

# GUIDE FOR HR:

## Employee mental health and wellbeing



## HR responsibility

Mental health is about the way we feel and think and our personal ability and coping mechanisms for dealing with 'life's' ups and downs. In other words, it's something we all have.

When we have good mental health, we have a purpose and sense of direction. We're energised to do things and have the ability to deal with challenges which occur.

In the same way as when we think about our physical health and have ways of keeping ourselves fit and we know the place to go for getting appropriate help as soon as possible, mental health should be exactly the same. Our mental health doesn't always remain at the same level and can fluctuate as circumstances change, however if we enjoy good mental health, we can:

- cope with what life throws at us
- play a full part in our workplace professional relationships

During these covid-19 times, it's natural that some of your workforce will be worried about their family and friends, their work, perhaps a change to working from home, being furloughed, potential of job losses and/or a return to the workplace. Such things could potentially trigger and set in motion a chain of events which cause employee mental illness or a drop in wellbeing.

Whilst mental health and employee wellbeing is a personal and complex issue, HR professionals should understand and know how to handle these areas correctly and sensitively.

In addition, it's frequently HR's role to be the essential conduit between business leaders, managers and the workforce:-

- a) To ensure employees feel comfortable in their workplace and crucially even if their mental health is suffering, remain feeling part of the team.
- b) Support and help managers to effectively manage staff who are experiencing problems at work.
- c) HR also have a responsibility to maintain awareness of and monitor the workforce climate because employee wellbeing doesn't start and end in their place of work.

How do you recognise there may be an issue as there are a lot of different symptoms and signs?



### 8 Ways to encourage your employees to look after their mental health and wellbeing at work

We can all take steps to help our employees improve their mental health and build their resilience to cope with life's challenges.

**1. Instil a culture where it's okay to talk about feelings**

- Talking about feelings can help maintain mental health - it's not a sign of weakness; it's part of wellbeing to stay healthy.
- It can be hard to talk about feelings at work so ensure your managers are trained in having 'such conversations' and/or have wellbeing champions

**2. Keep in touch with working relationships**

- Good working relationships are key to mental health where working in a supportive team is important.
- If you are aware of 'poor' working relationships, it can create tension. You may need to address these difficulties through workplace mediation.
- Try and make sure your employees maintain a good work/life balance.

**3. Support a colleague**

- Talking about mental health and/or wellbeing can seem daunting so ensure employees know who they can go to. Someone who is trained, sincere and friendly.

**4. Promote keeping active**

- Encourage employees to have regular exercise - it boosts self-esteem and can help concentration..
- Experts say that most people should do about 30 minutes' exercise at least five days a week

**5. Promote healthy eating and staying hydrated**

- What we eat can affect how we feel both immediately and is good for ymental and physical health.
- Encourage employees to take a lunch break and get away from their desk.
- Remind employees to drink lots of water.

**6. Have 'where to go to ask for help' on noticeboards/ your company website**

- Ensure your employees are aware of where they can go to seek help.
- You may have an employee assistance programme. Employees may also be able to access occupational health support so ensure they receive updated reminders of contact details.
- Ensure employees remember, their first port of call is their GP.

**7. Create a culture where it's okay to take a break**

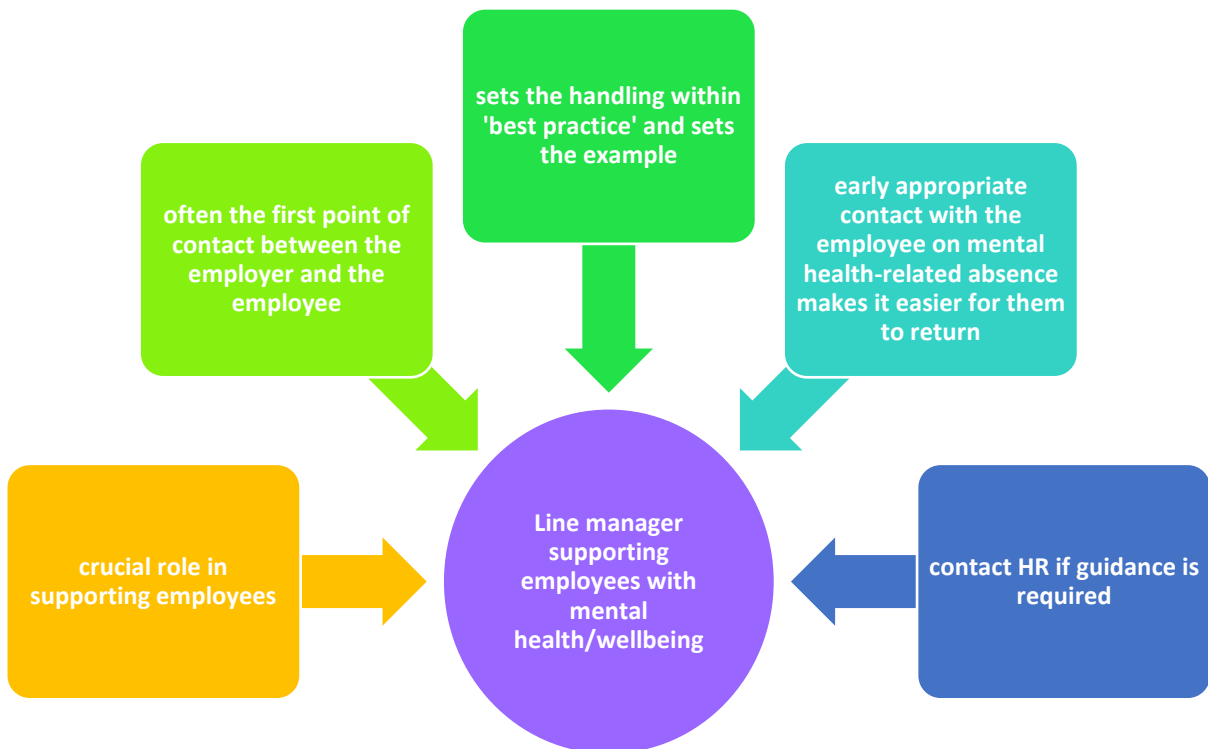
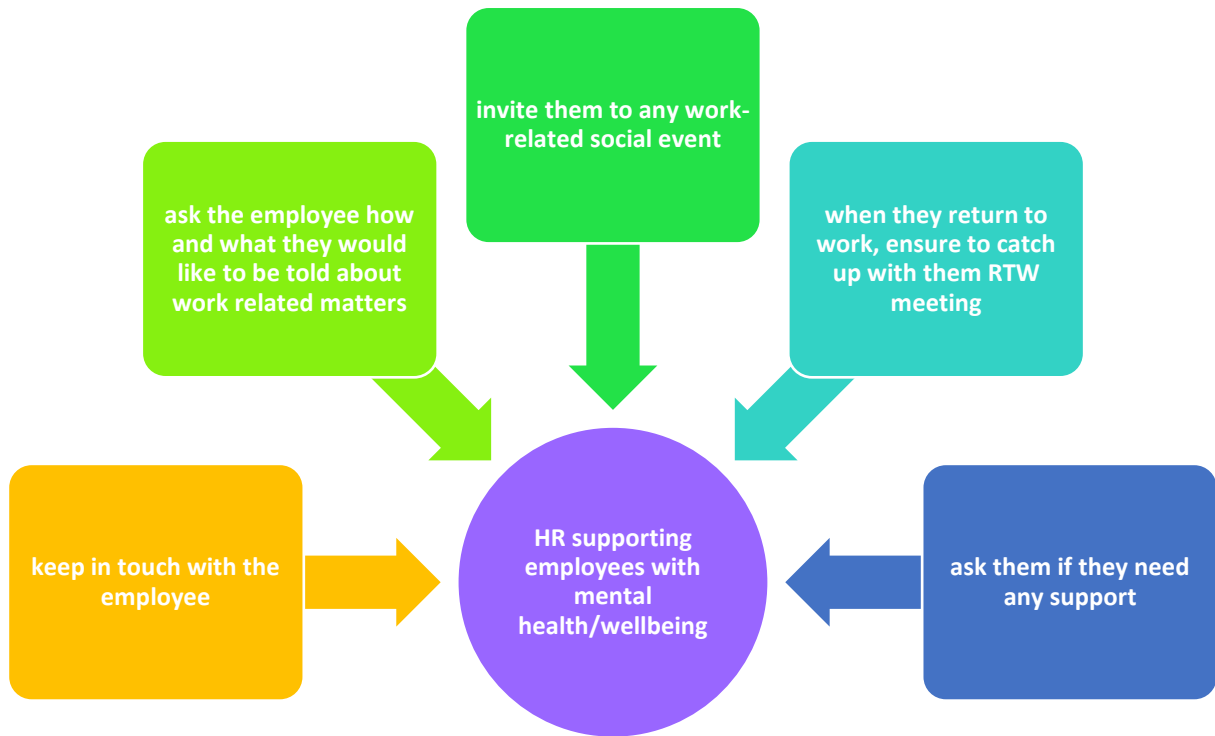
- A change of scene or a change of pace is good for mental health.
- A few minutes can be enough to de-stress so encourage employees to have some 'me time'.
- Remind employees that when they're on annual leave they should resist the temptation to check in with work.

**8. Create a caring workplace culture**

- Caring for others is often an important part of maintaining good working relationships.
- Workplaces which support flexible working, carers' leave, childcare voucher schemes and other initiatives have a big impact on employee engagement, wellbeing, mental health and productivity.
- Embed active listening as 'best practice' in your company

**Supporting an employee with ongoing mental health and wellbeing issues**

Supporting an employee with ongoing mental health and/or wellbeing issues is about helping them to find the right individual (organisation) to develop ways to recover, help them to stay well, and ensuring their workplace is a safe and pleasant place to be.



**Performance management and appraisal**

