Promotion, prevention, retention and support.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Action on stigma

This is a joint initiative by the Department of Health and the SHIFT campaign to promote health, ending discrimination at work. This stream of work will come out in the summer 2007 as a government policy. See website for details.

<http://www.shift.org.uk/employment.html>

Mindful employer

This aims to increase awareness of mental health in the workplace and support employers in recruiting and retaining employees. Mindful employer has key principles that employers can work towards and implement within the normal policies and practices of their company. This initiative is led by employers for employers, and it will help you access advice, information and practical support.

Employers can sign up to a Charter for being positive about mental health. When you sign up to this initiative you will receive a personalised certificate and be entitled to display the Mindful employer logo. Advice, information, training and practical support will be available from WORKWAYS and other Mindful employers.

<http://www.mindfulemployer.net/>

<http://www.mindfulemployer.net/charter.html>

Two ticks

This is a disability symbol. It is recognition by the employment service (job centre plus) to employers who have agreed to take action to meet the five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees. Employers can sign up by contacting our local Disability Employment Advisors at Job Centre Plus (Malcolm Hopkins 545162, Clive Diver 545090.)

Health and Safety Executive Tool kit for examining stress.

This is a toolkit that can be used for examining stress in the workplace. South Cambridgeshire District Council have been using the toolkit. The following is an article by Lawrence Green, council safety advisor (SCDC) on how it has been applied.

Workplace Stress – It's all too much.....or is it?

Work-related stress (WRS) is the second most common work-related health problem after back pain. Consequently, stress has become an extremely high profile topic and one of the 'Top Ten' priorities for the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), generating a huge amount of interest and coverage in the media. The demands of the modern workplace are such that the issues surrounding stress are continually growing in relevance and are unlikely to be eradicated without a proactive attitude by employers and their managers.

Employers have a legal, economic and ethical duty to manage health and safety in the workplace and these principles extend to the management of stress.

Many organisations perceive the subject of stress management as too difficult or beyond their control, and therefore constantly put off tackling the problem for another day, 'bury their heads in the sand' and hope the problem goes away or base their strategies upon the reactive provision of a help-line or counselling service. Of course without positive and proactive interventions the problem will never go away and can slowly eat away at an organisations productivity and profitability, not to mention the health and morale of the workforce.

However, help is at hand. The HSE provides a Free "Stress Survey Tool" that can be downloaded from the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress>. This enables organisations to evaluate if they have a problem under the HSE's six Stress Management Standards, which are divided under the headings of:

Demands	Control	Support
Role	Relationships	Change

The Survey identifies areas of poor and good performance in managing stress related issues and identifies priorities and sets goals for employers to target resources appropriately to begin to tackle Work Related Stress. The HSE also provides a series of Prompt Cards using these same Management Standard headings to assist employers to identify possible solutions and improve areas of weakness based upon the results of the survey.

In short, the Stress Survey Tool offers a practical and easy to follow solution to enable employers to take the first steps in Risk Assessing for Stress related hazards, prioritising and targeting resources and implementing proactive management initiatives to improve the management of Work Related Stress.

South Cambridgeshire District Council is one local organisation that has used the HSE Stress Survey Tool and following this first audit, implemented various management strategies to address stress related issues. Since this initiative began, the Council has to date seen a reduction in sickness absence rates across the workforce by 2.5 days per full-time equivalent employees. This equates to a reduction of 1150 lost workdays per annum.

"The HSE audit tool has been an extremely useful resource to enable the Council to identify areas of weakness in our management of work related stress and has enabled us to prioritise initiatives to improve our performance were it will make the greatest difference" Lawrence Green

The Councils initiatives to improve their management of stress has included: The creation of a Corporate Well-being Policy. The completion of Stress Risk Assessments based upon the results of the Stress Audit. The requirement for all managers to conduct regular one-to-one interviews with their staff. The formation of a communications working group, consisting of Departmental representatives to consider improvements to internal communication methods. Compulsory training of all Managers and Support Staff in Stress

Awareness. Further initiatives are planned for the future, which includes running the HSE Audit tool again to monitor the Council's performance since the last audit was conducted.

- o We plan to set up training days for employers on how the HSE stress toolkit can be applied in their organisation – Autumn 2007.

Health work and wellbeing website

<http://www.health-and-work.gov.uk/>

LOCAL RESOURCES

Retain and Regain

The Retain/Regain project is a new national RFET initiative designed to aid people with minor mental health problems to either return to work, or to help them stay in work, by providing assistance and advice. Based in various GP surgeries throughout the county, the service offered by Retain/Regain advisors includes identifying short- and long-term goals, confidence building, guidance and developing training plans. It is hoped that this will be particularly beneficial to those people who have not been referred to secondary mental health services for treatment, providing them with an alternative path.

By basing advisors in GP surgeries and health centres, the advisors aim to be part of a more convenient, holistic and community-based approach to treating mental health problems. Perhaps the most pivotal aspect of this is that it offers a preventative approach to mental illness - allowing GPs' patients to see advisors in the comfort of their own surgery and be part of treating the illness before their condition worsens. In this way the advisors hope to offer a major new approach to treating mental illness in the county - the scheme already being used successfully in London, Stoke and Brighton among other places. **Sarah Bye, RFET**

Mental health and work website www.mentalhealthandwork.co.uk

The web site is for anyone interested in the field of Mental Health and Work. It has been produced to provide information about Cambridge based agencies that work in, or have an interest in the field of work, activity, volunteering, education and training. The agencies include: RFET Cambridge, The Vocational Opportunities Network, the Cambridge Mental Health Resource Centre, Lifecraft, Red2Green, and Volunteers Plus. The site also has links to National sites. Further developments are publicised through the agencies involved and in the news section of this site. The site has examples of comments from service users but would welcome more contributors. If you have any comments or suggestions to make about the site contact Ken Kettle ken.kettle@cambsmh.nhs.uk

WHY SIGN UP TO THESE INITIATIVES?

By signing up to these initiatives you are:

- Promotion positive mental health and wellbeing
- Meeting the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty, which is a statutory requirement for all organisations.
- Complying with legislation (Disability Discriminations Act and Health and Safety Executive standards around stress).
- Demonstrating your commitment to your employees, new recruits and the promotion of good working practices.
- An exemplar employer for supporting mental health and wellbeing.
- Other potential benefits include:
 - Improving productivity
 - Reducing sickness levels
 - Reducing staff turn over
 - Making your workplace healthier.

**Compiled by Claire Ford
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