

## Mental health and wellbeing

World Mental Health Day is on 10 October.

This year, the theme is mental health in the workplace.

It may be hard to tell the difference between stress and a mental health problem – and mental health problems may be aggravated by stress at work.

Many of the symptoms of stress and a mental health condition are similar: the key differences are how severe the symptoms are, how long they last, and the impact they have on your life.

Most people with mental health problems are diagnosed and treated by their GP, and then continue to work productively. Evidence shows that staying in work can be very good for you if you are affected.



### Take action early

If you feel you have a problem, the earlier you take action the better - early action can help prevent you becoming more unwell.

Line managers and colleagues can also play a key role in identifying when you are behaving out of character, so be co-operative if your line manager approaches you.

### Talk to your manager

It might be that certain tasks, work environments, times of the day or being part of a particular team is associated with your difficulties. If you feel you have a problem, raise it with your line manager, HR or someone else in the workplace.

Remember, stress does not affect everyone in the same way. Your manager can make adjustments to ease your stress, but only if you give them a better understanding of your position. If you have had time off sick, discuss how you can return to work before you come back, so we can support you properly.

If you remain unwell despite support, see your GP or ask HR how you can get more help.

### If you are returning to work after illness

Most people who have had an illness will recover, but there will be a stage during your rehabilitation when you will return to work with some remnant of your ongoing mental health problems. This may mean that you need some support or changes in your role or work to make the return easier. Your manager will work with you to meet your needs.

It is possible that your condition may be one that is subject to the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act which may require your employer to make reasonable adjustments to help you get back into work – but if you don't talk to your manager and discuss these issues honestly they will be less likely to be able to meet your requirements.

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### Work related stress, anxiety and depression statistics

2016 estimates from the Labour Force Survey

- The total number of cases of work related stress, depression or anxiety in 2015/16 was 488,000 cases. That is 1510 cases per 100,000 workers
- The total number of working days lost due to this condition in 2015/16 was 11.7 million days. This is an average of 23.9 days lost per case

In 2015/16 stress accounted for 37% of all work related ill health cases and 45% of all working days lost due to ill health.

If you are concerned that you are developing a mental health problem, please talk to your GP urgently.

#### Other organisations that can help

Samaritans **samaritans.org**

Confidential emotional support 24 hours a day

Call or text free any time on 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

(Samaritans is VGC's charity for 2017)

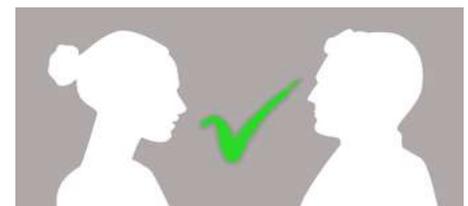
NHS 111 **www.nhs.uk/111**

Mind call 0300 123 3393 or text 86463 **www.mind.org.uk**

Anxiety UK 08444 775 774 **www.anxietyuk.org.uk**

For more information, see

**www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth**



#### Pros of disclosing

- Educates others about mental health issues and the individual becomes a positive role model.
- Enables reasonable adjustments to be made in the workplace to take account of the individual's condition - such as flexible work arrangements or a change in work duties.
- Can lead to positive experiences where other colleagues are understanding or disclose mental health issues themselves.
- Enables individuals to get emotional support.
- Means individuals can be 'honest' about their condition.
- Explains behavioural aspects associated with the individual's mental health issues that might otherwise be misinterpreted.
- Is less stressful than concealing a mental health problem.