

# **Mental Health & Employment**

## **Helping People to Stay in Employment Toolkit for Employers**

March 2012

This toolkit is supported by the European Union Programme for  
Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS (2007 – 2013)





# **Introduction**

---

# Introduction

This toolkit has been designed to help employers support employees with a mental health condition to remain in employment.

Mental ill health can impose significant costs on an employer. Around 1 in 4 people are likely to experience mental ill health at some point in their lives and the Centre for Mental Health estimates that the cost to UK employers of mental ill health is around £15.1 billion a year – over £1,000 per employee. However, with early intervention and using best practice, employers can reduce this cost by as much as 30%. It therefore makes sense for you to be prepared and to understand what you can do as an employer to help reduce the costs to your organisation.

This toolkit has been developed by social researchers at New Economy (Manchester, UK) using the insights gathered from focus groups with employers, as well as with health professionals and individuals with mental health conditions. This toolkit aims to reflect the themes that emerged and highlight areas of support and best practice for employers.

## Themes emerging from interviews:

- Skilled line managers are far more effective at keeping people in work and productive, than a large number of policies;
- Mental health conditions can present in a number of different ways and we need to develop a personalised approach to working with individuals;
- Mental wellbeing and mental illness are part of the same continuum and individuals will be in different places during their lives due to a number of factors, which can be both social and biological;
- Lots of people manage their mental health conditions and have successful careers – having a mental health condition isn't a barrier to employment, but poor management can be;
- Good work – where individuals are recognised and rewarded, where all employees have some say over their working day and ideas are welcomed – will help someone to recover from mental illness; and
- The stigma associated with having a mental health condition will have more impact on an individual's return to work than any other measure put in place by employers.

## What is good work?

Good work is not about being paying your staff well for the job they do, or about delivering a range of large-scale, expensive health and wellbeing activities. Good workplaces are those where people want to work because they feel valued and engaged.

Good workplaces are where:

- All staff have some control of their working day
- Staff are able to make suggestions and influence activities
- Staff are clear about what they are expected to do
- Staff get feedback on performance
- There is a safe and healthy working environment

It does not have to cost much to become a 'good work' workplace. This can be achieved through good leadership, listening to staff about their ideas or concerns and delivering a culture of positive health and wellbeing.

The benefits of creating 'good work' can include a reduction in sickness absences and the associated reduced costs; a more engaged and productive workforce; and new ideas, suggestions and innovations from motivated staff.

---

## What is the toolkit?

This toolkit contains guidance on what employers need to do in three inter-related areas of activity:

- **Prevention** – Preventing poor mental health in the workplace;
- **Recovery** – Support to individuals during recovery, whilst in treatment and off work; and
- **Return to work** – How to help individuals manage their return to work and give them the support needed.

Combined, the actions in these three areas are designed to help employers support individuals to stay in employment and they are all inter-related.



Having the appropriate policies in place to support prevention of mental ill health can help to reduce the numbers of individuals off work and in recovery. Focusing on good support through the recovery phase can aid the return to work process and get people back to work sooner. And lessons learned and changes to working patterns in the return to work phase can help prevent further mental ill health in the workplace.

## The role of employers

Employers have a threefold role in mental health in the workplace: leadership, communication and engagement.

- **Leadership** on promoting good mental health, reducing stigma and raising awareness of mental health in the workplace;
- **Communication** with staff about policies and procedures; with staff on a health-related absence from work; and with occupational health, GPs, trade unions and the individual in supporting someone back to work; and
- **Engagement** in making changes at work that can support an individual to remain in employment or return to work quicker.

## Who is this toolkit for?

Through working with employers, this toolkit has been designed for use by public, private and third sector organisations. Many of the actions within the toolkit can be performed or supported by a range of people within your organisation:

- **Senior management:** showing a commitment to good work and supporting individuals can help to change the work culture towards supporting your staff towards remaining in work and maintaining your organisation's productivity;
- **Human resources / personnel departments:** the actions within the toolkit include a range of best practice, along with appropriate resources, which human resources / personnel departments can use to support the retention of staff and good practices in work;
- **Line managers:** your team works well when everyone works together. The actions contained within help you to develop a workplace culture that supports good work and can help to reduce sickness absences within your team;
- **Trade union representatives:** this toolkit can help you to work with your employer for your members and provides access to resources that you can promote within your workplace to help develop good work and a good workplace.

The toolkit is provided as a series of actions for employers to put in place to ensure that good work contributes to good mental health. These actions are organised in order of importance and reflect what employers, line managers or senior management can do to support employees with mental health conditions.

## How to use the toolkit

- Don't re-invent the wheel – many resources are already out there for you and there are plenty of examples of good work policies or good practice that you can learn from and easily adapt to your needs.
- Go through the toolkit step-by-step – we have listed the actions in priority of importance. However, employers will need to implement all actions in order to be certain that they are making sure that their workplace is promoting good mental health for all staff.
- You may already have some of these actions in place – but make sure that your policies and procedures accurately reflect the actions in the toolkit. You may have a mental health policy in place, but does it cover all the right areas?

# Prevention

**Everyone is at risk of experiencing poor mental health at some point in their life. This section is about helping to prevent the workplace from being a factor in causing or contributing to poor mental health.**

**Some people will be at work with a mental health condition and don't want it to get worse. Some people could be vulnerable to having poor mental health because of a previous or undiagnosed condition. And some individuals will have no previous history of mental ill health, but will want to ensure that work is not a factor in causing any future mental health condition.**

**In each case, implementing the actions below will help to ensure that their condition is not impacted on by work, or reduces the likelihood of an episode of mental ill health. This can help reduce sickness absences associated with mental ill health in the workplace. Making work good is therefore good for an individual's mental health and for your organisation.**

Actions for employers	Examples	Resources and support
Senior management demonstrate commitment to positive mental health at work.	<p>Develop a supportive mental health at work policy.</p> <p>Regularly monitor absence trends for indications of workplace stress or mental ill health in the workplace.</p> <p>Management acts on any absence trends identified that are associated with mental ill health.</p>	<p>Action Planning Tool: <b>howyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</b></p> <p>Sample mental health policy: <b>howyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</b></p> <p>Emotional Resilience Toolkit: <b>bitc.org.uk</b></p> <p>Model Workplace: <b>obs.acas.org.uk/amw</b></p>
<p>Make sure that line managers understand how to identify an individual experiencing poor mental health and what to do if they think someone needs help.</p> <p>Help line managers understand the impact of poor mental health on an individual's ability to work</p>	<p>Include mental health training in line manager training courses.</p> <p>Provide guides for all line managers and ensure this is including in regular training and continuous professional development.</p> <p>Make sure that all managers have been trained in having difficult conversations.</p> <p>Line managers talk to staff individually about developing an advance plan in case of a period of mental ill health.</p>	<p>Guide to Health, Work and Wellbeing (including guidance on mental health): <b>acas.org.uk</b></p> <p>Guide for Line Managers: <b>mindfulemployer.net</b></p> <p>What Works for You: <b>centreformentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Identifying mental ill health: <b>tacklementalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Mental health A – Z: <b>mentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Advance statement plan example template: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Stress and mental health at work: <b>cipd.co.uk</b></p>
<p>Stop stigma in the workplace. Ensure that there are positive stories about people with mental health conditions in your workplace.</p> <p>Provide training to all staff on mental health awareness. Ensure this includes recognising signs of mental ill health in themselves and others, as well as how to deal constructively with this.</p>	<p>Develop and put in place a supportive mental health policy that includes actions to tackle workplace stigma about mental ill health.</p> <p>Develop and implement a bullying and harassment policy.</p> <p>Ensure all staff are aware of the policies.</p> <p>Use national resources and campaigns in the workplace to help reduce stigma. Include campaigns that focus on individuals' stories and stories about individuals remaining in work with a mental health condition.</p> <p>Encourage staff to be mental wellbeing champions – focused on improving mental wellbeing in work.</p>	<p>Creating a healthy workspace: <b>tacklementalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Time to Change campaign: <b>time-to-change.org.uk</b></p> <p>Workplace mental wellbeing policy – sample policy: <b>bhf.org.uk</b></p> <p>Bullying and harassment: <b>hse.gov.uk/stress</b></p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing Template (NHS): <b>dh.gov.uk</b></p>
<p>Make sure that every member of staff has opportunities to discuss concerns, or raise issues with their line manager.</p> <p>Ensure that any disclosure is treated in a supportive manner.</p>	<p>Regular one-to-ones scheduled in diaries (at least once a month) between staff and line managers.</p> <p>Open door days – when staff can book some time to talk to their managers.</p> <p>Senior manager open door days – when staff can book time to talk to directors.</p> <p>Have an open recruitment, selection and assessment process that highlights that appropriate support will be given if the individual chooses to disclose a mental health condition.</p>	<p>Listening to employees: <b>health4work.nhs.uk</b></p> <p>Talking with staff: <b>tacklementalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers: <b>cipd.co.uk</b></p> <p>The recruitment process: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Recruiting prospective employees with a history of mental ill health: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p>

Actions for employers	Examples	Resources and support
Perform a stress risk assessment to address risks to mental wellbeing during change.	<p>When someone starts a new job, draw up an assessment of the job and any stress risks that could arise with the employee. Agree an action plan to address these risks.</p> <p>When going through a period of change develop a mental health impact assessment to understand how it could impact on staff wellbeing.</p> <p>Draw up an action plan to minimise risks.</p>	<p>Workplace Stress Standards and stress risk assessment: <b><a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress">hse.gov.uk/stress</a></b></p> <p>Five Minute Stress Check (Designed for SMEs): <b><a href="https://www.businessmentality.org.uk">businessmentality.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Creating a healthy workspace: <b><a href="https://www.tacklementalhealth.org.uk">tacklementalhealth.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Mental Health Impact Assessment Toolkit: <b><a href="https://www.nmhd.org.uk">nmhd.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Employers' guide to mentally healthy workplaces: <b><a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/employment">mind.org.uk/employment</a></b></p>
Make sure your organisation has a clear policy on bullying and harassment.	<p>A bullying policy should define bullying, tell individuals where they can discuss issues in confidence and provide guidance to line managers.</p> <p>The policy should demonstrate the intolerance of harassment and bullying in the workplace and this should be embodied in the company's policy on harassment and bullying.</p> <p>The policy should be accessible to all staff.</p>	<p>Harassment and bullying policy templates: <b><a href="https://www.human-resource-solutions.co.uk">human-resource-solutions.co.uk</a></b></p> <p>Guide to Bullying and Harassment: <b><a href="https://www.acas.org.uk">acas.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Bullying and harassment: <b><a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress">hse.gov.uk/stress</a></b></p> <p>Bullying at work: <b><a href="https://www.cipd.co.uk">cipd.co.uk</a></b></p>
Have a policy for flexible working, including the agreement of flexible start times.	<p>Provide an agreement to late starts / finishes when staff start on new medication.</p> <p>Change shift patterns to reduce isolation, where this is an issue.</p> <p>Provide the option of earlier / late starts in response to anxieties about transport.</p> <p>Offer reduced hours or unpaid leave where this will help manage recovery.</p>	<p>Flexible Working and Work life Balance: <b><a href="https://www.acas.org.uk">acas.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Flexible Working and Equalities: <b><a href="https://www.acas.org.uk">acas.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Promoting mental wellbeing through productive and healthy working conditions: guidance for employers - NICE Guidance PH22: <b><a href="https://www.nice.org.uk/PH22">nice.org.uk/PH22</a></b></p>
Make sure that all staff know where to get help or support if they are misusing alcohol or drugs, experiencing difficulty sleeping or are anxious about home or work issues.	<p>Put in place Employee Assistance Programmes that can provide support to staff or direct staff to other sources of support.</p> <p>Provide leaflets and notices in communal staff areas so that all staff can access these materials.</p> <p>Provide awareness-raising sessions from service providers about the effects of alcohol or drug misuse, the benefits of sleep and relaxation and how to deal with anxiety and stress.</p> <p>Set up an early warning system that staff and managers can use to help identify alcohol or substance misuse, or any indication of mental ill health.</p> <p>Develop an organisational campaign to raise awareness of these issues.</p>	<p>Guidance for employers on alcohol at work: <b><a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk">hse.gov.uk</a></b></p> <p>Early Warning Signs: <b><a href="https://www.tacklementalhealth.org.uk">tacklementalhealth.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Recognising and identifying early signs: <b><a href="https://www.howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk">howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</a></b></p>
Put in place a grievance policy and make sure that line managers understand this policy.	<p>Develop and put in place a grievance policy which clearly states the grievance process.</p> <p>Clearly communicate to all staff the grievance policy and ensure staff are included in the design of the policy.</p> <p>Ensure line managers are regularly informed about the grievance policy and that this is part of their continuous professional development.</p>	<p>Guidance on discipline and grievances at work: <b><a href="https://www.acas.org.uk">acas.org.uk</a></b></p> <p>Fact sheets on discipline and grievance policies: <b><a href="https://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources">cipd.co.uk/hr-resources</a></b></p>

# Recovery

Sometimes an individual's mental health can decline and they will need a period of time off work to recover. The majority of people off work with a mental health condition want to get back to work but sometimes this can be difficult. This section will look at what employers need to do to help make sure that individuals can get back to work and reduce the risk of them needing further time off work. It is very helpful to invest in early help and support, because the longer someone is absent from work, the longer it will take them to return.



Actions for employers	Examples	Resources and support
Plan for the individual to return to work, not to be off ill.	<p>Develop a return to work action plan with the individual.</p> <p>Keep in contact with the individual, updating them about changes in the workplace.</p>	<p>Employers' checklist: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Planning for returning to work: <b>mentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Planning and preparing for your employee's return to work: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p> <p>Health 4 Work Adviceline (0800 0 77 88 44): <b>health4work.nhs.uk</b></p>
<p>Line managers should seek help to understand an employee's mental health condition.</p> <p>Different mental health conditions may need different responses.</p>	<p>Discuss the employee's health condition with the occupational health service, if this is provided. If agreed, consult with the GP or health professional treating the individual.</p> <p>Ensure the line manager is aware of the condition and how this may present differently in different people.</p> <p>Seek advice from occupational health (if this service is provided) and clinicians on the job role as well as on any changes that may be needed for the employee.</p> <p>Meet with the individual to share the information and what changes can be made in the workplace to support them.</p>	<p>Are You Worried About Someone's Mental Health?: <b>rethink.org</b></p> <p>What are mental health problems?: <b>mentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Mental Health A-Z: <b>mentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Common Mental Health Problems: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Discussing a mental health condition: <b>mentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Health 4 Work Adviceline (0800 0 77 88 44): <b>health4work.nhs.uk</b></p>
Share all information with occupational health (if this service is provided), the employee's line manager, the employee and the GP or relevant health professional.	<p>Organise joint meeting with occupational health (if this service is provided), individual and line manager to discuss the health condition and any recommendations made by a GP, occupational health or health professional.</p> <p>If an occupational health report is produced, share this with the employee, GP and line manager in advance of any meeting.</p> <p>Ensure that any occupational health report produced is discussed fully with line manager, individual and GP. Clarify any points or issues raised.</p>	<p>Supporting an employee off sick: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Talking early to staff: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Issues to raise: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Keeping in touch: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Occupational health support and its benefits to organisations: <b>support.health4work.nhs.uk</b></p>
Help staff to discuss the support they may need with a GP.	<p>employee. Make this available for the GP or relevant health professional and the employee to discuss.</p> <p>Share the job description with the GP and individual.</p> <p>Share any occupational health reports with the GP and the results of any discussions with the individual.</p> <p>Offer to discuss the workplace and the job role with the GP.</p>	<p>Discussing the workplace with the GP: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Supporting staff off sick: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p>

Actions for employers	Examples	Resources and support
<p>Discuss with the employee about a return-to-work plan.</p>	<p>Be clear about what you need to know from the employee to help you develop the return-to-work plan.</p> <p>Discussions should focus on problems that may be experienced in the workplace and what actions can be taken, including reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>Share any occupational health report with the individual in advance of any discussion.</p> <p>Use services such as occupational health reports (if this service is used) and any information a GP offers in supporting the employee.</p> <p>Include the line manager, occupational health (if used) and employee in the discussion.</p> <p>Facilitate a meeting between the individual and a trade union representative. If the individual agrees, involve the representative in the discussion.</p>	<p>Discussing returning to work with the individual: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Plan changes in work for the individual: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Return to work discussion template: <b>hse.gov.uk/stress</b></p>
<p>Tailor plans and actions to the individual. Consider what can be done to support the employee back to work.</p>	<p>Be flexible about work changes – can you accommodate flexible hours; a gradual return to work; changes to the employee’s workstation etc?</p> <p>Be clear with the employee about what you will put in place.</p> <p>Do not have a one-size-fits-all plan.</p>	<p>Potential adjustments in work: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Workplace adjustments: <b>hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence</b></p> <p>The costs and benefits of ‘reasonable adjustments’: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p>
<p>Agree a contact plan with the employee, or if they can’t speak to their employer make an agreement with a nominated contact.</p> <p>Remember if they feel that their line manager has been part of the problem they may not wish to have contact with them.</p> <p>Check if the employee wants to receive information from work – i.e. staff newsletters.</p> <p>Check that they are still happy with the plan on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Get in touch with the employee at an early stage of absence and discuss a contact plan.</p> <p>Listen to the employee and take on board their suggestions. Try to make the conversation supportive and informal.</p> <p>For some people, face-to-face communication may be hard. Try other options such as phone or email contact. Direct communication – via phone or face-to-face contact – is preferable as issues can be explained clearly and openly.</p> <p>Set up meetings where your employee can discuss their condition. The line manager or a relevant individual from your organisation should make themselves available to discuss the employee’s condition, or any other issues, throughout their recovery.</p> <p>Give the individual the option to discuss their condition – ask open questions.</p> <p>Check who the employee wants as their main contact. This may not be their line manager.</p> <p>Regularly review the contact plan and ensure that the employee is happy with the arrangements put in place.</p>	<p>Keeping in touch during a sickness absence: <b>howyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</b></p> <p>Contact plans: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>What Works For You?: <b>mentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Keeping in contact during sickness absence: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p>

Actions for employers	Examples	Resources and support
Address tensions and concerns in the team where an employee is absent.	<p>Offer training on mental health awareness to all staff.</p> <p>Explain the reasons for changes in workloads and help to increase understanding amongst colleagues.</p> <p>Agree with the individual how or if colleagues will be informed of their condition. This should be done in as supportive a way as possible.</p> <p>Brief staff on the changes to the workplace that will be made, according to the agreement you have made with the employee who is absent.</p>	<p>Discussing an absence with colleagues: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Difficult conversations: conversations in difficult circumstances: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p>
Deal with the absent employee's workload.	<p>Share the workload out amongst the team. Do not leave the workload for the employee to complete when they return from an absence.</p> <p>Adjust roles and responsibilities of the team to deal with any workload issues and support the team to achieve this.</p> <p>Meet with the employee to inform them that workload has been dealt with and this does not need to be a concern.</p> <p>Complete the employee's workload before they return to work.</p>	<p>Returning to work: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Managing sickness absence and return to work in small businesses: <b>hse.gov.uk</b></p>
Ensure the disciplinary procedure does not penalise people with mental health conditions.	<p>Develop and implement a clear attendance management policy.</p> <p>Focus on the health and wellbeing of the individual.</p> <p>Clearly define a sickness absence against an unauthorised absence and ensure there are procedures in place for both situations.</p> <p>Train and regularly brief staff on the attendance management policy.</p> <p>Train line managers in what to do when an absence occurs.</p>	<p>Attendance Management and Disciplinary Procedures: <b>acas.org.uk</b></p> <p>Attendance Management Policy template: <b>healthyworkinglives.com</b></p> <p>Absence management toolkit for line managers: <b>hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence</b></p>

# Return to Work

**You will need to plan with the individual and their line manager for a return to work. It may take someone a little time to settle back into their job and you need to have plans in place to help them do this. Use Occupational Health support if this is provided, the advice of government agencies and the advice of charities to make sure that the plans you are making will help, rather than hinder, someone making a permanent return to employment.**

Actions for employers	Examples	Resources and support
Have a pre-return meeting with the staff member.	<p>Organise a pre-return meeting with the employee at home, at work or in a neutral environment for the individual (e.g. a nearby café, a park etc).</p> <p>Meet informally (over a coffee) or formally (in work) as the individual chooses.</p> <p>Discuss changes in work, especially to job roles and responsibilities. Be clear about what adjustments will be made in work.</p> <p>Understand one another's expectations of the return to work and be clear about what will happen.</p> <p>Focus on the individual's health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Organise a joint meeting with the individual, trade union representative, occupational health and line manager.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk">howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</a></p> <p>Employers' workplace changes: <a href="https://www.shift.org.uk/employers">shift.org.uk/employers</a></p> <p>Returning to work after sickness absence: <a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress">hse.gov.uk/stress</a></p>
Jointly agree a back to work plan with the individual, including when they will be returning, who will greet them and where they will be located.	<p>Organise a meeting between occupational health (if this service is used), the employee's line manager and the employee.</p> <p>Discuss and agree a back to work plan.</p> <p>Discuss workplace changes and help the employee to understand their responsibilities.</p> <p>Discuss any changes in work hours – especially around flexible work hours or a phased return to work – along with their associated responsibilities and management.</p> <p>Discuss and agree to review this back to work plan regularly to examine progress and any changes.</p> <p>Draw up a Wellness Recovery Action Plan with the employee.</p>	<p>Developing an action plan: <a href="https://www.howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk">howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</a></p> <p>Return to work plan: <a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence">hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence</a></p> <p>Manager support for return-to-work checklist: <a href="https://www.bohrf.org.uk">bohrf.org.uk</a></p> <p>Making a WRAP (Wellness recovery action planning): <a href="https://www.imhrec.ie">imhrec.ie</a></p> <p>WRAP: <a href="https://www.recoverydevon.co.uk">recoverydevon.co.uk</a></p>
Ensure the line manager is aware of the condition and how to support the individual.	<p>Discuss the condition with occupational health service (if this is provided) or a relevant health professional.</p> <p>Seek advice from occupational health (if utilised) and relevant health professionals (e.g. the employee's GP) on the employee's job role and any changes that might be needed.</p> <p>Meet with the individual to share the information.</p>	<p>Line managers' checklist: <a href="https://www.shift.org.uk/employers">shift.org.uk/employers</a></p> <p>Common mental health problems: <a href="https://www.shift.org.uk/employers">shift.org.uk/employers</a></p>
Agree with individual how colleagues are to be informed.	<p>Meet informally with the individual to discuss how the return to work will be managed.</p> <p>Agree how the individual will talk about their absence and their return to work.</p> <p>Agree how the employer will inform staff of the return to work.</p> <p>Be guided by the employee's wishes.</p>	<p>Keeping in touch: <a href="https://www.shift.org.uk/employers">shift.org.uk/employers</a></p> <p>Do's and don'ts for keeping in touch: <a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence">hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence</a></p> <p>Keeping in contact: <a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence">hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence</a></p>
Ensure that colleagues are aware of the individual returning to work and have been informed of the arrangements.	<p>Brief staff on the return to work arrangements for the employee including any adjustments.</p> <p>Inform any staff whose job role, hours or responsibilities will be affected and provide support through this change.</p> <p>Be clear about confidentiality of the employee and boundaries.</p> <p>Be guided by the employees' wishes.</p>	<p>Returning to work support: <a href="https://www.howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk">howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</a></p> <p>Planning and undertaking workplace adjustments: <a href="https://www.hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence">hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence</a></p>

Actions for employers	Examples	Resources and support
Prepare for a return to work.	<p>Clean and tidy the employee's work area.</p> <p>If the work area has been used by another person, return the work area to its original condition.</p> <p>Deal with the individual's workload before a return to work.</p> <p>Discuss with the individual who has taken on which outstanding tasks and any changes in responsibility.</p>	<p>Managing rehabilitation: <b>bohrf.org.uk</b></p> <p>Preparing for the return of your employee after a period of mental ill health: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p>
Involve occupational health services (if these are used) and the employee in conversations about return to work.	<p>Organise a meeting with occupational health (if this service is used), the employee's line manager and the employee.</p> <p>Share any occupational health reports produced with the employee before any discussion.</p> <p>Take into account both the occupational health report and the employee's own thoughts and feelings.</p>	<p>Returning to work: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Preparing for the return of your employee after a period of mental ill health: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p> <p>Planning and preparing for your employee's return to work: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p>
Discuss making a plan with the employee about what will happen if things aren't going well.	<p>Recognise that recovery may involve cases of relapse and that good work can lead to a good recovery.</p> <p>Be open and honest with the individual that this is a plan that is meant to support the individual.</p> <p>Understand and discuss the indicators of a relapse in mental ill health.</p> <p>Regularly reassess the plan and be flexible to any changes that might be suggested.</p>	<p>Returning to work and the role of depression: <b>mentalhealth.org.uk</b></p> <p>Returning to work support: howyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</p> <p>Agreeing and reviewing a return to work plan: <b>hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence</b></p>
Ensure that line managers are aware of the issues facing the individual.	<p>Issue a formal note to line manager from occupational health services (if these are used), or from the relevant health professional (e.g. a GP) which is shared with the employee.</p> <p>Share any statements from the employee or occupational health service with the line manager.</p> <p>Ensure mental health awareness training is provided for line manager.</p> <p>Organise a meeting with employee about the issues at work that may form a barrier for the individual to return to work.</p>	<p>Rehabilitating employees after work-related stress absence: <b>hse.gov.uk</b></p> <p>Issues to raise with individuals: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p>
Put in place workplace changes that have been agreed with the returning member of staff.	<p>Be flexible about work hours where this is possible.</p> <p>Other changes may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A change in the employee's job role / responsibility;</li> <li>- A change in the working environment;</li> <li>- Policy changes at work;</li> <li>- A buddying scheme or personal support;</li> <li>- Technological assistance; or</li> <li>- Supervisory support.</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that skills development or further training is also provided to staff.</p>	<p>Royal College of Psychiatrists - suggested adjustments in the workplace: <b>rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo</b></p> <p>Examples of workplace changes: <b>shift.org.uk/employers</b></p> <p>Making Adjustments At Work for People With Mental Health Problems: <b>healthatwork.org.uk</b></p> <p>Managing a long-term illness: <b>howyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk</b></p>

**“Good mental health  
is everybody’s  
business”**



This publication is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).

This programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitment. PROGRESS is instrumental in:

- providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large

For more information see: [ec.europa.eu/progress](http://ec.europa.eu/progress)

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission, which is the Contracting Authority.

*Partners*

