The Mental Health at Work Commitment Introduction Guide

Prioritising workplace mental health has never been more important.

MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK COMMITMENT

MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

Curated by mind

What is the Mental Health at Work Commitment?

Developed with the knowledge and expertise of mental health charities, leading employers and trade organisations, the Mental Health at Work Commitment provides a simple framework for employers who recognise the importance of promoting staff wellbeing.

This framework sets out six clear standards based on what best practice has shown is needed to make a difference and better equip employers to create an environment where employees can thrive. These standards build on those set out in the independent Government-commissioned Thriving at Work review in 2017 and Time to Change Employer Pledge.

We believe the Mental Health at Work Commitment, and the standards which underpin it, are a roadmap to achieving better mental health outcomes for employees. It's a set of actions that any organisation can follow to improve and support the mental health of their people.

By signing your organisation up to the Commitment, you will be declaring publicly that mental health at work is a priority for you and you'll join a growing movement of over 1200 likeminded employers, businesses and organisations across the UK.

Why sign?

Mental health is an issue your organisation can't afford to ignore

- At least one in six workers experience common mental health problems, including anxiety and depression.
- Mental ill-health is a leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, accounting for 12.7% of all sickness absence days taken each year.
- Mental ill-health is estimated to cost private sector employers an average of £1716 per employee and public sector employers £1652 each year.

Following the peak of the pandemic, employers will see a considerable increase in the number of employees that will require workplace support

These long standing issues have been further compounded by the coronavirus, which has had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of UK adults

- The pandemic has exacerbated the scale and severity of mental health problems across the country. According to a recent Mind survey, 29% of adults say their mental health has gotten much worse since March 2020 and more than 1 in 4 experienced mental distress for the first time during the pandemic. 41% would describe their current mental health as poor or very poor.[1]
- As a result, 1 in 6 have accessed mental health support for the first time during the pandemic and two thirds of these (65%) said they would continue to access support post-pandemic.[2]
- The Centre for Mental Health estimates 8.5 million adults will need support for anxiety, depression, PTSD and other mental health problems following the pandemic. This is equivalent to 1 in 5 of all adults in England and Wales. Of these, a third will need help with their mental health for the first time.[3]

As employers consider their new ways of working post-pandemic, considerable thought will need to be given to how organisations design work around wellbeing and best support their staff, given the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on employee mental health specifically

- BITC estimates that 41% of employees experienced mental health symptoms caused or worsened by work in 2020
- According to the Labour Force Survey not only did the number of self-reported illnesses caused or made worse by work increase by 19% over the last year, the number related to stress, depression of anxiety grew by 35%

There is significant evidence to show that looking after the mental health of your employees makes business sense and increases productivity

- Analysis by Deloitte suggests poor mental health costs employers up to £45 billion each year. This can be broken down to: £29.3 billion in Presenteeism costs (when individuals are less productive due to poor mental health in work); £8.6 billion in staff turnover costs; and £6.8 billion in absenteeism costs.
- The same report found for every £1 spent by employers on mental health interventions they get £5 back in reduced absence, presenteeism and staff turnover.

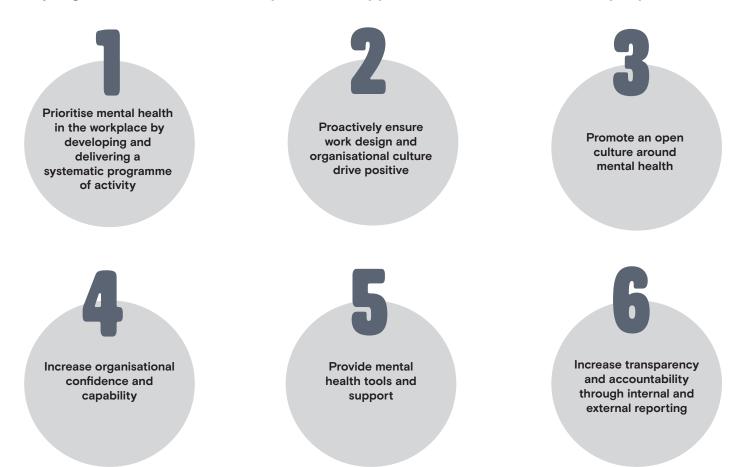[1] Coronavirus One Year On Interim Report, Mind, May 2021.
[2] Coronavirus One Year On Interim Report, Mind, May 2021.
[3] Covid-19 and the nation's mental health, Centre for Mental Health, October 2020.
[4] Wellbeing and Mental Health at work, BITC, October 2020.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment Standards: How does the Commitment support my organisation to address these issues?

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is a set of actions, organised into six standards, that any organisation can follow to improve and support the mental health of their people.

1

Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity

2

Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive

3

Promote an open culture around mental health

4

Increase organisational confidence and capability

5

Provide mental health tools and support

6

Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting

The Mental Health at Work Commitment standards set out a holistic framework through which to examine your organisation's current mental health interventions and support and explore the activities your organisation might look to undertake to support employees who are thriving at work, struggling in work and who are ill and may or may not currently be in work.

The standards set out activities that create mentally healthy workplace cultures, proactively promote wellbeing, address the causes of work-related mental health problems and supports staff who are experiencing mental health problems. Ensuring that employees and managers are supported to create mentally healthy workplace environments and those in need of help are easily able to access support.

How does the Mental Health at Work Commitment differ from other frameworks?

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is free to organisations to sign up to.

There is no registration fee, subscription fee or any administration costs to your organisation to publicly declare your commitment to employee mental health and wellbeing.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is not an accreditation.

You will not be assessed or asked to submit evidence to support your organisation's intention to improve employee mental health. We understand all organisations will have varying experiences of implementing mental health interventions and support and will be beginning their journey at different stages. The purpose of the Commitment is to signal your organisation's intentions and provide a framework to support all businesses on that journey.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is flexible to your organisational context and culture.

It has been designed to be suitable for organisations or all sizes and sector. Our framework sets out six standards, underpinned by 21 supporting actions, alongside guidance for implementation and signposting to useful resources. However, our framework does not dictate any mandatory activity, nor the manner in which you deliver it. The Commitment is designed to be flexible to your current position, experience of what has or hasn't worked in the past and how you feel you can best support your people with due consideration to your organisation's size, sector, ways of working and resource available.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is nationally recognised and evidence-based.

There is a wide range of frameworks and charters now available. The Mental Health at Work Commitment is an evidence-based framework, built upon the government commissioned Thriving at Work Review in 2017 and overseen by the Thriving at Work Leadership Council. The Commitment is supported by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD), Federation of Small Business (FSB), Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Institute of Directors (IOD) and Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) alongside leading employers including Deloitte, Barclays and the Lloyds Banking Group. The Mental Health at Work Commitment is the single charter or pledge named in Government Social Value Model as evidence under its wellbeing theme. Subsequently it can also be found in other government social value models including NHS Digital Social Value Charter.

Case study: EKFB Construction

EKFB is a joint venture of four leading civil engineering and construction companies. They employ several thousand people in a variety of roles covering engineering, construction, and office-based work.

The construction industry has one of the highest rates of suicide of any sector, so EKFB have always been mindful of the need to look after its peoples' mental health and to ensure that mental health is treated with the same importance as health and safety.

To help meet the MHAWC standards, EKFB has recruited and trained 36 mental health 'champions' from within the organisation – with more to be appointed during 2021. The role includes regularly checking in on people and acting as someone to go to if workers are showing signs of or experiencing issues with their mental health.

How EKFB Construction implemented the Mental Health at Work Commitment (MHAWC)

EKFB has also signed up to employee assistance programme PAM Assist, which allows access to clinical expertise over the phone or in person, and made sure its Senior Leadership Team are engaged with the Mental Health at Work Commitment ensuring positive attitudes towards mental health come from the top.

Steven said: "Our champions are our eyes and ears on the ground – they are the key to identifying problems early and making sure everyone is as well as they can be. During the pandemic, our champions checked in with our people through video calls. New starters are taught about the MHAWC and our other mental health policies as part of their induction – it's just as important as all of the technical aspects of their work. That way, they immediately realise EKFB is an organisation that will not look down on someone for speaking up, and will point them in the right direction to get the individual help they need.

"The champions we've hired are crucial to this – they're our people's first port of call when it comes to their mental health, and we make it clear from day one that they're at EKFB to listen and help."

The impact of the Mental Health at Work Commitment (MHAWC)

Since signing up, EKFB has increased the range of regular activities to support staff mental health. Team talks are held every fortnight for everyone to have an informal catch-up and to raise any issues. Awards are also given out to those who have gone out of their way to provide support to a colleague.

This change has already had positive effects – more people are coming forward earlier with issues, and absenteeism has been reduced. "I would encourage all businesses to take mental health seriously in their workplaces – whether that's by signing up to the MHAWC or to something else," Steven added.

"Good mental health is essential to a functioning workforce. If you can create an environment where people are unafraid to be honest and know they can get the help they need, you will have happy people who are more likely to do a good job than if you brush the issues under the carpet.

"The fact that our people understand that we care about their mental health has seen some come forward with any issues earlier, and has meant that we can help them before they have to take time away from work or come in anyway and do a poor job.

"It works – so I would encourage employers on the fence about implementing new mental health schemes to look at what option is right for them, and then to do it."

EKFB Construction have been supported to take the Mental Health at Work Commitment by the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot, funded by the Midlands Engine. The programme brings together a range of expert partners to improve mental health and productivity in the Midlands Engine region. To find out more about their work visit their website.

What's next? How do I sign?

Signing the Mental Health at Work Commitment

Signing the Mental Health at Work Commitment is easy. Simply visit www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/commitment and complete the sign up for at the bottom of the page.

Before your sign the Commitment ensure you have the authority to commit your organisation to the Commitment and be aware that you are committing your organisation at an organisational-wide level – not at a location or departmental level.

The Commitment's standards and underpinning activities similarly have a number of activities that will require the support of senior leadership to implement at an organisational level. Before signing the Mental Health at Work Commitment you might wish to ensure your senior leadership are aware of any expectations you might have regarding their involvement in implementation.

Your Welcome Pack

Once you've signed the Mental Health at Work Commitment you'll receive a Welcome Pack from our Mental Health at Work team at Mind. This pack has everything you need to get started and includes:
- The Mental Health at Work Commitment logo, which you are free to use on your website, intranet or other collateral to demonstrate your commitment to employee mental health and wellbeing
- Internal communications templates, including templates for intranet news items, staff emails, a powerpoint for staff briefings/meetings and guidance for producing blogs
- External communications templates, including templates for media releases, recruitment webpage copy and guidance for social media posts

Your Action Plan

Your Welcome Pack also includes a link to an action plan template. This template will help you to assess what activity your organisation is already doing and how these map against the standards, so that you can more readily identify where you may have gaps needing new interventions or support.

The Mental Health at Work website has over 450 curated resources demonstrating best practice for you to explore in developing your approach.

Mind's Workplace Wellbeing team can also support your organisation through our virtual training, eLearning, Workplace Wellbeing Index and consultancy products where you identify the need to increase capability amongst your employees or benchmark externally.

MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

COMMITMENT