It's OK … NOT TO BE OKAY …
Let's Talk about … Mental Health

Managing Mental Health at work is important for employers and employees

According to the Mental Health Foundation, one in six employees experience mental ill health each year.

The impact of the pandemic, the increasing cost of living and changes to working practices mean that it is now more important than ever, to put workplace mental health at the top of workplace agendas.
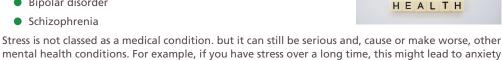
Mental health problems can happen suddenly, because of a specific event in someone's life, or it can build up gradually over time.

There are many types of mental health conditions, for example:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia

Stress is not classed as a medical condition. but it can still be serious and, cause or make worse, other mental health conditions. For example, if you have stress over a long time, this might lead to anxiety or depression.

Spotting possible signs of a mental health problem:

Not everyone will show obvious signs of poor mental health and it's important not to make assumptions. But some possible signs at work include:

- appearing tired, anxious or withdrawn
- increase in sickness absence or being late to work
- changes in the standard of a person's work or focus on tasks
- being less interested in tasks they previously enjoyed
- changes in usual behaviour, mood or how the person behaves with the people they work with

It can be harder to spot these signs if employees are working from home. It is important for employers to regularly ask their employees how they are doing. They should help them to be open and honest about how they are feeling.

Looking after your own mental health

It is important to look after your mental health at work, ways to support your own mental health are:

- Stay in contact with people – talk to people you work with or friends about how you are feeling. Talk to others in your facility, Mental Health First Aiders, Occupational Health, Your Manager.
- Have a routine so you plan in advance what you'll be doing each day.
- Keep active and exercise.
- Make time for activities you enjoy.
- Reflect on what helps you feel more positive and what does not.

Looking after Employees' Mental Health

The sooner an employer becomes aware of a mental health problem, the sooner they can provide help and support.

Whilst many of the reasons behind poor mental health will not be work-related, evidence shows that employers who, reduce stigma, improve management capability and increase self-support, markedly help their employees to remain productive and stay in work.

What can I do as a manager?

- Be open in facilities about Mental Health awareness.
- Talk regularly with individuals and teams.
- Address workload issues and add additional rest breaks if required.
- Organise and promote positive social events e.g. cake in the tearoom, walks at lunchtime.
- Recognise signs of mental ill health and take advice on how to support staff members, this may be from HR, Occupational Health, organisational support networks or Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) in the Organisation.

References and for further support and information

https://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/online-mental-health-support

https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/support-groups/

Mental Health Awareness

IAT Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

EDI Group

iat Institute of Animal Technology
COUNCIL