

## How to identify if someone in the workplace is struggling with their Mental Health

This is a sensitive subject for many. However, we know that talking about mental health in the same way we do physical health, helps to reduce the stigma which is still attached to it.

There are many things out there to support this for example MHFA England, the Mental Health Foundation, Mind and many other. Throughout the year there are specific events focusing on mental health such as Mental Health Awareness week. Information is much more readily available than it was some years ago and organisations are doing all they can to make it “normal” for people to speak openly about their mental health.

Despite all this, there is still reluctance to talk openly about mental health. In the workplace, staff would much rather ring in sick with a physical illness than a mental illness because they feel they may be judged unfairly when it comes to work progression, and this is an issue for many managers who may themselves feel uncomfortable about the subject.

We all know that wellbeing is good for business. Practical mental health skills and awareness training is a key component for creating a safe, healthy workplace where the mental health and physical health of employees are valued equally. It gives people the tools to support their own mental health and that of their colleagues, and encourages them to access timely support when needed.

We all have mental health just as we have physical health, but it can seem more difficult to spot the signs of mental ill health. Here are some of the common triggers which might impact on someone’s mental health and signs that suggest they may need support.

### Triggers

People often undergo significant life changes without developing a mental health issue. But for some people changes in their work or personal life, including happy events, can prove stressful and may trigger mental ill health.

Here are some examples of circumstances which might trigger mental ill health:

#### Personal life changes

Bereavement  
Relationship breakdown  
Having Children  
Health scares or physical illness

#### Changes at work

Starting a new job  
Coping with a new job or additional work load  
Poor relationships within the team or with managers  
Redundancy or fear of redundancy

Since last March, we have all been living with and trying to “manage” the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic professionals have noticed a sharp rise in the referrals for mental health issues and also, the increase in the diagnosis of mental illnesses which have either developed during this time, or for those living with existing mental illnesses, they have found their symptoms have been exacerbated.

## Signs to spot

Recognising a mental health issue is the first step in getting the support needed to recover. One of the first signs of mental ill health may be changes in the person’s behaviour.

Some of the signs to look out for include:

### Emotional and behavioural

- Irritability, aggression or tearfulness
- Being withdrawn, not participating in conversations or social activities
- Increased arguments or conflict with others
- Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes or sedatives
- Indecision, inability to concentrate
- Erratic or socially unacceptable behaviour
- Being louder or more exuberant than usual
- Loss of confidence
- Difficulty remembering things
- Loss of humour

### Physical

- Frequent headaches or stomach upsets
- Suffering from frequent minor illnesses
- Difficulty sleeping or constant tiredness
- Being run down
- Lack of care over appearance
- Sudden weight loss or gain

## At work

Look out for these signs that an employee may need more support in the workplace:

- Increased errors, missing deadlines or forgetting tasks
- Taking on too much work and volunteering for every new project
- An employee who is normally punctual arriving late
- Working too many hours: first in, last out, sending emails out of hours or while on leave
- Increased sickness absence
- Negative changes to ways of working or socialising with colleagues

Despite all this, it is still isn’t always easy to spot when someone is struggling because many people mask their mental health by talking about physical health, simply because for some it seems more acceptable. By working together, by having Mental Health First Aiders, Metal Health Champions within the work place and accessible ways of contacting them goes a long way to help and support all staff and managers.

## How can Care first help?

If you feel you may need some emotional or practical support, you can contact Care first on the Freephone number. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. Whilst our BACP accredited Counsellors are available 24/7 to provide support with emotional issues, our expertly trained Information Specialists are available 8am-8pm Monday-Friday to provide advice on any practical issues that may be causing you a stress or worry and help you feel more in control of a situation.

All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

## More Information

If you would like to view the Webinar on **'How to identify if someone in the Workplace is struggling with their Mental Health'** this is being delivered live on **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June at 12pm**, please use the below link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/299468899914617100>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.