

Sut ydych chi?

How are you?

Briffio ar gyfer Cynrychiolwyr
Cydraddoldeb Undebau Llafur
lechyd Meddwl a Gwaith

Trade Union Equality
Representative Briefing
Mental Health and Work



What is mental health?

"Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community."

World Health Organisation

We all have mental health

Mental health is just as important as physical health and can have a huge impact on our ability to participate in education, work and society. It can vary enormously as we go through life and can be affected by a huge range of factors. As a result, it is helpful to take a whole-person approach to this issue - considering circumstances, environment and social issues alongside the presence or absence of a medical diagnosis.

The Welsh Government has done exactly this in recent legislation such as the [Mental Health \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#) and in their mental health and wellbeing strategy [Together for Mental Health](#) (2012). Both of these documents outline eight core areas of life that can affect or be affected by a person's mental health and wellbeing:

- **Work and occupation**
- **Finance and money**
- **Accommodation**
- **Physical wellbeing**
- **Education and training**
- **Family, parenting and / or caring relationships**
- **Social, cultural or spiritual**
- **Medical and other forms of treatment (including psychological interventions)**

What are mental health problems?

'Mental health problems', 'mental illness' and 'mental ill health' are all common terms that are used to refer to the full spectrum of diagnosed clinical conditions such as depression, anxiety, psychosis, bipolar or schizophrenia. Symptoms of mental health problems have traditionally been divided into groups called either 'neurotic' or 'psychotic' symptoms.

'Neurotic' covers those symptoms which can be regarded as extreme forms of 'normal' emotional experiences such as depression, anxiety or panic. Conditions formerly referred to as 'neuroses' are now more frequently called 'common mental health problems,' although this does not always mean they are less severe than conditions with psychotic symptoms.

Less common are 'psychotic' symptoms which interfere with a person's perception of reality and may include hallucinations, delusions or paranoia, with the person seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling or believing things that no one else does. Psychotic symptoms or 'psychoses' are often associated with 'severe mental health problems.'

Different mental health problems

Research shows us that **one in four** people will experience a mental health problem in any given year, making mental health problems some of the most common health conditions. Here are some of the most common mental health problems:

- Anxiety
- Bipolar disorder
- Depression
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Phobias
- Postnatal depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Psychosis
- Schizoaffective disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Seasonal affective disorder
- Self harm

Due to the prevalence of mental health problems we probably all have friends, family and/or colleagues who have been affected by this issue and may require our support in the future.

Mental illness ≠ poor mental wellbeing

It may seem counter-intuitive, but people with a diagnosed mental illness can experience good mental health and wellbeing. With the right support and treatment, many people learn to effectively manage their mental health problem and go on to live fulfilled lives - playing important roles in education, business and wider society.

Why is this important to your role?

One in four of us will experience mental health problems in any given year. This could translate to one in four people in your...

- Local pub, restaurant or cinema
- Parents' group
- Street or housing estate
- Local sports centre or rugby club

**1 in 4 people
experience mental
health problems**

**1 in 6 British workers
are affected by
conditions like anxiety,
depression & stress**

One in six British workers are affected by conditions like anxiety, depression and stress every year. Although this can have an impact on the workplace, it is vital to understand that people with mental health problems can and do work. Many recover or learn to manage their mental health problem with the right support. You never know when a fellow employee might want to speak to you about their mental health and wellbeing.

The current financial climate

Since the beginning of the recession life has become increasingly difficult for workers across Wales, as they have battled with cuts, welfare reform, the cost of living and threats to job security. Trade union representatives have reported that colleagues are approaching them much more frequently to talk about mental health problems and ask for information and support. The following issues are common during a time of austerity and could result in increased levels of stress, anxiety and depression among your workforce:

- Redundancies
- Reorganisations
- Overwhelming workloads
- Being expected to do more with less
- Low paid jobs
- The uncertainty of zero hour contracts

Impact on individuals and organisations

In 2009 the All Wales Mental Health Promotion Network published a report called *Promoting mental health and preventing mental illness: the economic case for investment in Wales*.

It estimated that the costs associated with poor mental health in the workplace amount to nearly £1.2billion a year, equivalent to £860 for every employee in the Welsh workforce. This includes the costs of sickness absence, reduced productivity and increased staff turnover.

Costs associated with poor mental health in the workplace amount to nearly £1.2billion each year

Research conducted by the mental health charity Mind also shows that mental health problems can be costly to employers:

- **1 in 5 people take a day off work due to stress.**
- **1 in 10 people have resigned a job due to stress, 1 in 4 have thought about it.**
- **19% of staff feel they can't speak to managers about stress at work.**
- **25% of people we surveyed considered resigning due to stress.**
- **56% of employers said they would like to do more to improve staff wellbeing but don't feel they have the right training or guidance.**

This is only relevant to HR and management, right?

Wrong. Many people at work will choose to visit their HR department or manager, but others may feel more comfortable speaking to someone else within the workplace in a more informal setting. A trade union rep can provide confidential advice and support, without the formality of speaking to a HR officer or manager.

As a result, it's important that trade union reps feel comfortable and confident to talk and listen to colleagues about their mental health problems. However, it is also important that trade union reps know their limitations as non-health professionals and have the right information to signpost colleagues to appropriate advice, treatment and support services.

Myths and facts

The following myths and facts are taken from the **Time to Change Wales** campaign.

Myth: Mental health problems are very rare.

Fact: Mental health problems affect one in four people.

Myth: People aren't discriminated against because of mental health problems.

Fact: Nine out of ten people with mental health problems experience stigma and discrimination.

Myth: People with mental illness are violent and unpredictable.

Fact: People with mental illness are more likely to be a victim of violence.

Myth: People with mental illness can't work.

Fact: You probably work with someone with mental illness.

Myth: People with mental illness never recover.

Fact: People with mental illness can and do recover.

Myth: After experiencing a mental health problem, people are weaker.

Fact: Many people who have gone through this actually feel stronger.

Myth: It's best to leave people alone if they develop a mental health problem.

Fact: Most people with mental health problems want to keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.

Five Ways to Wellbeing

Developed by the **New Economics Foundation**, these five messages encourage people to take simple actions to improve their mental health and wellbeing:

Connect...

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work or in your local community. Think of these 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.

Find out more at: <http://www.fivewaystowellbeing.org/>

What can you do as a trade union rep?

- **Talk openly about mental health and wellbeing**, use non-discriminatory language and challenge stigma and discrimination.
- **Promote good mental health and wellbeing** for colleagues across your workplace.
- **Provide training** – such as mental health first aid - for managers, reps and staff to help them spot the signs and respond appropriately.
- **Create a supportive environment** for your team, so that all members of staff along with volunteers feel comfortable to raise an issue.
- **Raise awareness of local mental health support services** – provided by the workplace and local community - so that they know where they can signpost those who require help (e.g. counselling services, local doctors, voluntary organisations or helplines).
- **Campaign for improved provision of mental health support services** and Employee Assistance Schemes within your workplace.
- **Ensure that your workplace has an appropriate mental health policy**, which is used and referred to regularly.
- **Ask your managers to provide the training budget** for mental health training for all staff members - including managers.
- **Encourage people to become mental health champions** within your workplace.
- **Lobby your organisation to support the Time to Change Wales campaign** and sign the TTCW organisational pledge and chart their development towards becoming an exemplar employer.
- **Encourage all members of staff to register with a local GP surgery** - so that they can easily access mental health support services when and if they need to.
- **Mark World Mental Health Day** (10th October) in your workplace.

Potential activities in the workplace

You may decide to raise awareness or mark specific days such as **World Mental Health Day** (10th October) in your workplace. Here are a few ideas:

Display posters and leaflets about mental health around your workplace, in staff rooms or canteens to better inform colleagues about mental health and where/how they can access help and support.

Set up a stall in the foyer offering advice, information and campaign materials. You can order a campaign box from Time to Change Wales at: www.time-to-change-wales.org.uk

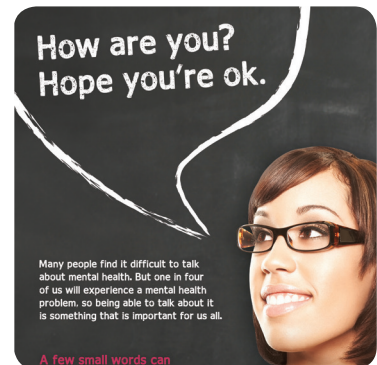
Organise lunchtime wellbeing activities for employees such as complementary therapies, mindfulness, yoga or tai chi sessions.

Invite a Time to Change Wales Champion to deliver a presentation to employees and management to increase understanding of mental health problems, stigma and discrimination.

Invite local health organisations to come and talk to employees.

Organise a walk, fun run or bike ride for employees to participate in - physical activity can be good for mental health!

Join local charities and community groups at World Mental Health Day events in your area.



What can your employer do?

The **Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010** and the Welsh Government's mental health and wellbeing strategy **Together for Mental Health** recognise that all aspects of life can affect and be affected by a person's mental health and wellbeing. Both identify eight specific areas of life and advocate an holistic, whole person approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Taking these eight areas into consideration, there are a number of things that your employer can do to improve mental health and wellbeing across the workforce. Trade union reps can play an important role in putting mental health and wellbeing on their agenda by taking positive action - whether that's raising issues at meetings, scrutinising budgets for support services or campaigning. Here are a few examples that you might want to raise in your workplace:

Work and career progression

- Providing meaningful and supportive feedback to employees.
- Providing and facilitating useful work experience opportunities.
- Providing mentoring opportunities where staff can develop with full support from a more senior representative.

Finance and money

- Providing financial advice services for staff or clear signposting to help and advice services.
- Paying a living wage to staff - including young members of staff.
- Providing or facilitating transport loan schemes for employees.

Education and training

- Providing support and information for employees who want to access further education and training.
- Providing on-going training opportunities for front-line staff and managers.
- Allowing time off to attend training and personal development.

Physical wellbeing

- Providing healthy, affordable food in the workplace, through the staff canteen and vending machine facilities.
- Encouraging physical activity through discounted gym membership or cycle to work schemes.
- Providing employee health care schemes.
- Carrying out workstation assessments for staff members.
- Delivering appropriate health and safety measures such as proper eye-care, safety equipment and cold/hot weather provision.

Parenting or caring relationships

- Providing information and support for parents/carers.
- Providing childcare and maternity services for employees.
- Providing advance shift timetabling to allow reasonable opportunities to find and organise child care.
- Promoting good practice and complying with family friendly policies.
- Providing part-time / flexible working opportunities.

Social, cultural or spiritual issues

- Respecting cultural and religious needs of employees.
- Promoting good practice and complying with equality and diversity policies.
- Providing faith spaces.
- Being supportive of employees who want to organise extra-curricular activities such as team-building days, sporting activities and/or cultural events.
- Organising and funding regular staff wellbeing days.

Medical and other forms of treatment

- Encouraging registration with local GP surgeries and dentists.
- Providing Employee Assistance Programmes/Schemes.
- Supporting employee led wellbeing initiatives such as peer support groups.
- Providing mental health training for staff to ensure they can spot early signs of mental health problems.

Accommodation

- Providing a good quality working environment that supports employee wellbeing.
- Providing information and signposting employees to organisations such as Shelter Cymru for help with accommodation problems.

Why should they care?

It is estimated that the costs associated with poor mental health in the workplace amount to nearly **£1.2billion a year**, equivalent to £860 for every employee in the Welsh workforce. This includes the costs of sickness absence, reduced productivity and increased staff turnover.

Conversely, improving employee mental health and wellbeing is likely to improve staff retention and productivity. As a result, investing in employee wellbeing services and creating a supportive working environment will deliver benefits for all concerned.

Good mental health and wellbeing can help people to reach their full potential at work!

Time to Change Wales

Time to Change Wales (TTCW) is the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. It is delivered by a partnership of three leading Welsh mental health charities - Gofal, Hafal and Mind Cymru. The campaign is funded by Big Lottery, Comic Relief and the Welsh Government. To meet the goal of ending mental health stigma and discrimination in Wales, the campaign delivers a variety of activities:

Community projects

TTCW works with individuals and groups around Wales to set up projects that challenge mental health stigma and discrimination. These projects bring people with and without mental health problems together to take part in activities and events. The projects are active from north to south, mid to west and involve cycling, music, family fun days, creative writing - even planting daffodils!



Training

TTCW provides training for people with experience of mental health problems to become 'Educators'. These Educators are supported to tell their stories, deliver presentations and anti-stigma training to community groups, organisations and workplaces around Wales. By sharing their experiences they help to tackle people's perceptions and reduce stigma.



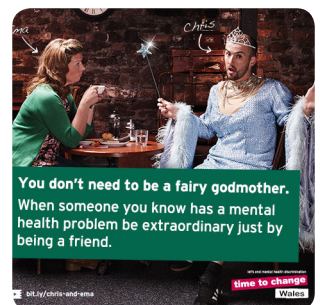
Getting mental health on the agenda

TTCW works with politicians and the press to get mental health on the agenda in Wales. With one in four people experiencing mental health problems this is an important part of the campaign. TTCW supported four Assembly Members - Llyr Gruffydd, David Melding, Eluned Parrott and Ken Skates - to talk openly about their own mental health problems in the National Assembly and the media.



Campaigns

TTCW runs high profile media campaigns throughout Wales to challenge negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviour. The **Be Extraordinary** campaign shows how talking about mental health can really help. You don't need to be a rocket scientist, ninja, lion tamer, fairy godmother, astronaut or superhero to be extraordinary. You just need to be a friend. Starting a conversation about mental health is important because it helps people to recover. It can also strengthen relationships between friends, family and colleagues.



TTCW Organisational Pledge

The Time to Change Wales pledge is a public declaration that an organisation wants to step up to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. It isn't a quality mark, accreditation or endorsement. There is no test or application. You just have to commit to taking actions that are realistic and right for you that will lead to a reduction in discrimination within your organisation and the wider community. More organisations stepping up to make the organisational pledge means that more noise is being made – helping to break the silence around mental health. Imagine if every organisation in Wales made a public pledge to tackle stigma: employers big and small, councils, universities, football clubs, charities... it would send a powerful message that mental health is something that can be talked about, and that stigma and discrimination are not welcome.



Who can pledge?

Stigma and discrimination affect people in all areas of life so we need organisations from all sectors of society to step up and play their part. Whether an organisation has already done lots, is just beginning to think about mental health, or has identified that it needs to make improvements, it's never too late to start.

What does pledging mean for an organisation?

Every organisation is different and there are various ways you can put the pledge into action, but all organisations that want to pledge must complete an action plan setting out what they are going to do. Time to Change Wales can help advise you on the action plan but it's the responsibility of the organisation to deliver it. Activities that we encourage organisations to consider are:

- Looking at policies and culture to make sure the workplace is supportive of people with mental health problems.
- Running internal anti-stigma campaigns using our materials; inviting our educators to deliver anti-stigma training.
- Promoting the messages externally to people who use your services and the wider community through your communications channels or by running a campaign.
- The action plan should be realistic and manageable but there are no penalties if everything cannot be achieved – so we encourage you to aim high!

Encourage your organisation to sign the pledge!

It would be great if you could encourage your organisation to sign the TTCW organisational pledge. Find out more at: www.timetochangewales.org.uk/en/your-organisation/5-step-plan

Spot the signs

Mental ill health is a very personal experience and although there are common symptoms, they can present themselves differently in each person. Symptoms also vary between mental illnesses - as they would for physical illnesses - but some similarities can exist. If you think someone may be experiencing mental health problems, here are a few things to look out for:

- Becoming isolated
- Change in eating or drinking habits
- Doing less well at work
- Relationships suffering
- Absence
- Lack of focus or interest
- Tiredness
- Erratic behaviour
- Forgetfulness

What you can do to help?

- **Be there to talk and listen.**
- If someone talks to you **acknowledge their problem** and let them know you're there for them.
- **Make time to stay in touch.** Call, visit or invite your friend round - carry on with whatever you normally do.
- **Ask the person how you can help** - people will want support at different times in different ways.
- Keep in mind that having **a mental health problem is just one part of the person.** People don't want to be defined by their mental health problem.
- **Think about the words you use.** Words like 'nutter', 'crazy' and 'psycho' can hurt.

Talking tips

Many people find it difficult to talk about mental health. But one in four of us will be affected by a mental health problem, so being able to talk about it is important for us all. Whether it's fear of talking about our own mental health or feeling awkward about talking to someone we know about their mental health, avoiding the subject isn't good for anyone.

The following 'talking tips' have been developed by **Time to Change Wales** to help people talk about their own mental health problems or talk to someone else about their mental health problems. You might want to share these with colleagues who are thinking about talking to their friends and family members.

Talk about your own mental health problem

If you feel ready to talk about your mental health problem, here are a few points to help you out:

- **Be prepared:**

Think about the different reactions, positive and negative, that the person might have so you're prepared.

- **Choose a good time:**

Choose a time and place where you feel comfortable and ready to talk.

- **Be ready for lots of questions... or none:**

The person you are talking to might have lots of questions. Or they might feel uncomfortable and try to move the conversation on – if this happens it's still helpful that the first step has been taken.

- **Have some information ready:**

Sometimes it's easier for people to find out more in their own time – so it might be useful to have some information to hand.

- **Take up opportunities to talk:**

If someone asks you about your mental health, don't shy away - be yourself and answer honestly.

- **Courage is contagious:**

Often, once mental health is out in the open people want to talk. Don't be surprised if your honesty encourages other people to talk about their own experiences.

Talk to someone about their mental health problems

You don't need to be an expert on mental health to be a friend. It's often the everyday things that make a difference – here are some pointers to start talking...

- **Take the lead:**

If you know someone has been unwell, don't be afraid to ask how they are.

- **Avoid clichés:**

Phrases like 'Cheer up', 'I'm sure it'll pass', 'Pull yourself together' definitely won't help the conversation! Being open minded, non-judgemental and listening will.

- **Ask how you can help:**

People will want support at different times in different ways, so ask how you can help.

- **Don't avoid the issue:**

If someone comes to you to talk, don't brush it off because this can be a hard step to take. Acknowledge their illness and let them know that you're there for them.

- **Stay in touch:**

Actions are important too so stay in touch with a text, email or postcard and let someone know you are thinking about them.

These talking tips are taken from:

Time to Change Wales

- the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems in Wales.

Website: www.timetochangewales.org.uk

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/TTCWales](https://twitter.com/TTCWales)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ttcwales



Where can people find help?

One in four of us will experience mental health problems and it's important that people can access support when they need it. If a colleague confides in you and says they are experiencing mental health problems you could advise them to:

Talk to someone they trust

- Such as a friend or family member. And check out the Time to Change Wales 'talking tips'.

Make an appointment to see their local GP

- Describe the mental health problems they are experiencing.
- Ask about the range of advice, treatment and support available through their local GP surgery.
- Ask about the range of advice, treatment and support available in the community, through voluntary sector groups and charities.

Find out if their workplace has access to support services

- Some workplaces offer staff benefits which might mean you are able to access advice and support services such as counselling or financial advice services.

Talk to a Trade Union Representative

- Trade Union Equality Representatives may be able to offer help by helping your workplace provide reasonable adjustments, advocating on your behalf, signposting and supporting you to get the help you want or need.

Get support from the All Wales Equality Network

- The All Wales Equality Network can support you by emailing regular newsletters and hosting regular network meetings throughout Wales. You can find out more on the Wales TUC website.

Phone a confidential mental health advice helpline

- Give them a copy of the 'Advice and support helplines' briefing sheet.

Advice and support helplines

C.A.L.L. Helpline

Confidential listening and support service that offers emotional support and information about mental health and related matters to people in Wales.

Freephone: 0800 132 737

Text: HELP to 81066

Website: <http://callhelpline.org.uk/>

Mind infoline

The Mind infoline provides information on a range of topics including: types of mental health problem, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments; and advocacy.

Phone: 0300 123 3393

Website: www.mind.org.uk

The Samaritans

The Samaritans helpline offers a 24-hour confidential emotional support service.

Phone: 08457 90 90 90

Website: www.thesamaritans.org

C.A.L.M.

The C.A.L.M. helpline offers confidential, anonymous and free support, information and signposting to men throughout the UK.

Freephone: 0800 58 58 58

Website: www.thecalmzone.net

Citizens Advice Bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau offers free, confidential, impartial and independent advice through a variety of mediums, in locations across Wales.

Phone: 08444 77 20 20

Web: www.adviceguide.org.uk/wales

Shelter Cymru

Shelter Cymru provides housing advice at community-based locations across Wales. If you have an urgent housing problem you can contact their Advice & Support Services.

Phone: 0845 075 5005

Web: www.sheltercymru.org.uk

Improvements to local mental health services

In 2012 a new law came into force, which aims to improve mental health support services in Wales. This new law is called the Mental Health (Wales) Measure and it was developed and passed by the National Assembly for Wales.

'Part One' of the Measure looks at primary mental health support services, which are usually the type of services you access at your local doctors' surgery. You might need to use these services if you are experiencing mild to moderate mental health problems, including:

- Anxiety
- Mild to moderate depression
- Psychosocial, behavioural and emotional difficulties experienced by children and young people
- Memory impairment experienced by older adults

You might also use these services if you have a stable, enduring mental illness such as schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, dementia or an eating disorder.

Why was this law introduced?

Getting the right support when you first become unwell is really important. It can prevent the problem from worsening, make recovery easier to achieve and help a person to maintain a full and active life. Unfortunately, people have reported that mental health services are not always as good as they should be, with some people waiting a long time to receive the right support.

As a result, the Welsh Government worked with Assembly Members, the NHS, mental health charities and other organisations to make a law that should improve these services.

Part One of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure aims to:

- Provide more consistent services across Wales
- Improve people's experiences of services
- Ensure earlier access to services
- Deliver better outcomes for individuals
- Lessen the risk of people's mental health getting worse
- Reduce potential need for inpatient treatment

The new law requires local authorities and health boards to provide local primary mental health support services, such as:

- Comprehensive mental health assessments
- Short-term interventions (i.e. treatment)
- Onward referral and the co-ordination of next steps
- Provision of support and advice to GPs and other primary care providers
- Provision of information and advice to individuals and their carers

As a result, more support services should be available for people experiencing mild to moderate mental health problems such as anxiety or depression. These services, which may include counselling or stress and anxiety management, will either be at the GP practice or nearby - so it should be easier to get to them. People should also be told about other services that might help them, such as those provided by local voluntary groups or advice about money or housing. As a result, people should receive advice, support and treatment without having to wait as long as they did before.

Do you need to be registered with a GP?

You do not need to be registered with a GP to access the primary mental health support services introduced by the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010. However, it is a good idea to join a local surgery to ensure that you have access to primary health services when you need them.

How can trade union reps help?

It is important that people know about these improvements in local primary mental health support services and are encouraged to access them at their local GP surgery. You can help to raise awareness within your workplace by handing out information and talking to colleagues about primary mental health services.

If people tell you that they are experiencing mental health problems you can advise them to:

- Make an appointment to see their local GP
- Describe the mental health problems they are experiencing
- Ask about the range of advice, treatment and support available through their local GP surgery
- Ask about the range of advice, treatment and support available in the community, through voluntary sector groups and charities

Looking after trade union reps and activists

Workplace reps, trade union activists and campaigners often contribute a huge amount of time and energy in order to make a difference to their colleagues' lives. They work tirelessly throughout the year to support their colleagues and run campaigns, often without any expectation of personal reward. However, it is crucial that trade union representatives, activists and campaigners receive the right support to safeguard their mental (and physical) health.

Top 10 Tips - by activists

The NUS UK Disabled Students' campaign recently produced four 'Activist Mental Health Guides' that provide information and advice about looking after the mental health of student activists and campaigners. Although this is a different context to trade union activism, some of the advice and guidance is equally as relevant. In particular, one of these guides includes a list of top ten tips written by activists and campaigners themselves:

- 1. Learn when to say 'no' to being involved in things.**
- 2. Set your own limitations and stick to them.**
- 3. Take care of yourself by doing the things that you enjoy (remember, this in itself is a revolutionary act!)**
- 4. Take time to do things other than activism.**
- 5. Set small, tangible goals and celebrate achieving these.**
- 6. Find some inspirational quotations and look at these every day.**
- 7. Know when to go and get help for yourself.**
- 8. Make sure you talk to people about how you are feeling.**
- 9. Develop your own personal support network with friends, family and fellow activists.**
- 10. Remember: you are a more effective campaigner when you are happy, healthy and take care of yourself.**

What are my rights?

The Equality Act - How does the law protect me?

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination. It brings together the law that was found in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), the Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. It protects people from being discriminated against because of certain characteristics, such as gender, age or disability.

You might not think of yourself as disabled, but if your mental health condition has a serious impact on your day-to-day life over a long period then it might be considered a disability under this law.

The Equality Act applies to all employers in the UK. It also covers contract workers, office holders and business partners. It is a very detailed law, and Mind has produced a legal briefing called 'Disability discrimination under the Equality Act' which explains how it works. Some of the most important things to know about it are:

- An employer must not treat a disabled person less favourably than another employee because of disability.
- It is wrong for your employer to treat you badly because they think that you have a disability.
- It is wrong to treat you unfavourably where this is linked to disability.
- Employers must make reasonable adjustments to work practices, and provide other aids and adaptations, for disabled employees.
- The law covers you during recruitment, employment and if you are being dismissed for any reason, including redundancy.
- Employers are not allowed to use 'pre-employment questionnaires' to ask about your health before you are offered a job.

The law is there to protect you from mental health discrimination. You should not be treated differently to other employees or lose your job because of your mental health problem. However, the law only applies where you have told your employer about your disability - there are pros and cons to doing this.

Health and Safety Executive

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was created by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and acts in the public interest to reduce work-related death and serious injury across Great Britain's workplaces. It is:

- the national independent watchdog for work-related health, safety and illness.
- an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- the body responsible for the encouragement, regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare, and for research into occupational risks in England, Wales and Scotland.

The HSE website has a range of information and advice about work-related health, safety and illness: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

Advice and information

- **Advice Now Guides**

Advice Now have produced a website called [Is that discrimination?](http://www.advicenow.org.uk/is-that-discrimination/) which is packed with easy-to-understand information about discrimination, unfair treatment, bullying and harassment.

www.advicenow.org.uk/is-that-discrimination/

- **Direct Gov Advice**

This Direct Gov website explains the differences between discrimination and bullying, and provides links to further information and sources of support.

www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/discrimination-at-work

- **Equality and Human Rights Commission**

The EHRC has produced a series of guides to explain your rights under the equality law. They cover recruitment, pay, management and many other topics.

www.equalityhumanrights.com/your-rights/employment/guidance-workers

Feeling unwell at work?

Mental health problems can be distressing and challenging at home and at work. The work environment can impact on your mental health and wellbeing and vice versa. It is important to look after yourself and access help and support, so you may want to talk to your employer about how you are feeling. This can be tricky, but here are a few tips and suggestions written by the **Time to Change** campaign in England.

Look after yourself

There are things you can do to help stay well at work, especially if you feel that you are becoming stressed and unwell. Here are a few tips:

- Try and take a walk or get some fresh air during the day
- Be assertive – say no if you can't take on extra demands
- Be realistic – you don't have to be perfect all the time
- If everything starts to feel overwhelming, take a deep breath and try to take a break
- Write a list of what needs to be done; this can help you to prioritise, focus and get things in perspective
- Try not to work long hours or take work home with you
- If there is something about your job, the work environment or the way your work is organised that is damaging you or preventing you from working effectively, ask if you can get it changed

Talking to your employer

If you feel comfortable talking to your manager then some of these ideas might help you to remain at work, or support you when you are unwell. If you don't feel able to talk to your manager then consider talking to a colleague, HR team member, union representative or welfare officer.

- Follow a more flexible working pattern; this can help even if it is only possible for a temporary period.
- Ask for help prioritising the most important tasks and focus on these.
- Have regular catch up sessions with your manager/colleagues.
- Ask someone to watch out for 'triggers' that you are becoming unwell.
- If you are off work stay in touch with your colleagues so you don't feel isolated.
- Look at your company's policies and any schemes that they might have in place which might be helpful to you, including staff handbooks, company mental health policies, mentoring, advisors, training or staff development schemes.

Help, support and reasonable adjustments

If you are finding work stressful or struggling because of a mental health problem then your employer should be able to offer you support. The Equality Act requires employers to be flexible and make 'reasonable adjustments' for people with disabilities to enable them to do their jobs. These reasonable adjustments do not need to be complicated and should help you to do your job more effectively, which will benefit your employer as well. The type of adjustment (or change) that you agree will vary depending on your role, the size of your organisation and your individual needs.

Top tips

- **Remember you are not alone** – one in six of our workforce experiences mental health problems each year and with a bit of practice, many people can balance their health with the demands of a job.
- **It's your choice** – disclosure of mental health issues at work is a personal choice, and you can say as much or as little as you want. If you need more support, being open can help you get it.
- **Request a one-to-one meeting with your manager** – Get some private time where you can discuss your mental health, how it relates to your work, and what might help you manage your health so you can perform well.
- **Remember you are the expert on your needs** – agree a plan of changes with your boss and a time to meet again to discuss whether things have improved. If you're not sure what might help, try small experimental steps, and make a note of whether they help or not.
- **You have rights** – if your boss is unhelpful or dismissive, remember they have legal duties under the Equality Act to make 'reasonable adjustments' and not discriminate in recruiting, retaining or promoting staff. Mental health problems are a disability under the Act so you are likely to be protected, but always seek legal advice.

Mindful Employer

MINDFUL EMPLOYER is an NHS initiative run by Workways, a service of Devon Partnership NHS Trust. Workways supports people with a mental health condition to find or remain in employment. Mindful Employer was developed by employers in Exeter and launched in 2004. Initially intended as a purely local initiative, it has since developed throughout the UK and has been launched abroad. Mindful Employer has been recommended as good practice by the UK government and other national organisations.

Being a Mindful Employer

- Shows others and your own staff that you are a good employer
- Expresses your corporate social responsibility
- Reduces recruitment and training costs
- Helps towards complying with legislation (e.g. Equality Act & HSE)
- Reduces sickness levels
- Enhances customer service
- Improves productivity
- Makes you more attractive to people with mental health issues and others
- Helps you retain staff who have experienced discrimination in the past
- Makes yours a healthier workplace

Developed, led and supported by employers, MINDFUL EMPLOYER® provides businesses and organisations with easier access to information and support for staff who experience stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions. Whether you run your own business or organisation, are a manager or an employee, finding the right information can be very time-consuming. However, on the Mindful Employer website you'll find a wealth of information about the law, good practice, managing mental health, training and organisations who can help, together with publications for managers and staff.

Charter for employers

Over 1.3 million people work for employers who are signatories to the Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health. The Charter is just one part of the MINDFUL EMPLOYER® initiative and over 1,200 employers have signed it since the initiative began in 2004. The Charter is a voluntary agreement seeking to support employers in working within the spirit of its positive approach. It's not an accreditation or a set of quality standards nor a policy or target but about working towards the principles of it – signing up is a step along a journey not the end of it. It is completely voluntary. Any employer can sign the Charter - small, medium or large, public, private or voluntary sector, anywhere in the UK.

For more information visit: www.mindfulemployer.net/

