Mental health and the workplace: understanding where we are now and how to respond

Emma Mamo
Head of Workplace Wellbeing
mind.org.uk/work
We're Mind, the mental health charity

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.
Current picture
The impact of COVID-19 on us all

- Outbreak cuts across all areas of wellbeing – physical, mental, social and financial
- Impact on individuals – different for everyone (most likely in multiple ways and at different times)
- Impact on mental health – health anxiety, uncertainty, isolation, limiting our access to the things that keep us well, bereavement, trauma
Headlines from our survey

60% of adults and 68% of young people said their mental health got worse during lockdown.

Parents and BAME respondents were more affected by concerns about work.

Women were disproportionately affected by coronavirus restrictions.

People felt their issues were not serious enough to seek help.

More people were drinking alcohol and eating too much/too little to cope.

18-24 year olds used more negative coping strategies and are struggling to access support.
### Other key considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Concerns</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unequal impact</td>
<td>Some groups have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caring responsibilities</td>
<td>People who have children have had additional burdens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shielded group</td>
<td>Impact of stricter restrictions on their lives, isolation and health anxiety</td>
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<td>Cultural differences</td>
<td>Mental health is not openly talked about in some communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>What happens next</td>
<td>Recovery/rebuilding phase – opportunity for a reset?</td>
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Other key events

• School results
• NHS on pause
• Murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter movement
• Brexit
• Transphobia, Government policy and media coverage
• Climate change
Supporting your people
Guiding principles

- **Wellbeing** – needs to be the priority, need to understand people’s individual circumstances
- **Clarity** – priorities, policies, processes, focus on simplification
- **Community** – regular updates, two-way dialogue, social connection
- **Reflective** – take stock, ‘test and learn’, seek feedback
Wellness Action Plans

Our tool helps develop a tailored action plan for:

- what keeps you well at work
- triggers and early warning signs
- impact of mental health problems on performance
- steps you and your line manager could take
- steps you can take yourself
### Employees who are key workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Solution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to COVID-19</td>
<td>Ensure adequate safety measures are in place and clearly communicated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exposure to trauma</td>
<td>Ensure appropriate support is available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenging situations</td>
<td>Encourage peer support and debriefing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact on resilience</td>
<td>Encourage self-care – before, during and at the end of a shift</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burn-out</td>
<td>Manage staffing levels and have regular check-ins</td>
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# Employees who are WFH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘Always on’</td>
<td>Support clear boundaries for the working day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘System overload’</td>
<td>Agree ways of working including systems and platforms to be used, manage email traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to support</td>
<td>Schedule regular check-ins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burn-out</td>
<td>Clarity about priorities and offer flexibility especially for working parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Encourage social connection and peer support</td>
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</table>
### Employees who have been furloughed

<table>
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<th>Issue</th>
<th>Solution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition point</td>
<td>Provide reassurance where you can and keep people updated as you prepare to bring them back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reintegration</td>
<td>Carry out wellbeing check-ins and develop return-to-work plans – routine, caring responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact on self-esteem</td>
<td>Be transparent about decision-making process and provide reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of distrust, anger or anxiety</td>
<td>Repair the impact of any decisions or actions taken during lockdown through two-way dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial concerns</td>
<td>Signpost to support available</td>
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Managing change
Guiding principles

• **Ensure wellbeing is a priority** – signpost to internal and external support

• **Demonstrate compassionate leadership** – adopt tailored support and approach for each employee. Ensure employees are appropriately aware of applicable policies and rights

• **Ensure clear communication** – needs to be correct, detailed and streamlined. Ensure the rationale for change is clearly articulated with respect to the reasons for change and what the future state needs to achieve

• **Listen (and respond)** – explore all options and counter-proposals
Taking care of your own mental health
Stress versus pressure

Performance

Level of pressure

minimum

maximum

high

low

boredom

comfort

stretch

strain

maximum performance

crisis
What is it?

The capacity to stay mentally well during difficult times is what we call resilience.

Resilience is something that can change over time and that we, as individuals, have the power to change.

We believe that resilience can be taught, and learned, and that the elements that build resilience can be introduced into everyday life.
Useful tools
Scan your body from head to toe.

Identify any physical signs of stress, such as tense muscles, an upset stomach, or shallow breathing.

Now scan your mind and mood. Notice if you are snappy, easily startled or have racing thoughts.

Look out regularly for your stress signature. The sooner you spot the stress, the sooner you can manage it.
Breathing Window

1. Find a square shape in the room.
2. Trace each line clockwise with your eyes.
3. Take a deep breath in and out as you follow each line.
4. Keep your breathing slow and steady.
5. This improves oxygen flow and will adjust your focus.

Take 90 seconds for YOU
Take one minute for you - tense and relax

5 Inhale and tense one muscle group for five seconds – like your feet, or shoulder muscles.

♂ Exhale and release the tension that’s there, imagining stress leaving your body.

10 Relax for 10 seconds, and move on to the next muscle group, until you’ve worked through your whole body.

♂ When releasing the tension, focus on the changes you feel when the muscle is relaxed.

♂ Finally, tense your entire body and then relax. Take a deep breath and focus on the feeling of ease.
# Finishing work checklist

1. Take a moment to think about today or write down your thoughts
2. Acknowledge three things that were difficult. Purposefully let them go
3. Consider three things that went well. Hold onto them
4. Choose an action that signals the end of your shift or work day
5. Now switch your attention to home
6. How will you rest and recharge?
If you're struggling to switch off...

Is there anything I can do about it?
- Yes: Make a plan, the sooner the better.
- No: Let it go.

If you can't take action now, let it go until you can.

Change focus of attention.
Further support
Useful resources

• Information for **individuals** and **young people**
• Information on **bereavement** and **managing stress**
• Information for **workplaces**
• Toolkits for **employers**

Contact: [work@mind.org.uk](mailto:work@mind.org.uk)
Thank you!

To find out more visit mind.org.uk/workplace

Contact:
work@mind.org.uk
020 8215 2231