

Having a Conversation About Mental Health



Choose an appropriate place

- It's important to make colleagues feel comfortable; therefore it's good to have the conversation somewhere private and quiet.

Avoid making assumptions

- It can be difficult for people to disclose information relating to their mental health, so make it easier by keeping an open mind and giving them space to talk it out.
- Avoid trying to guess what symptoms a colleague might have and how these might affect their ability to do their job.
- Remember, many people are able to manage their condition and perform their role to a high standard.

Embed confidentiality

- Colleagues will understandably be anxious about disclosing details of their mental health condition, so be prepared to assume responsibility for some confidential and sensitive information.
- Reassure the colleague that any private information they disclose will not be leaked to their colleagues.
- Discuss with the colleague that any information they would like shared with team colleagues and how, as this can be very supportive for some people.

Encourage colleagues to talk

- It's important to have an open dialogue with colleagues when discussing their mental health.
- Remember, everyone's experience of poor mental health is different, and how you deal with a disclosure should be entirely dependent on the individual.
- Explore how the condition manifests itself, what the implications are and what support the colleague needs.

Respond flexibly

- Mental health affects people in different ways so be prepared to adapt your support to the colleague
- If it works for both of you, work with your employee to develop an individual wellness action plan.
- Remember, workplace adjustments for poor mental health can be simple too.
- Be aware of the steps to take if you're concerned the employee – guide them to seek help from their GP or our Mental Health First Aiders.

Be honest and clear

- It's important to recognise that a colleague's performance or behaviour can be affected if they are experiencing a mental health problem.
- If you have specific grounds for concern, such as high absence levels or impaired performance, it's important to address these at an early stage.
- The support colleagues receive from you is key in determining how well and how quickly they are able to get back to peak performance.

Encourage people to seek support

- Colleagues should seek support from their GP or the EAP regarding the support available.
- The Society has trained Mental Health First Aiders who can offer confidential support, alongside dedicated wellbeing pages on the Bridge signposting to external support.
- Be aware that problems in a colleague's personal life can often have a negative effect on their mental wellbeing.

Reassure colleagues

- Colleagues may not always be ready to talk straight away, so it's important that you outline what support is available.
- Reassure colleagues that your door is always open and they can speak to you as their line manager at any time.
- Let them know you'll ensure they get the support they need.

Develop a Wellness Action Plan

- Work with your colleague to develop an individual Wellness Action Plan.
- The plan will identify the signs of the colleagues's mental health problem, triggers for stress, the possible impact on their work, who to contact in a crisis, and what support they need.
- The plan should include an agreed time to review the support measures to check if they have been effective or whether any further adjustments are needed.
- Include a date to follow up on this action plan and set up a subsequent meeting.

Further support

- If you'd like further support then speak with your HR Adviser.
- The Mental Health Support booklet for colleagues details the support available in the Society and externally.
- You have the opportunity to arrange an Occupational Health assessment if you feel this would be beneficial to both you and the individual.
- Remember that once we're aware of health or disability information, we have a duty to consider making reasonable adjustments as well as a general duty of care and responsibility for colleague health and wellbeing.