

City Mental Health Alliance

Mental health is everyone's business

Conditions such as anxiety and depression are experienced by one in six British workers at any one time. Considering how much time is spent at work, it is not surprising that the working environment can affect wellbeing and equally that levels of mental wellbeing can affect job performance.

Research suggests the impact of the recent recession has led to a rise in the level of work-related mental health problems:

44%

of employers seeing an increase in reported mental health problems¹

50%

of long-term absences in non-manual workers accounted for by stress²

70%

of people with a mental health problem fully recover³

While one in five workers is likely to have taken a day off due to stress in the past year, widespread stigma and discrimination often prevents people accessing help and support early on. 90% of people taking time off due to stress said they cited a different reason to their employer for their absence⁴. 92% of people believe that admitting to having a mental health condition to their employer would damage their career⁵. This culture of fear and silence about stress and mental health problems carries a significant price tag for individual employers, employees and the wider business community at large.

"Everyone has mental health in the same way as everyone has physical health. The focus is therefore on supporting all City workers to achieve our full potential, for ourselves, our families, our communities and the businesses for whom we work, throughout our working lives. We believe business can take a leading role in building on the wave of change in society that is making mental health a subject that everyone can talk about without fear."

Peter Rodgers, Chair, City Mental Health Alliance

Mental health – the bottom line

Mental ill health costs UK employers an estimated £26 billion⁶, which equates to an average of over £1,000 per employee. Broken down, this includes:

£8.4bn a year in sickness

absence⁷ – 70 million lost working days a year, including one in seven directly caused by a person's work or working conditions⁸. Unless addressed at an early stage, absence due to mental health problems can often be long term, with the average absence for a mental health condition lasting 21 days⁹.

£15.1bn a year in reduced productivity at work¹⁰ – workers may come to work even though they are unwell because they are concerned that if they disclose a mental health problem, they will face prejudice. 'Presenteeism' accounts for 1.5 times as much working time lost as absenteeism and costs more to employers because it is more common among higher-paid staff¹¹.

£2.4bn a year in recruitment costs¹² – replacing staff who leave their jobs because of mental ill health. CIPD research finds higher stress is associated with lower work satisfaction, lower levels of loyalty to line management and a higher intention to leave the organisation¹³.

Early intervention and support around mental health in the workplace has the potential to reduce considerably the overall economic burden to wider society¹⁴.

Creating mentally healthy workplaces

While the cost of mental ill health for employers is high, the cost of tackling it is comparatively low, representing a significant return on investment. The cost of providing practical help and support to people experiencing mental health in the workplace has been shown to be more than outweighed by a reduction in both presenteeism and levels of absenteeism¹⁵.

Companies can work to ensure their business achieves peak performance through:

1. Promoting wellbeing for all staff

Preventing problems in the first place and fostering a culture of openness that aids early intervention can result in cost savings to employers of up to 30%¹⁶. A study by the London School of Economics¹⁷ found that workplace-based wellbeing interventions can bring both short-term and long-term cost savings to employers, with an annual return on investment of more than 9-1.

2. Tackling the causes of work-related mental ill health

Conducting a stress risk assessment gives a comprehensive analysis of the state of the organisation and key areas to address to prevent stress and mental ill health among staff. Training managers to identify risks and recognise the triggers and signs of mental health problems builds the confidence and knowledge necessary for early intervention¹⁸.

3. Supporting staff who are experiencing mental health problems

Clear policies on workplace adjustments and phased returns to work have been shown to be crucial for reducing the length of mental health related sickness absence. More than 70% of people with a mental health problem fully recover and assume normal duties and responsibilities³.

About the City Mental Health Alliance

The City Mental Health Alliance is a coalition of organisations that have come together to improve mental health in the City of London. The focus of the Alliance is on the common stress related mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, while remaining inclusive of other conditions.

The strategic objectives that inform the Alliance's work include:

1. Increasing mental health literacy
2. Creating a culture of openness
3. Enabling practical steps to be taken by employers
4. Influencing providers and policy makers
5. Reducing the stigma of mental ill health

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