

# THE J:ALT TOOLKIT

**JUST:  
ASK, LISTEN,  
TALK.**

**HELPING EMPLOYERS  
IMPROVE WORKPLACE  
MENTAL HEALTH**


**KEEPING YOUR WORKFORCE  
MENTALLY HEALTHY  
YOUR BUSINESS**

**IS**  
....

**A mentally healthy workplace**

**Struggling at work due to mental health issues**

**Off sick with mental health issues**



## Important information for Employers

The information provided in this toolkit is intended to supplement and not replace any other support mechanisms available within your organisation to support people with mental health issues in the workplace. This includes:

- People policies and procedures
- Human resources
- Occupation Health provision
- Union representation

We advise that any, or all of the above support mechanisms should be consulted when positive action is required to support people in the workplace.

The Just: Ask, Listen, Talk Toolkit is the intellectual property of the Just: Ask, Listen, Talk (JALT) team and can be shared for the purpose of non-commercial and educational purpose. It must not be altered in any way without permission from the JALT team. We have made every effort to ensure accuracy and reliability of the information provided at the time of publication. The information provided in this toolkit must not be used to support legal action and we do not accept any responsibility for negative outcomes resulting from the use of this information.

Revision 3. First Published May 2019

## INTRODUCTION: JUST: ASK, LISTEN, TALK

The **just: ASK, LISTEN, TALK (j:ALT)** toolkit offers straightforward no cost solutions to help you make a positive difference to your business in managing mental health in the workplace.

Using this toolkit shows your commitment to joining the growing band of employers who are willing to **just: ASK, LISTEN, TALK** about mental health with their employees. You understand it's good for business to make it your business, to create and sustain a mentally healthy workplace.

You may have already tried to wade your way through the substantial body of information that outlines the legislative, moral and economic context for mental health at work. External website addresses are referenced throughout the toolkit, if you want to read more.

The **j:ALT toolkit** doesn't replace existing information. It offers quick, down-to-earth suggestions over three work-related areas and signposts you to practical resources.

Putting the toolkit suggestions in place has the potential to bring immediate benefits to you and your employees. Build your skills and knowledge to create a mentally healthy work place.

Most importantly, you don't have to put **j:ALT** practices into place on your own. We've included contact details for key organisations in Fife who are willing to come to your workplace, at your convenience and provide free advice and practical solutions for you and your employees on how to start to **just: ASK LISTEN TALK** about mental health at work.

Sign up to Fife's **just: ASK LISTEN TALK** pledge. (More information on **Section 3 Page 28**)

The **just: ASK, LISTEN, TALK** toolkit has been produced in consultation with small to medium businesses in Fife and people with lived experience of mental health issues.

We all have mental health. The toolkit encourages all workplaces to put in place **j:ALT** solutions to protect the mental wellbeing of their employees.

In addition to the information in the toolkit, an **Employer Guide to Support for Mental Health in the Workplace** can be found at [www.opportunitiesfife.org/media/1390/employer-guide-to-mental-health-services-final.pdf](http://www.opportunitiesfife.org/media/1390/employer-guide-to-mental-health-services-final.pdf). This provides contact details of organisations in Fife who can help you and your workforce improve mental health at work.

The development and design of the **j:ALT toolkit** was funded through Delivering Differently, a programme that aims to improve employment outcomes for people in Fife who experience issues related to their mental health.

Fife Council's Supported Employment Service and Fife's Health Promotion Service Workplace Team worked together to produce the toolkit.

We have referenced sites and identified organisations that we have found most useful in the development of the toolkit. The toolkit is designed to provide helpful information on the subjects discussed. References are provided for information purposes only and do not constitute endorsement of any websites or services.



**GO STRAIGHT TO THE SECTION MOST USEFUL TO YOU ...  
BUT WE RECOMMEND YOU READ THE WHOLE TOOLKIT**

### The sections are

#### **Section 1: Off sick with mental health issues**

Staff sickness absence is a significant cost to your business. We offer guidance on your first contact with staff who are off sick due mental health issues and what you can do to help them get back to work sooner.

**Page 6**

#### **Section 2: Struggling at work due to mental health issues**

Ignoring staff who are showing signs they might be experiencing mental health issues is not the right thing to do. Take the time to talk with employees at work and put in place adjustments or accommodations to help them stay in work.

**Page 20**

#### **Section 3: A mentally healthy workplace**

The **just: ASK, LISTEN, TALK** pledge can be tailored for your business. A **j:ALT** pledge lets your employees know you offer a safe workplace to have frank discussions when they need to talk about their mental health.

**Page 28**



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Having a mentally healthy workplace is the best way to reduce sickness absence due to mental health issues. It improves how you and your staff view mental health at work and helps people have sensitive conversations about their health when the need arises. Find out if you have a mentally healthy workplace by reading **Section 3 pages 28-36**.

**Section 2 page 20** aims to increase your confidence to **just ask, listen and talk** about mental health issues when staff are at work.

This section gives you guidance on opening up lines of communication with staff who are off sick due to poor mental health and supporting them back to work.

Has it happened to you?

It's possible you've already had staff off sick or who have left the business due to their experience of mental health issues.

Whilst some people may disclose they are struggling with poor mental health, most people are very reluctant to talk about the difficulties they are experiencing or ask for support. And many people would rather resign or not return to work than face the stigma of being labelled as having mental health issues in the workplace.

A recent NHS investigation shows that at least one third of sickness absences lasting longer than five days are due to mental health issues. Other studies show that at least 12% of all absences are due to mental health issues.

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## SUPPORTING STAFF WHO ARE OFF SICK

An absence management policy is a framework to help employers support staff who are off sick. It will include procedures for the notification and certification of absence, and how to manage people when they're off sick. Go to **Section 3 page 30** for information on organisations that offer guidance on absence management policies and procedures.

### Sickness absence due to poor mental health

Despite any concerns you or your employee may have **asking, listening and talking** about sickness related to poor mental health, leaving things as they are and hoping for the best isn't the right option.

Putting in place a culture that encourages difficult or sensitive conversations, begins long before people are off sick. Let all your staff know to expect a contact when they are off sick. Doing this when they are at work and well, makes it less likely to be perceived as invasive if they know beforehand it will happen. This could be referred to as a sickness contact protocol or you could make it part of your **j:ALT** pledge (more about the pledge on **Section 3 page 28**).

Contacting staff when they are off sick should send the message you value and support them during difficult times.

Building a mentally healthy workplace helps you get people back to work sooner. **Section 3 on Page 29** highlights the six building blocks of a mentally healthy workplace.

## LOCAL SUPPORT WHEN STAFF ARE OFF SICK



### Supported Employment Service

Helping Fife's businesses break the cycle of sickness absence

Practical support for employees struggling at work or off work due to sickness

Information and training on Equality Legislation

Equality & diversity awareness training for staff

**sw.ses@fife.gov.uk**

**01592 583142**

# FIRST CONTACT

The first contact with your employee when they are off sick should help you find out:

Reason for absence ..... **page 11**

Duration of absence ..... **page 12**

Medical support or treatment ..... **page 13**

Support you can provide ..... **page 14**



# REASON FOR ABSENCE

**Information on work-related stress absence is on page 17**

Employees are unlikely to disclose they have a mental illness or mental health issue. It's more likely people will say they're off due to:

- **Family or personal issues**
- **Traumas such as bereavement, specified illness, accident or family separation**

Compassionate, parental and family leave can provide time off that helps employees manage personal crisis situations and averts sickness absence.

However, regardless of the reason for absence, personal or family difficulties might not be resolved or concluded quickly. The pressures of dealing with these difficulties and trying to return to work can feel like being **“between a rock and a hard place.”** Left unsupported, this can seriously affect employees’ mental health and may result in a longer period of absence.

You can’t force people to disclose detailed information about their personal or family concerns. Making contact to let your employee know you want to help may be the first step towards a more open discussion about the difficulties they are experiencing and working out what you can do to support them back to work.

## DURATION OF ABSENCE

People who are off sick due to illnesses such as colds, infections or physical injury, are usually able to estimate a likely return to work date.

People off sick as a result of poor mental health or mental illness might find it difficult to specify a return to work date.

Mental health issues may result in short term, long term, temporary or permanent absence and affects everyone differently. Factors such as lifestyle, physical health, personal situation, living environment, work concerns and family responsibilities all impact on people's resilience and ability to recover from poor mental health.



## MEDICAL SUPPORT OR TREATMENT

We all have mental health. It's very likely we'll all experience poor mental health on occasion.

Whilst it's important to ask your staff whether they are receiving medical support or treatment, it's worth noting that many people experiencing mental health issues may be reluctant to seek medical intervention through fear of being stigmatised or discriminated against. Receiving treatment or support is not an indicator of the severity of someone's poor mental health nor does it provide any indication of when they are likely to return to work.

On the other hand, many people who have mental health conditions who receive treatment and support cope very well day to day. And most people will manage periods of poor mental health on their own or just with the support of family and friends.

It's a complex landscape. The best you can do is ask the question. Having this conversation might help your employee think about whether or not they need additional support.

Employees can be directed to the organisations listed on **page 9** for additional support.





## SUPPORT YOU CAN PROVIDE

Make sure your employee knows their reason for absence is strictly confidential and on a need to know basis. This reassurance gives all your staff confidence that if they are off due to poor mental health in the future, it won't be a topic for office chatter or speculation. Ask your employee if there's anything they feel you can do and be guided by how your employee responds. Feel free to provide suggestions about adjustments or accommodations that might lead to a return to work such as:

**Arranging a face to face meeting** to **just: ASK LISTEN TALK** in more detail about the issues and attempt to find solutions that can achieve a return to work.

**Minor adjustments in hours or duties** such as starting later or finishing earlier or temporary workload reductions might be all it takes to give employees the flexibility they need to deal with personal or family issues and feel able to return to work sooner.

### **The outcome of your first contact conversation might be:**

A return to work with accommodations or adjustments go to **Section 2 page 18 & page 26**

or

Long term sickness absence go to **page 16**

# #TIMETOTALK

**THROUGH TALKING AND  
LISTENING , YOU HAVE THE  
POWER TO GIVE SOMEONE  
BACK THEIR WORTH**

**BEING ABLE TO  
TALK ABOUT MY  
MENTAL HEALTH  
MAKES ME FEEL LIKE  
I'M NOT ALONE IN  
THIS WORLD**

*Mental illness  
is nothing to be  
ashamed of neither  
is talking about it*

**If we all talked about  
it, people with mental  
health problems  
would feel a lot more  
comfortable.**

# LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE (MORE THAN ONE WEEK)

Employees may need a longer period off work despite your initial efforts to provide support at the start of their sickness absence. Good absence management policies encourage you and your employee to maintain regular contact by telephone, face to face, email - whatever suits your employee or meets the policy expectations **(go to Section 3 page 30)**.

People experiencing mental health issues may think, behave and act differently than before. Their mood, sleep, appetite and day to day ability to function might be affected. They may feel vulnerable, worthless, angry, isolated and possibly guilty at being off work.

Handle communication sensitively by thinking about how your employee is feeling. Keeping in regular contact allows them to talk about their concerns, lets you find out how they are doing and helps you keep up to date on any treatment or support they are receiving. When your employee is feeling more resilient, you should focus your discussions on adjustments or accommodations that can be put in place to support a return to work.

Information on sites and tools you can use during sickness absence and to support a return to work are on **page 18 & 19**



# WORK-RELATED STRESS SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognise stress as a health and safety risk in the workplace. When work-related stress absence is shown to be a consequence of poor mentally healthy work practices it may become a legal requirement to take action that reduces the stress risks.

However, you and your employee may find it difficult to specify whether poor work practices have resulted in an employee's mental health issues, or whether their mental health issues have affected their ability to cope at work, particularly during times of change or conflict.

People's ability to sustain good mental health relies on a number of variables such as lifestyle, age, physical health, circumstances, family situation, finances and so on. And dealing with difficult personal or family situations whilst trying to hold down a job can negatively impact on staff's resilience at work.

A stress questionnaire focuses on key factors associated with mentally healthy work practices. It might help your employee pinpoint the stress factors in the workplace that may led to work-related stress. It can be completed before or during sickness absence.

A mentally healthy workplace recognises stress as a health and safety risk and benefits from:

- Reduced work-related stress absence

and

- An increase in the number of people returning to work sooner who have been absent due to work-related stress

Go to **Section 3 page 28** to learn more about a mentally health workplace and **page 19** for site links that offer guidance on work-related stress.

## RETURN TO WORK

Keeping in regular contact with your employee during their absence involves them in discussions about what you can do to support their return to work, before they return to work.

In this way, although the first day back can be daunting, your employee is likely to feel less anxious about the support they will be provided with to help them return to work normality.

Accommodations or adjustments should be discussed and agreed before your employee returns to work (**useful sites page 19 & Section 2 page 26**).

Arrange a meeting on the first day. If you're not around at the start of their day, ask a close colleague to provide a fuss-free welcome back.

A quick first meeting helps you gauge how your employee is feeling, lets them know you're glad to see them back and allows both of you to discuss the support in place.

It's good practice to arrange additional meetings over the coming weeks to give your employee the chance to talk about how they are coping at work and discuss reductions or increases to the support that's in place. Tools you can use to support employees return to work include:

**Wellness Action Plan:** Set headings show what keeps the person well at work through flexible working and/or reasonable adjustments (**useful sites page 19**).

**Stress or Return to Work Questionnaire:** these are completed by employees and focus on workplace stress factors rather than personal or family matters that have resulted in poor mental health (**useful sites page 19**).

## USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.hse.gov.uk/stress](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress)

[www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/workplace-mental-health/supporting-employees-mental-health/managing-time-off](http://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/workplace-mental-health/supporting-employees-mental-health/managing-time-off)

[www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1900](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1900)

[www.mind.org.uk/workplace/](http://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/)

[www.seemescotland.org/workplace](http://www.seemescotland.org/workplace)

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week)

**Mates in Mind** is a leading UK charity enabling organisations to provide a positive mental health environment for their employees and educating individuals to better support themselves and others.

**Phone:** 020 3510 5018 **Email:** [support@matesinmind.org](mailto:support@matesinmind.org)

[www.matesinmind.org](http://www.matesinmind.org) [@matesinmind](https://twitter.com/matesinmind) [/Matesinmind](https://www.facebook.com/Matesinmind)





## SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

Having a mentally healthy workplace is the best way to reduce the number of employees who may be struggling at work due to mental health issues. It improves how you and your staff view mental health at work and helps people have sensitive conversations about their health when the need arises. Find out if you have a mentally healthy workplace in **Section 3 page 28-36**.

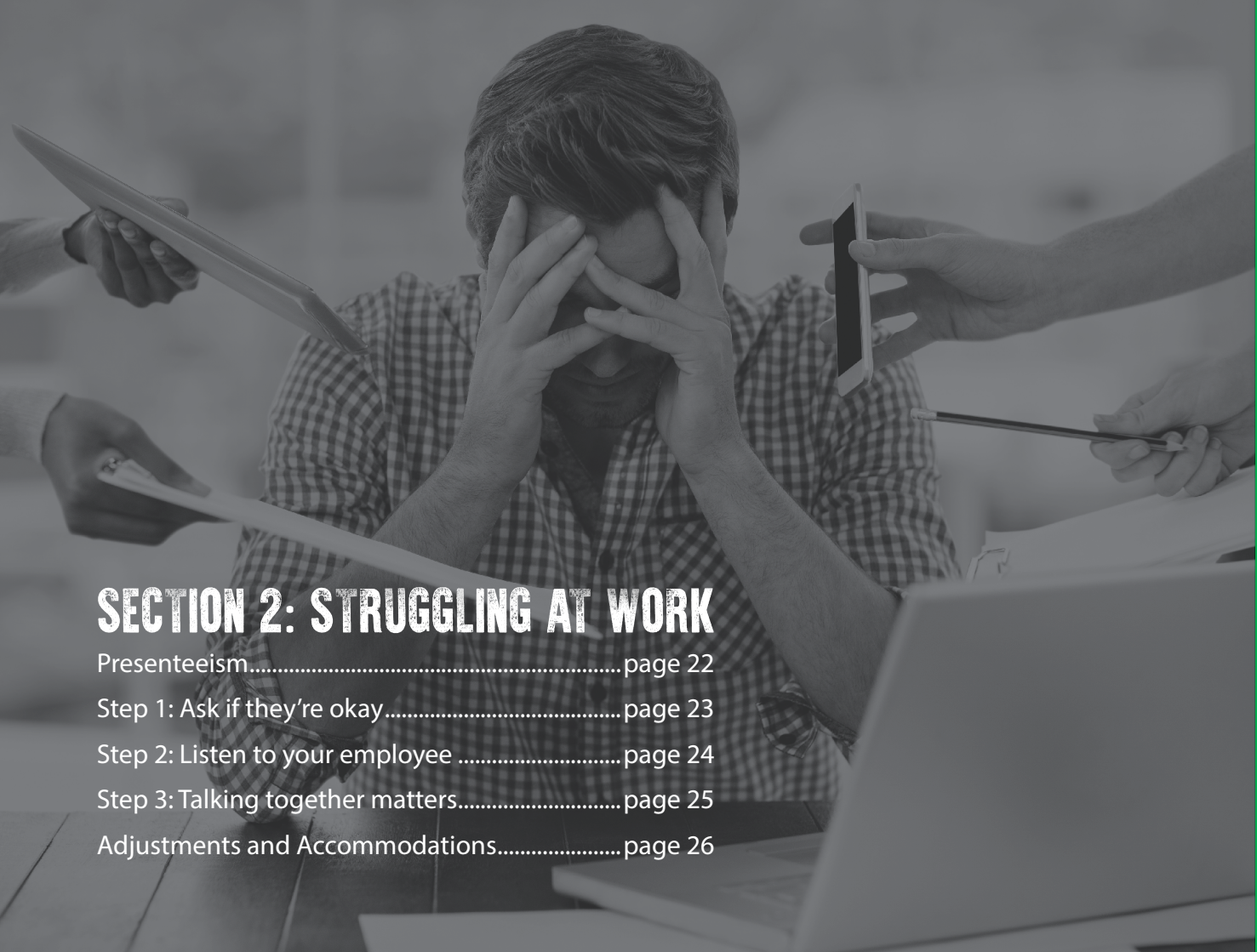
**Section 1 Page 6** gives guidance on **asking about, listening to and talking** with staff who are off sick due to poor mental health and supporting them back to work.

This section aims to increase your confidence **asking, listening and talking** about mental health issues when staff are at work.

There is an abundance of up to date information about poor mental health in the workplace. You'll find statistical references in many of the sites listed in the toolkit. In general, it's worth knowing

**most of your employees are unlikely to disclose they are experiencing mental health issues; men are less likely to talk about their mental health than women; suicide is the leading cause of death among young people age 20-34 years and people who die from suicide are not usually in contact with health services, often pushing on in silence as their ability to cope deteriorates.**

Getting to know your employees means you're more likely to notice the signs of poor mental health. It also helps your staff feel more comfortable speaking to you about their mental health when they need to.



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## PRESENTEEISM

Presenteeism is a term used to describe people who continue to work when they are unwell and is often associated with people who experience mental health issues.

High employment rates mean more adults are in work than not in work. Therefore, workplaces have a crucial role in reaching out to people who might be struggling with their mental health. Staff experiencing poor mental health may start to behave or act differently than before. Some of the warning signs include a lack of concentration, less able to cope with change, late starts, talking less or more than normal, finding it difficult to control emotions, becoming irritable, aggressive or disinterested.

**A recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development study highlighted the impact on organisations when people are experiencing mental ill health at work:**

- 37% more likely to get into conflict with colleagues
- 57% find it harder to juggle multiple tasks
- 80% find it difficult to concentrate
- 62% take longer to do tasks
- 50% are potentially less patient with customers/clients.

Noticing the signs of poor mental health is essential for you, your employees and the success of your business.

## STEP 1: ASK IF THEY ARE OKAY

If you schedule regular 1-1 meetings with staff when they are well, it's easier to use these meetings to raise your concerns when staff appear to be struggling.

If regular meetings aren't normal practice, arrange one as soon as possible and make sure it's in a private area of the workplace. Reduce the stress of this situation by offering it as an informal chat at short notice, rather than planning a meeting days in advance. Advanced planning may cause more anxiety for your employee as it makes the meeting seem more official.

Help your employee feel comfortable by letting them know you want to talk about how they're doing at work. Say you've noticed some changes to the way they normally act or behave and give examples. Show you're aware of their usual attributes by making comments such as "you're not your usual cheery self" or "you're normally a great time keeper".

Let your employee know you want to help in any way you can.



## STEP 2: LISTEN TO YOUR EMPLOYEE

Your employee might say nothing or tell you everything is fine. Repeat some of the changes you've noticed in them at work and give reassurance this isn't about their work performance. Ask again if they're okay.

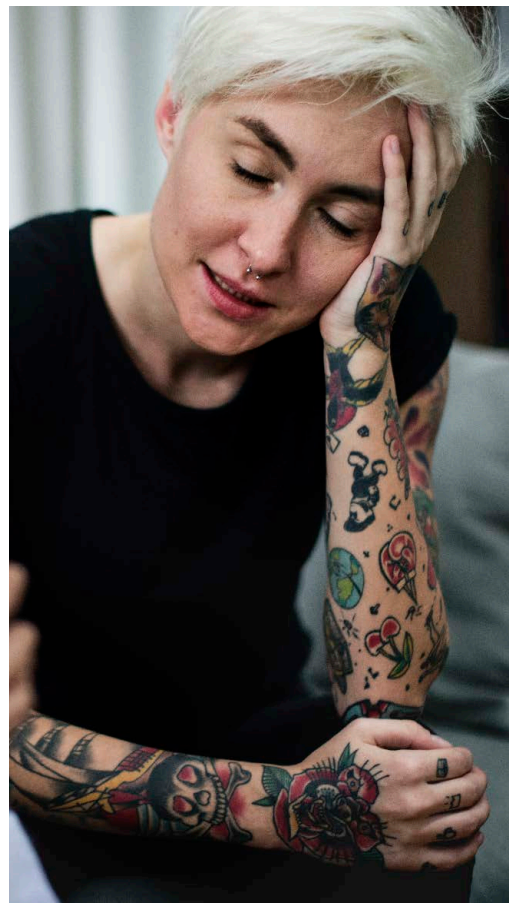
Listening will only happen if your employee feels comfortable enough to talk.

It might be tempting to fill the silence. Don't. Give your employee time to process their thoughts.

Don't force the conversation if your employee is reluctant to speak. Offer an open door if they want to come back to you and check with them a few days later to give them another chance to talk.

When your employee begins to open up about their mental health, don't interrupt. This can be a very difficult conversation for people, so give them the courtesy of time.

Don't think about what you want to say back, and don't pry too much. Wait till your employee has finished speaking.



## STEP 3: TALKING TOGETHER MATTERS

Consider your employee's circumstances, how they feel and how this is affecting them.

- Are they experiencing poor mental health due to work or personal matters or a combination of both?
- Do you both feel the issues are particularly challenging?
- Will they need more than small flexible changes such as change to start or finish times or a few days off?

Consider tools that will help your employee specify in more detail adjustments or accommodations that might help them stay in work. These are outlined in more detail on **page 26**.

Once you've **asked** about, and **listened** to what your employee tells you, start to **talk** about what you can both do to help the situation. And if required, begin to use the tools described in **Section 2 page 18** to agree on adjustments or accommodations that can be offered in the short term or long term to improve their mental health in the workplace.

It's sometimes easier to support people at work than when they are off sick.



## ADJUSTMENTS OR ACCOMMODATIONS

**Go to page 19 for websites that give information about adjustments or accommodations.**

Adjustments and accommodations are usually linked to protocols, the environment or people. And we've listed a few here:

### Protocols

- Offer a more flexible approach to start or finish times and shift patterns
- Allow paid or unpaid leave to attend medical appointments
- Temporarily reallocate some tasks - particularly those that may be causing stress
- Consider the possibility to work from home at times

### Environment

- Offer private space at work, use partitions or allow work away from the main workspace
- Provide seats nearest exits at team meetings - and a protocol for leaving in times of increase anxiety e.g. employee can excuse themselves without question

### People

- Increase frequency of supervision and help people prioritise their workload
- Provide a buddy or mentor or mediation if there have been conflicts or difficulties with colleagues

These are just a few examples of what you can do. Whatever works for your employee, the success of your business and organisational needs is what matters most.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

If you aren't sure what to do, despite **asking about, listening to and talking** with your employee about their mental wellbeing, there are organisations in Fife who can help. Go to [www.opportunitiesfife.org/](http://www.opportunitiesfife.org/) **Employer Guide to Support for Mental Health in the Workplace**

**Mental ill-health is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, costing an average of £1,300 per employee per year**

**95% of employees calling in sick with stress gave a different reason**

## ACCESS TO WORK

Access to Work provides funding that helps people with disabilities, health conditions and mental health issues start or stay in work.

For people with a mental health condition, a support plan can be provided for people who need support to start, remain at or return to work.

Find more information at [www.gov.uk/access-to-work/what-youll-get](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/what-youll-get)

# SECTION 3: INTRODUCTION

Section 1 is about supporting staff off sick with mental health issues

Section 2 is about supporting staff at work who are struggling due to mental health issues

Having a mentally healthy workplace is the best way to reduce sickness absence due to mental health issues and the number of staff struggling at work. This section outlines the six building block all employers should put in place to create and sustain a mentally healthy workplace.

Take the **just: ASK, LISTEN, TALK** pledge now to improve how you and your staff view mental health at work and help your staff have sensitive conversations about their health when the need arises. Small changes can make a big difference.



Supported Employment Service

Email [sw.ses@fife.gov.uk](mailto:sw.ses@fife.gov.uk) and provide the name of your business or organisation and a contact number and we'll send you the **just: ASK, LISTEN, TALK** pledge template.

# SECTION 3: A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE

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Encourage good communication .....page 33

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Support and develop managers and supervisors .....page 35

Monitor employee health and wellbeing.....page 36



## CONTACTS

The Health Promotion Workplace Team provides free advice and on-site practical support across six building blocks to help you create and sustain a mentally healthy workplace.

Contact them at [Fife.hwlfife@nhs.scot](mailto:Fife.hwlfife@nhs.scot)

The team's services include:

- Leaflets, posters and interactive resources on a range of health topics
- Help to put in place a workplace wellbeing programme
- A calendar of health events that is also a useful tool for planning your wellbeing programme
- Campaigns and awareness raising activities linked to mental health and stress in the workplace at [www.hpac.fife.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.hpac.fife.scot.nhs.uk)
- Support to develop policies and staff surveys
- Breaking the stigma of talking about mental health e.g. Have a look at "Ahead for Health" at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABKuz8BCb\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABKuz8BCb_8) and "See Me... Power of Ok" at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC4QzwlmhxQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC4QzwlmhxQ).
- Achieve good work and a good working environment
- Provide free mentally healthy workplace training and a range of training for line managers, supervisors and people who live or work in Fife.
- Put a training programme in place that suits your workplace.
- Develop stress risk assessments and staff surveys

## INTRODUCE A WORKPLACE WELLBEING PROGRAMME

A workplace wellbeing programme is a plan of how you are going to promote health, safety and wellbeing. Encourage buy-in from your staff by asking them to help you develop your workplace wellbeing programme. Your plan might include the offer of health checks for workers or raising awareness of support services. You can encourage good health through topics such as healthy eating, stopping smoking and alcohol awareness. Ask your staff through surveys and health questionnaires what they want to see in your plan.





## RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Promoting awareness of good mental health and how to cope and seek support when staff are experiencing poor mental health are all important ways to show your commitment to a mentally healthy workplace.

Some organisations find it helps to introduce a mental health policy to underline their commitment to supporting mental health in the workplace.

Let your staff know about the Health Scotland online module on Mentally Healthy Workplaces to raise awareness of this topic: [www.elearning.healthscotland.com/course/view.php?id=95](http://www.elearning.healthscotland.com/course/view.php?id=95)

See Me has a free e-learning course on the impact of stigma and discrimination on people with mental health problems in the workplace: [www.seemescotland.org/workplace/training-and-e-learning/](http://www.seemescotland.org/workplace/training-and-e-learning/)



## ENCOURAGE GOOD COMMUNICATION

Good, open conversations and communication is key to a mentally health workplace. This helps foster good workplace relations and makes workers feel supported and able to talk about their mental health.

Think about policies and procedures that can reinforce good communication such as a Mental Health Policy. Talk about Mental Health Awareness Week and mention some of the sites referenced in the toolkit. Build in the expectation of regular work reviews and set appointments to speak with line managers on a 1-1 basis.

Communication shouldn't be restricted to work-related matters. You can lead discussions about your employees' general health and wellbeing through surveys or by offering health assessments. This is a good way of getting staff, line managers and senior managers' sharing common ground and talking in the workplace.



## PROVIDE A GOOD WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Most studies prove that being in work is better for our health and wellbeing than being out of work.

**Unfortunately, not all work is good for us. Up to one-third of jobs fail to lift families out of poverty and increase employees' risk of illness, injury and poor mental health. Unsafe or unhealthy work practices, low pay, zero hour contracts, being subject to bullying, not being valued or listened to and poor management are just some examples of workplaces that impact negatively on people's mental wellbeing.**

Good work provides us with a decent financial reward, social interaction, status, a sense of purpose and self worth.

Good work is embodied within health, safety, wellbeing and people management policy, practice and procedures.

Health and safety risks are minimised, employees are encouraged to take up personal development opportunities and can contribute to workplace decisions and improvements. Employees will be treated with equity and offered guidance and support to deal with childcare, disability, health or personal concerns which all helps people stay in work longer and achieve a healthy work life balance.

## SUPPORT AND DEVELOP MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

If you have management responsibility for staff, congratulations this may be your first step in creating a mentally healthy workplace. Your next step is to encourage all other managers and supervisors in your business or organisation to read this toolkit.

There is no financial cost involved in training and developing your managers or supervisors confidence to deal with mental health in the workplace in a positive manner.

Give your staff time to go to the Health Scotland online module on Mentally Healthy Workplace for more information on this subject: [www.elearning.healthscotland.com/course/view.php?id=95](http://www.elearning.healthscotland.com/course/view.php?id=95)



## MONITOR EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

If you want to create and sustain a mentally healthy workplace, it's important to know how your employees are fairing in relation to their health and wellbeing.

Sickness absence statistics, reasons for absence, health surveys and stress audits are some of the tools you can use to monitor and review health and wellbeing at work.

It is important to review this information to see how the work you are doing to create a mentally healthy workplace is going, and to identify any key areas you would like to focus on.

A staff survey or health needs assessment is a good way of getting some feedback from workers. Carrying out a stress risk audit is a key way of assessing and managing the risk of stress.

A number of tools exist to support with this, for example the HSE Talking Toolkit go to [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/stress-talking-toolkit.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/stress-talking-toolkit.pdf)

Or

Work Positive audit tool

[www.surveys.healthyworkinglives.com/workPositive/whatIsWorkPositive.asp.issue](http://www.surveys.healthyworkinglives.com/workPositive/whatIsWorkPositive.asp.issue)



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## EMPLOYERS QUOTES



This kind of toolkit is exactly what we would utilise to signpost and support our staff more effectively. Many employers like us, are happy enough to talk with our staff and vice versa, but telling them where to go or what might be best support wise is a different case. We've seen the difference of having open communication with staff about mental health- it's made us more approachable and able to resolve issues regarding mental health.



We know for a fact that staff have cited other physical reasons for absences because they feel unable to talk openly about the real reason- mental health. It would be a positive step to be able to promote a mentally healthy workplace and encourage open and candid conversations about it. Normalising this type of conversation and promoting good mental health practices frequently amongst staff would probably encourage employees to feel more able to approach us when they aren't feeling great.



I don't have any issues speaking to my staff and asking them if they're alright... but I know not all managers feel able to do that. Actually asking someone outright if everything is okay when you sense it might not be, could mean the world to someone at work. If changes can be made that are going to help employer and employees when people aren't doing well, why wouldn't you ask the question?

## EMPLOYEES QUOTES



I have generalised anxiety which is exacerbated by situations such as busy times at work and new experiences or training. I really rely on my management being aware of that during these times and supporting me through it. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to continue in my work.



My main issue regarding the support of my mental health at work is trust and confidentiality. If I don't have that with a manager then I'm not able to discuss any issues I'm having.



Its all very well corporate management and upper level management understanding mental health and the strategies around it but it's front line management that are managing staff that need to understand mental health and supporting those with issues. If they understood these issues better, they could have supported me before I felt like I was going to have to be off work unwell.



I need my employer to listen. Listening is the most important thing for me. If I know my employer is taking on board what I'm saying, I feel that they'll know better how to support me.



**MAKE AN  
EFFORT TO...**

**J:ALT**

**create & sustain a mentally healthy workplace**

**Fife Health  
& Social Care  
Partnership**



**Health Promotion Service  
Workplace Team**

**PROVIDE A  
SPACE TO...**

**J:ALT**

**when your employee is struggling at work**



**Supported  
Employment  
Service**

**TAKE THE  
TIME TO...**

**J:ALT**

**when your employee is off sick**