

Supporting your Mental Health



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A great place to work where people can realise their potential

We're committed to supporting your mental health. We know this is critical to ensuring our strategic pillars of creating a great place to work, where you can realise your potential and to help our communities make positive changes. In 2019 we pledged our commitment to supporting your mental health by signing the Time to Change pledge:



We are Time to Change, a growing movement of people changing how we all think and act about mental health problems.

Since then we've continued to develop the support available to you by utilising the Time to Change resources alongside other best practice materials.

We know you're unique and how we best support you and your colleagues can differ depending on your personal circumstances. There are some things that we know will benefit most of our colleagues and as such we continue to provide information on how we can:

- * Talk openly, listen with empathy and guiding to professional support
- * Be kind and help colleagues be kind to themselves
- * Prioritise wellbeing that supports our mental health.

We want this guide to highlight our commitment to supporting your mental health and share the ways that our Society can support you looking after your wellbeing.



We hope you find this helpful.

Let's talk

We'll try hard to support you— talking is the first step in understanding how we can best do this.

It's okay to talk about our challenges

We know it isn't always easy to talk when we're experiencing mental health challenges but with 1 in 4 of us likely to experience mental health conditions there's nothing unusual about it and only good can come from opening up.



Who should you talk to?

Who you talk to depends on who you're most comfortable talking to and over the next few pages you'll see some options you have both inside and outside of the Society. We also encourage you to talk to your line manager so they can best support you day to day and with your workload.



Helping People to Talk

We all play a role in creating a culture that supports others in feeling able to open up and get support.

**MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.**

**Being open to
mental health
problems is
good for all
of us.**



**And it's easier than
you might think.**

**Your
conversation
matters.**



**AT
WORK**

**WITH
A TEXT**

**OVER
A CUPPA**



**Any time, any place.
You don't need all
the answers.**

**MAKE A
CONVERSATION.**

Are You Okay?



Are You Sure You're Okay?

There's lots of ways to ask twice simply:

Are you sure?

It's okay if you're not okay
you know

I am worried about you can
I just double check you're
okay?

Nice one, having a tough
day myself, if I'm honest

Cool, you know where I am
if you need me

We don't need to be experts to help people open up, here are a few simple tips that can make the world of difference to someone who needs help:



'How are you?'
Showing
you care and
just being there
means a lot.



2
CUPS
Natter over a
brew or drop a text.
Small actions can
make a big difference.



0
PRESSURE
You don't have to
be a mental health
expert to help.
It's not
about 'fixing'
things, just
having a
chat.

Supporting Managers to Promote Mental Health

Line managers play a crucial role in helping colleagues feel able to open up about challenges they are facing and how they are best supported at work.

Overcoming Stigma

It can be challenging to feel able to speak openly at work for fear of being judged or the impact it could have on their employment.

Role modelling openness and reassuring colleagues that they will be listened to with empathy, confidentially and supported wherever possible will help make it much easier to speak openly.



What can managers do?

You might be responsible for helping shape the culture but:

Starting a conversation about mental health doesn't have to be difficult

When should you have a conversation about mental health?

There's never a bad time to check that someone is okay. There are times when it's critical to make sure someone is okay:

An infographic with a white background and a purple header. The header contains a purple exclamation mark icon and the text "Look out for signs that someone may be struggling to cope". Below the header, there are two columns of text. The left column is titled "How someone might behave" and the right column is titled "How they may be thinking or feeling". Both columns contain a list of bullet points. At the bottom right, there is a speech bubble with the text "ARE YOU OK?".

How someone might behave	How they may be thinking or feeling
• Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns • Withdrawing from, or avoiding friends and family • Stopping telephone or social media contact • Losing interest in things, including their appearance • Risky behaviour or increased use of alcohol and drugs • Carelessness or lack of interest in work • Starting or increasing self-harming behaviour • Increasing coping behaviour such as hand-washing • Struggling to make decisions and concentrate.	• Sadness or anxiety that does not go away • Losing enjoyment and interest in people and activities • Lack of energy, lethargy and tiredness • Extreme mood swings, ongoing irritability or anger • Developing unrealistic or excessive fears and worries • Increased anxiety about their health • Chest pains, shortness of breath

What should you do?

Good conversations follow the same simple principles:

An infographic with a yellow background. It features six principles for good conversations, each with a title, a description, and an icon. The principles are: "Show you're willing" (Just being there means a lot, icon: speech bubble), "Step up" (Make a brew, text, take a walk. Small things go a long way, icon: coffee cup), "Listen, don't judge" (Talking is important. So is a friendly ear, icon: ear), "Be patient" (Good days and bad days happen, icon: sun and cloud), "Be yourself" (Talking about everyday things helps. You don't have to fix this, icon: woman's face), and "Support" (Remember, professional support options are out there, icon: man's face).

Principle	Description	Icon
Show you're willing	Just being there means a lot.	Speech bubble
Step up	Make a brew, text, take a walk. Small things go a long way.	Coffee cup
Listen, don't judge	Talking is important. So is a friendly ear.	Ear
Be patient	Good days and bad days happen.	Sun and cloud
Be yourself	Talking about everyday things helps. You don't have to fix this.	Woman's face
Support	Remember, professional support options are out there.	Man's face

What should you ask?

Examples of questions to ask:

Questions to ask

- How are you doing at the moment?
- You seem to be a bit down/upset/under pressure/frustrated/angry. Is everything okay?
- I've noticed you've been arriving late recently and I wondered if you're okay?
- I've noticed the reports are late when they usually are not. Is everything okay?
- Is there anything I can do to help?
- What would you like to happen? How?
- What support do you think might help?
- Have you spoken to your GP or looked for help anywhere else?

Questions to avoid

- You're clearly struggling. What's up?
- Why can't you just get your act together?
- What do you expect me to do about it?
- Your performance is really unacceptable right now – what's going on?
- Everyone else is in the same boat and they're okay. Why aren't you?
- Who do you expect to pick up all the work that you can't manage?

What Support do managers have?

You might be responsible for helping shape the culture but:

Self care is crucial.

**Use the experts
around you when
you need to.**

It can be challenging for managers to look after themselves when colleagues are sharing their concerns. Self care is crucial- you won't be able to do a great job of supporting others if you don't care for yourself first.

We want to make sure managers are supported too– you have support available internally via your own line manager, your HR Business Partner and HR Adviser, mentors or coaches. Each of these people are there to listen to you without judgement, can help you look at things through another lens and point you toward external professional help as needed too.

Find ways to make good conversations part of your culture

Creating regular opportunities, as part of team meetings or check ins, where people are encouraged to open up can help role model openness.

The Time to Change website has some great materials we can use to help get conversations started, including these postcards:



Finding the right language can be helpful to get people to open up more and create a team environment where people can speak comfortably about how they are and any support they might need from you or their peers.

Over the page are some suggestions that might be helpful to use but we encourage you to get creative in creating ways that resonates for your team.

Supporting Managers to Promote Mental Health

How is your wellbeing feeling on a score of 1/10?	Draw an emoji that best sums up your mood today.	What is one thing you've done or can do to help your wellbeing?	What's one thing me/ the team can do to help your well-being?
4		Get an earlier night tonight and read before bed	Help peer review my work today and just check I'm okay!

Remember this is just a conversation starter so it can be light hearted– rather than using 1-10 you could use something more fun like cakes (ranging from failed home attempts to masterpieces in the bakers), cartoon characters/ actors in different roles/ moods, animals in different levels of grumpiness , colours of the rainbow, different types of accommodation—the options are endless!



Stress Bucket

Stress is a part of everyday life. It can help us take action and work productively. If our Stress Bucket becomes full it can overwhelm us and impact our mental health.

Everyday stressors including work, money and family flow into the Stress Bucket like rain. But we also have ways of coping that allow this stress to flow out, like holes in the bucket

This terminology can help people open up:

- What creates your rain clouds?
- What creates holes in the bucket?
- Can we help you create more holes in the bucket?



How balanced is your wellbeing today?



What would the scales look like for you?

Perfectly balanced?

Tipping slightly ?

Why?

What can we do to help you get them more balanced?

Is there anything you can do?

Finding the best option for you

We're all different and the support we all require may differ. To help make sure each of our colleagues has the right support for them we have a number of different options available. Over the next few pages you'll see information on:

- MetLife- our Employee Assistance Programme This is a free and confidential service available to all colleagues through professional external counsellors.
- NHS Choices
- Remploy
- MIND and the Mental Health Foundation
- Bereavement Counselling
- Domestic Violence and Men's Mental Health support

These support services may not meet your needs, if that's the case, or even if you just need to talk, contact a Health and Wellbeing Advocate or a Mental Health First Aider who may be able to guide you to the right service for you.



Meet Your Mental Health First Aiders

What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aiders are there to provide support to anyone living with a mental health condition, or experiencing emotional distress.

Discussions will be treated sensitively and held in confidence. Mental Health First Aiders are there to:

- Listen without judgement.
- Guide you to relevant professional help.

Each of our Mental Health First Aiders have undertaken training to be able to best support colleagues who find themselves in challenging situations.

They are also trained Domestic Violence Champions and can signpost you to the right support for you if you are experiencing violence or abuse at home.

Claire Armstrong
Property Services
Administrator



Karen Hannon
Operations Manager



Jen Jennings
Team Leader



Beth Jones
Project Support Coordinator



Nicola Knox
Team Leader



Marianne Larkin
Business Information
Manager



Rebecca Patterson
Risk Coordinator



Karen Richardson
Divisional Manager



Kate Myers
Customer Service
Adviser



Lisa Shanks
Customer Service
Adviser



Lisa Whitehead
CSC Development
Coach



How do I contact a Mental Health First Aider?

Contact details are on the Mental Health First Aid page of The Bridge. You can get in touch by phone, e-mail or face to face, whatever suits you best.

How to access wellbeing support



Call Freephone
0800 389 0285



Download the Health e-hub
app from the App store
or Google Play
Username – **Wellbeing**
Password – **Hub**



Visit the online portal at
healthassuredeap.co.uk
Username – **Wellbeing**
Password – **Hub**

Through MetLife you can access;

- FREE & CONFIDENTIAL 24/7 counselling helpline and where applicable, up to 6 sessions of structured, short-term solution focussed therapy.
- Support in relation to living with physical conditions
- Basic legal support and advice on managing financial difficulty.

Your wellbeing matters

Take control with MetLife's Wellbeing Hub



In today's busy world finding the right kind of support and services that we need can be time consuming, not to mention expensive.

MetLife's Wellbeing Hub can help you feel in control, whether it's affecting you directly or a loved one in your household, who are also able to access the service for free.'

NHS Choices

The NHS website has a wealth of information around mental health support



How are you feeling?

Help with stress, anxiety or depression

[Stress](#)

[Anxiety, fear and panic](#)

[Low mood, sadness and depression](#)

Help with other common feelings

[Feeling lonely](#)

[Grief after bereavement or loss](#)

[Anger](#)

I'm not sure how I feel

[Mood self-assessment](#)

Your mental wellbeing

[5 steps to mental wellbeing](#)

[Mindfulness](#)

[Mental wellbeing audio guides](#)

Improve low mood

[How to be happier](#)

[Raising low self-esteem](#)

Reduce stress

[10 stress busters](#)

[Breathing exercise for stress](#)

[Easy time-management tips](#)

[How to cope with money worries](#)

Therapy and counselling

Talking therapies and counselling

[Types of talking therapies](#)

[Benefits of talking therapy](#)

[Self-help therapies](#)

[Can I get free therapy or counselling?](#)

Helplines and support groups

[Mental health helplines](#)

[Depression support groups](#)

[Mental health issues if you're gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans](#)

[Loneliness in older people](#)

[Loneliness in the elderly: how to help](#)

Remploy

Putting ability first

Confidential Helpline

0300 456 8114

Or email

a2wmhss@remploy.co.uk

Remploy provide free and confidential 1:1 mental health advice and guidance appointments.

The sessions aim to provide expert advice and support for up to 6 months as part of the Access to Work Mental Support Service. During which time you will develop a wellbeing plan and gain the various workplace and condition coping to support you at work or home.

Mental Health Foundation

Who we are and what we do

Prevention is at the heart of what we do. Our vision is good mental health for all. Our mission is to help people understand, protect and sustain their mental health.



Your mental health

A range of content designed to give you more information about mental health and to help you to look after your mental health.

We have podcasts, videos, inspiring stories and information about getting help if you're struggling.

About mental health

What is mental health? What are mental health problems? What is good mental health?

Podcasts and videos

Practical podcasts and informative videos.

Stories

Inspiring stories about your mental health and wellbeing.

MIND

About us

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets **support and respect**.

What we do

We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

Mind have a range of helpful resources and information— below is a snapshot of some of this content.

Information and support

When you're living with a mental health problem, or supporting someone who is, having access to the right information is vital. Choose one of the options below to find out more.

Types of mental health problems

If you've just been diagnosed with a mental health problem you might be looking for information on your diagnosis, treatment options and where to go for support. Our information pages will help you learn more.

Helping someone else

It can be really worrying when someone you know is going through a difficult time. Our information covers a wide range of mental health conditions, and contain helpful tips on supporting someone.

Tips for everyday living

Living with a mental health problem can often have an impact on day to day life, making things that others might not think about a bit more difficult. We've put together these tips and guides to help you cope with everyday things like money, work, university and more.

Guides to support and services

The mental health system can be complicated and it can be hard to know where to go for support. We have made some guides to help you decide what the best option for you is.

Infoline: **0300 123 3393**

Email: info@mind.org.uk

Text: **86463**

Post: Mind Infoline, PO Box 75225, London, E15 9FS

Our Infoline provides an information and signposting service. We're open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

Ask us about:

- mental health problems
- where to get help near you
- treatment options
- advocacy services.



Bereavement Counselling

Bereavement Counselling offers unlimited access to a 24/7 bereavement helpline, and up to four face-to-face or structured telephone sessions with a qualified counsellor.

Bereavement Counselling is offered to you, your immediate family¹ and work colleagues at an emotionally challenging time. Experienced counsellors are on hand to provide support for as long as they are required.

FREE² to use for:

- ✓ UK-based employees covered under a Group Life Assurance policy
- ✓ Immediate family¹ members if the employee passed away
- ✓ Colleagues in the workplace

Call **FREE** any time of the day or night
0800 912 0826



Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can take many forms and isn't just physical. It can also be emotional, psychological, financial or sexual and can begin at any stage of a relationship. For further support, visit the Mental Health pages on the Bridge or speak to your line manager, Mental Health First Aider, HR Business Partner or HR Adviser in confidence.

**AT HOME
SHOULDN'T
MEAN
AT RISK**

Women's Aid provide information and support: www.womensaid.org.uk

Refuge provide support for women and children: www.refuge.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland provide free, confidential support and information: www.rctn.org.uk

Men's Advice Line provide support to men experiencing abuse.
www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Men's Mental Health

We know that men are less likely to seek support for their mental health. We wanted to share resources and support available specifically for you.

70% of men say their friends can rely on them for support, but only 48% say that they rely on their friends. In other words: we're here for our mates, but worried about asking for help for ourselves. Reaching out is crucial.

Man Health provide support to men through running peer support groups across the North East. These are a great way to interact with other men who are experiencing mental health problems, share stories and support each other. They're free to attend and are run by men who have experienced mental health problems themselves.

Website: www.manhealth.org.uk

Email: info@manhealth.org.uk



CALM is a leading movement against suicide—the single biggest killer of men under 45. They provide a free and confidential helpline and webchat from 5pm—midnight 7 days a week. They also have a lot of information on their website to help you understand different issues you may be facing in life from anger or depression to separation or divorce.

Website: www.thecalmzone.net Helpline: 0800 58 58 58



Movember are the leading charity changing the face of men's health. They have information on mental health support available for men alongside tips on how to "have a convo, save a bro". Website: www.movember.com



LET'S BE KIND

Self care is always important

When we're experiencing challenging circumstances self care and being kind to ourselves is crucial.

On the Bridge Health and Wellbeing pages we've shared tips on how we can care for ourselves through activities like practicing mindfulness, gratitude exercises and creative pursuits.



Putting Thoughts on Trial



In this exercise, you will put a thought on trial by acting as a defense attorney, prosecutor, and judge, to determine the accuracy of the thought.

Prosecution and Defense: Gather evidence in support of, and against, your thought. Evidence can only be used if it's a verifiable fact. No interpretations, guesses, or opinions!

Judge: Come to a verdict regarding your thought. Is the thought accurate and fair? Are there other thoughts that could explain the facts?

The Thought	
The Defense evidence for the thought	The Prosecution evidence against the thought
The Judge's Verdict	

We have shared a couple of resources here around how to practice mindfulness and manage worries. Please look at the wellbeing pages for more resources and support around being kind to ourselves.

Caring for others

As an organisation we are passionate about making positive changes in our communities and this often involves caring for others. We couldn't possibly list all the ways that we see people care for others, or, all of the ways you can do this but our wellbeing pages on the Bridge have lots of information around how we can be kind to others, particularly as they navigate challenging times in their lives.

Some of the topics we have shared information on include: supporting those who encounter menopause, critical conditions, domestic violence, and men's health matters. Please take the time to look at this and we're always looking to build on this information with topics that are important to colleagues so please take the time to share your thoughts on this.



LET'S PRIORITISE WELLBEING

We are committed to being a great place to work and we recognise the importance integrating health and wellbeing into day to day activities to create a positive and healthy working environment. Our Health and Wellbeing Advocates are here to:

- Encourage colleagues to take part in wellbeing events
- Signpost colleagues to sources of health and wellbeing support, advice and information
- Obtain feedback and suggestions from colleagues on health and wellbeing activities
- Work with the Better Health at Work Award assessors to achieve the North East Better Health at Work Awards

In 2020 we were awarded the Better Health at Work Bronze award and we're currently working towards the Silver!



We work closely with the Better Health at Work team to find best practice information on wellbeing to share with colleagues to help promote an environment that prioritises wellbeing.

Our wellbeing pages on the Bridge have lots of information around how we can look after our wellbeing. Some of the topics include nutrition, exercise, sleep and self care- please take the time to look at this. Over the page is a snapshot of some advice from the Better Health at Work team and the following page has information from MIND around how we can all prioritise our wellbeing.



Five ways to wellbeing

A review of the most up-to-date evidence suggests that building the following five actions into our day-to-day lives is important for wellbeing:

Connect...

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of them as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.



Making space in your life for relaxation is only one part of managing your mental health. Our Bridge Health and wellbeing pages have more suggestions for ways to help yourself. If you're finding things very hard right now and the tips on this page don't feel possible, it is ok to ask for help. See our pages on seeking help for a mental health problem for guidance on talking to your doctor about options for support and treatment.



Take a break

Relaxation doesn't have to take up lots of your time. Just stepping away from something stressful for a few minutes or taking time away from your normal routines and thoughts can give you space and distance to feel calmer.

- Read a book or a magazine, even if it's only for a few minutes.
- Run yourself a bath, watch a film, play with a pet or try a new recipe.

Focus on your breathing

Learning to breathe more deeply can help you feel a lot calmer.

- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Try to keep your shoulders down and relaxed and place a hand on your stomach – it should rise as you breathe in and fall as you breathe out.
- Count as you breathe. Start by counting 'one, two, three, four' as you breathe in and 'one, two, three, four' as you breathe out. Try to work out what's comfortable for you.

Spend time in nature

Spending time outside and in green spaces can be great for your physical and mental health.

- Take a walk in the countryside or through a local park, taking time to notice trees, flowers, plants and animals you see on the way.
- See our page on relaxation exercises for a guided mindful moment in nature.
- Spend some time taking part in conservation, whether that's digging in your own garden or taking part in a local green project. You can find projects and outdoor activities to suit whatever level of mobility you have. See our pages on ecotherapy for more information about how to find projects in your area.

Do a tech check

Technology can be great for helping you feel connected, but if you're using it a lot then it can contribute to making you feel busy and stressed. Taking a break (even a short one) can help you relax.

- Try turning your phone off for an hour (or a whole day if you're feeling brave).
- Step away from the TV, or have an evening where you don't check emails or social networks. Use the time to do something relaxing – you could try some of the ideas above.

Try active relaxation

Relaxation doesn't have to mean sitting still – gentle exercise can help too.

- Take a walk, going at your own pace. You might choose to go for a longer walk, but even a few minutes of walking can help you relax.
- Look for a class you'd like to try- yoga, pilates or gentle stretching.
- See our page on physical activity and mental health for more tips.
- If you're interested in getting more active to support your mental health, take a look at our Get Set to Go campaign to find out more about how you can get active in your local area.

Get creative

Getting in touch with your artistic side can help you feel more calm.

- Try painting, drawing, making crafts, playing a musical instrument, dancing, baking or sewing.
- Try not to worry too much about the finished product – just focus on enjoying yourself.
- See our page on relaxation exercises for more ideas on how to use creative activities to relax.

Listen to music

Music can relax you, connect you to your emotions and distract you from worrying thoughts.

- Listen to your favourite songs. Turn up the volume and dance or sing along, or put your headphones on and close your eyes.
- Really listen to the music. Can you pick out different instruments? Can you hear a drum beat or a certain rhythm? Focus on the music, and let other thoughts fade away.

Thanks for taking the time to read this!

We're trying hard to find ways to support all of our colleagues and create an environment where people feel empowered to share their challenges safe in the knowledge they will be listened to and supported wherever possible.

We hope you found this guide helpful. If you have any thoughts for ways we can build on what we're doing please get in touch with our Mental Health First Aiders, our Health and Wellbeing Advocates or the Human Resources team.

Take care

