TUC

Changing the world of work for good

Talking Mental Health

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Mental Health Foundation

Things to Cover Today

- Introduction to Mental Health
- Noticing distress and reaching out appropriately to somebody who isn’t coping
- Supporting disclosure and assisting with ongoing concerns, including reasonable adjustments and return to work
- Working strategically to improve the nature of work to protect and promote mental wellbeing for all staff.

A world with good mental health for all

Prevention

Doing more of what protects and promotes good mental health, whilst reducing the impact of factors that increase the risk of mental ill health

The only feasible way to meet the huge mental health challenges we face

Requires action reaching individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole

For all - but most urgent need where people are at risk, or living with mental health problems

Good work can be a key factor in **supporting** and **protecting** mental health

Toxic work is corrosive to mental health, and must be addressed

5m UK workers
with mental health
problems contributed
£226 billion
to UK GDP last year.

We need to stop seeing mental health purely as a problem or burden - instead of an asset that everyone has and which needs to be protected and improved

15%

working adults living with symptoms of a mental health problem

>6000 people a year die by suicide in the UK

Highest risk in men in middle age
Highest growth in young women

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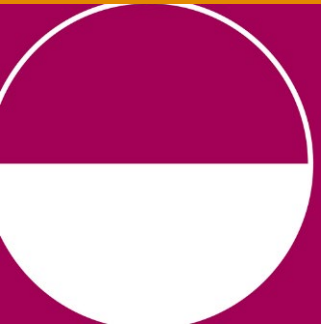
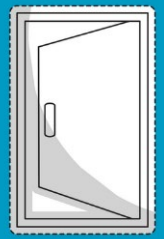
Over the past year, 74% of people have at some point felt so stressed that they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope.



Only 1/2 of people who have experienced a mental health problem have disclosed it at work

300,000 people with mental health problems leave the UK workforce each year



20% said that 'powering through stress' was expected as part of their workplace culture

Only 7% said their work treated psychological hazards as equal to physical hazards

Distress and Mental Health Problems

Mental Health Problems

- Roughly 1 in 6 in any given week
- Can happen to anyone – though some factors make us more vulnerable
- Diagnosis is not a definitive way to understand a person's experience

Distress

- Not coping – for whatever reason
- Most of us experience it at some point

A compassionate response is key

Personal Flags

A change in behaviours, appearance or manner which lasts more than a few days and which concerns you

- Daytime tiredness
- Change in appearance
- Lack of attention to personal grooming/ hygiene
- Frequent minor ailments
- Changes in diet or weight
- Increased anger or irritability
- Increased distractibility
- Physically hiding away or withdrawing (e.g using headphones or avoiding social time)
- Forgetfulness
- Negativity, especially if out of character
- Tearfulness
- Lack of energy

Work Flags

A noticeable change in work behaviour or performance which causes concern

Reduced productivity/ output

'poor attitude' or increase in conflict/aggression

Increase in or covering up of mistakes

Increased frequency of short absences and short notice leave requests

Change in working style/approach

Increased accidents/incidents

Change in level of engagement with colleagues

Difficulty adjusting to changes in shift pattern

Working longer hours or in non work time

Late starts and early finishes

Increased procrastination/ paralysis

Compassion fatigue/fault finding

Increased complaints by or about individuals

Taking on too much

Intrusive/Inappropriate behaviours – in person and online

Triggers

Life Events

- Bereavement/loss
- Relationship difficulties
- Becoming a parent
- Imminent retirement
- Sudden health issues
- Moving house
- Getting married
- Trauma
- Anniversaries of past events

Ongoing Challenges

- Change at work
- Financial concerns
- Long term health conditions/caring
- Housing difficulties
- Discrimination
- Abuse/Trauma
- Loneliness/Isolation
- Addictions (substances, gambling, internet, porn)

Reaching Out

Place and Time

Preparation

Persistence

Having Difficult Conversations

Presence

Open questioning

Non verbal communication

Self-Management

Follow-Up

Confidentiality

Talking About Suicide

32% of Brits that told us they have been stressed in the last year said that at some point they'd had suicidal thoughts because of that stress.

One in 20 of us come to work whilst experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings.

Talking openly and directly about suicide can help prevent suicide – it will not make suicide more likely.

Crisis Signposting

- They could contact the Samaritans straight away, for a listening ear they can call 116 123 for free.
- You could also help them to call their doctor, or a trusted partner or friend.
- If you are concerned for someone's immediate safety, or they tell you that they plan to end their life imminently, you can call 999 and ask for the police, or take them to an A&E Department.
- If you are worried that someone is a risk to themselves, or to others, or unwell to the point that they are losing touch with reality you have a duty of care in the workplace to see that they get help. It's not enough to send somebody home alone.

Ongoing Support

Supporting people to assert their rights

Being present/advocating during dispute, disciplinary and competence processes

Duty of Care

Duties and Responsibilities

Duty of care to all staff through Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)

- To recognise, measure and mitigate against occupational hazards, including psychological hazards

To disabled employees, under the Equality Act (2010)

- A person must have an impairment that has “a substantial, adverse, and long-term impact on their ability to carry out everyday tasks”
- Employer duty provide reasonable adjustments to people with impairments meeting the definition of disability

Reasonable Adjustments

An adjustment is intended to level the playing field by removing a barrier to the job arising due to disability (in this case their mental health problem)

'Reasonable' is defined by law – circumstances which are 'unreasonable' include disproportionate cost or the job being untenable if adapted.

Examples:

- Varying work patterns to enable a person to avoid rush hour, or get over medication sedation in the morning
- Enabling home working or flexible working with appropriate IT equipment, subject to monitoring
- Excusing someone from work related eating – like attending conference dinners
- Not counting disability related leave towards triggers for review/reduction in pay

Looking after your own mental health

- Practice Self-Care
  - Know what works for you
  - Plan time and space to maintain your mental health
- Consider using your own experiences and vulnerability within boundaries
- Debrief and get support
- Acknowledge and learn from your mistakes
- Give and receive feedback
- Keep your comfort zone and boundaries under review
- Read – and translate concepts to MH

Strategy and Prevention

Making mental health central to organisational success– helping everyone thrive, not just survive at work

Understanding personal and work related risk factors for distress or mental health problems. Helping those at particular risk reduce barriers and grow resilience in a safe and inclusive work environment

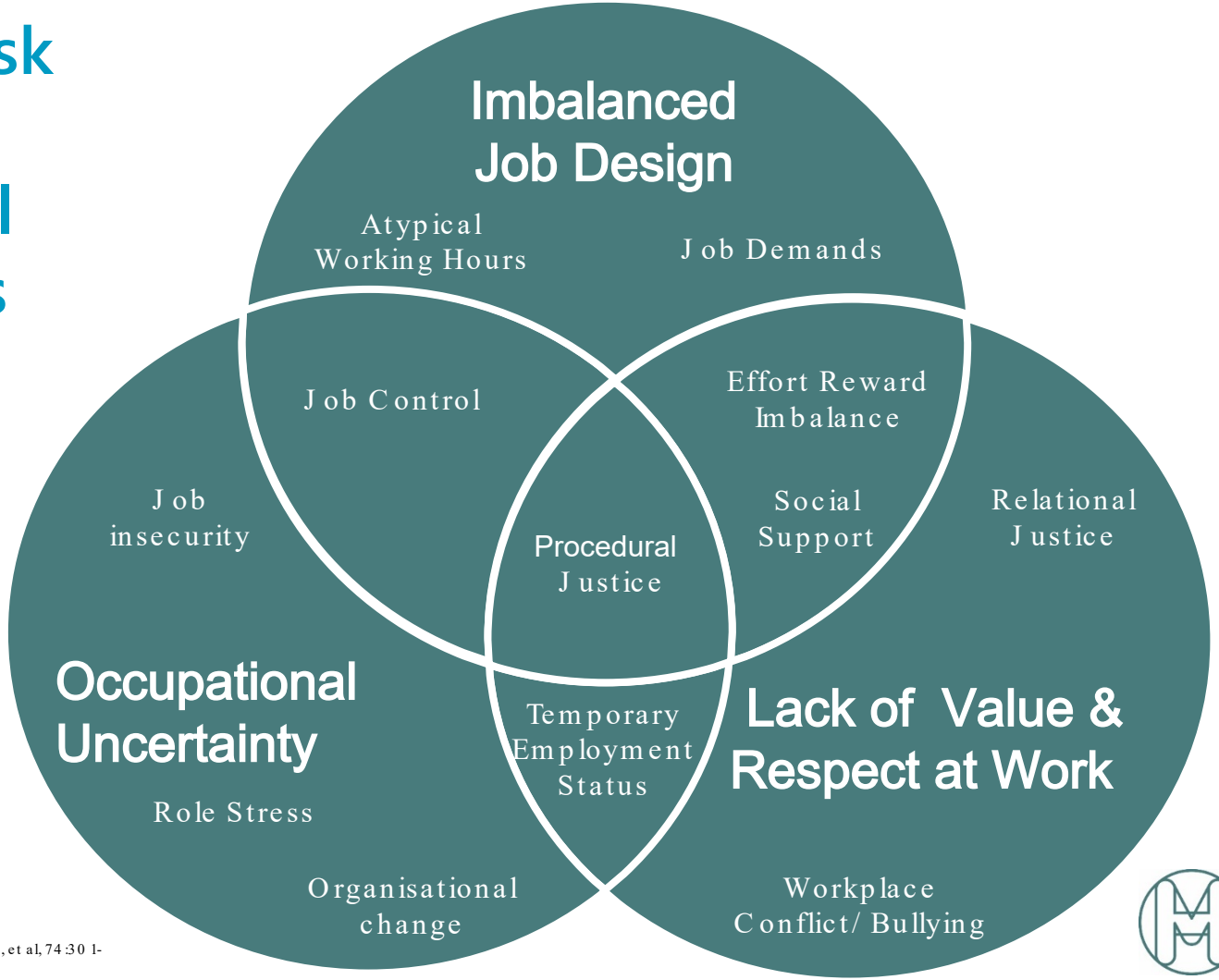
Helping colleagues having trouble coping to come forward, and get back on track – through in work support and zero tolerance approach to discrimination

Helping colleagues who have or have had mental health problems feel safe and supported, so work can support recovery. Recognising and supporting colleagues with mental health impairments to use Equality Act rights

Thriving at Work Core Standards

- Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan
- Develop mental health awareness among employees;
- Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling;
- Provide employees with good working conditions and ensure they have a healthy work life balance and opportunities for development;
- Promote effective people management through line managers and supervisors;
- Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

Work Related Risk Factors for Common Mental Health Problems (Harvey et al 2017)



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Mental Health Foundation

http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/

How To Support Mental Health at Work
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-support-mental-health-work

Added Value – Mental Health As A Workplace Asset
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/addedvalue

Getting Help
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/getting-help

Other References

Thriving at Work – A Review of Mental Health and Employers

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thriving-at-work-a-review-of-mental-health-and-employers

Minds at Work – Fabians and Community Union

https://fabians.org.uk/publication/minds-at-work/

Acas Framework for Positive Mental Health at Work

http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1900

Time to Change (England and Wales) See Me (Scotland)

https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/ https://www.seemescotland.org/

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