



AUTHOR / KEY CONTACT



Emma Starmer
Senior Employment Law and HR Advisor

✉ emma.starmer@la-law.com
☎ 01202 786276

Supporting Your People – Mental Health First Aiders at Work

As we make our way through these uncertain times, we are becoming more and more aware of the importance of good mental health. Over recent months some of us have experienced bereavement, ill health, increased caring responsibilities and business uncertainty. Some people have found the situation harder than others, and everyone reacts differently.

Historically there has been a lot of stigma attached to poor mental health and it was often perceived that the topic should not be discussed. Avoiding having these important conversations can prevent people from getting the vital support they need.

Statistics have shown that 1 in 4 of the UK workforce has been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime. The biggest rises have been seen in anxiety and depression, particularly among younger women and older men.

Why are people becoming more aware of mental health?

Is it down to the increasing use of social media? Celebrities raising awareness? Campaigns such as #itsoktonotbeok? Whatever the reason behind it, we are more aware. As we become more aware, employers begin to realise the impact that poor mental health has on their employees and in turn, their wellbeing and productivity.

Government employment mental health review

At the beginning of 2017, the Prime Minister requested an independent review into how employers can better support the health of all people currently in employment including those with mental health problems or poor well-being to remain in and thrive through work.

Various recommendations were made for employers in the outcome of the [review](#) including:

- 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
- Promote effective people management
- Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

In 2018, the Health and Safety Executive recognised the recommendations and enhanced their first aid guidance to include mental health.

Tips for implementing Mental Health First Aiders into your business

One way in which employers can support their workforce when it comes to mental health is by introducing Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs).

Mental Health First Aiders are taught how to spot the symptoms of mental ill health and provide help on a first aid basis.

Employers have certain responsibilities to their workforce and are liable for the actions of employees in certain circumstances. It is, therefore, important to set clear boundaries and guidelines for MHFAs to be effectively implemented within your organisation.

Some top tips:

- Use an application framework to appoint MHFAs.
- Ensure you use a recognised training provider for courses.
- Check your company's insurance policies. You may need to let them know you have MHFAs in place.
- Implement effective policies. Set clear expectations and boundaries for MHFAs. These could be extended to include physical, financial and emotional wellbeing.
- Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

- Ensure a healthy work-life balance.

How can the introduction of Mental Health Aiders help your business?

The implementation of MHFAs has proven to positively impact a business in a wide variety of ways:

- Cut sickness absence
- Retain skills by reducing staff turnover
- Reduce presenteeism
- Demonstrate commitment to CSR
- Decrease likelihood of grievance and discrimination claims
- Ensure compliance with legislation
- Create a healthier workplace
- Improve staff morale
- Provide better customer service
- Increase engagement and commitment from staff
- Make your workplace a great place to work!

World Mental Health Day 2020

World Mental Health Day falls on 10 October every year. The objective is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world, mobilizing efforts in support of mental health.

This could be a great time to highlight the support that is available to your employees from a variety of sources, and encourage a workplace culture that enables people to raise concerns and seek support.

According to research carried out by Mind with over 16,000 people, more than half of adults (60%) and over two thirds of young people (68%) have said their mental health got worse during lockdown. Mind say that many have developed new mental health problems as a result of the pandemic and, for some, existing mental health problems have got worse.

Need further advice?

If you would like advice and assistance about the role of MHFAs, your obligations towards employees who are experiencing mental health issues, or help in dealing with mental health-related absence, performance or capability issues, please do not hesitate to contact our Employment solicitors on [01202 786183](tel:01202786183) or email online.enquiries@LA-law.com.