Absence Management

How to 10: Support an employee who is experiencing mental health problems
Advice for line managers

Introduction

Shropshire Council recognises that there are many different types of mental health. Problems. Mental Health problems can affect anyone regardless of their job, age, gender or social background. MIND, a leading national mental health charity, provides some useful guidance on types of mental health problems as well as advice on spotting the signs of mental-health. http//www.mind.org.uk.

Mental health problems can seriously affect some peoples' ability to cope with everyday life, including work, while others can effectively manage their condition alongside the demands of a job and their other responsibilities. Managers will not assume that someone will be unable to stay in work if they have a mental health problem.

Stress is often regarded as a mental health problem. In itself, stress is not a medical condition, but it can lead to anxiety and depression. Managing stress effectively is, therefore, an important part of an organisational approach to supporting employees with mental health problems. For more information. Managing Attendance: How to 5. Supporting employees with stress.

Attitudes to mental health problems

People with mental health problems often say that the biggest problem they face is the stigma, rather than their actual condition. This can prevent them from being open about their mental health problems which can delay them getting the support they need.

Managers can help to create an environment where employees feel able to be open about their health by:

- Providing opportunities for employees to discuss their health concerns.

- Making sure employees are aware of Shropshire Councils mental health support services and their approach to making reasonable adjustments so that they know what to expect if they disclose a mental health issue.

- Ensuring that all managers receive training on equality and diversity issues

- Making sure that stigmatising language and banter are not used within the workplace.

What to do in a crisis

It is possible that the employee's health will deteriorate while they are at work. You will need to take action to ensure that they are safe and get the help that they need.

Things to consider include:

- Do not send the employee home alone- if possible, the preferred contact should take them home and stay with them.

- If you cannot get in touch with the preferred contact, you may need to seek urgent medical advice, this may involve ringing for an ambulance to take the employee to the local Accident and Emergency department for assessment/treatment. This may result in admission to hospital.

- Consider the safety of the employee and other colleagues. If there is an immediate danger of the employee harming themselves or others you will need to consider calling for an ambulance. The Human resources team can also provide advice on how you can support an employee who is experiencing a crisis at work

Supporting an employee with a mental health problem

Early intervention can be critical in supporting employees with mental health problems, helping them to stay at or return to work. If an employee tells you they have a mental health problem, or you suspect they do, it is important to talk to them as soon as possible to establish their needs and put the appropriate support in place.
During the discussion with the employee, managers will:

- Explore any work-related issues and how they can be addressed

- Discuss any temporary or permanent changes you can make to the employees working pattern or duties which might help. The effects of a mental health problem may mean that an employee is considered to have a disability. If so, they may be covered by the Equality Act 2010 which places a duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments. The https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers information has some suggestions for temporary or permanent changes which might specifically help employees with mental health problems.

- Ensure the employee is aware of other sources of support that are available. These include, but are not limited to;

  1. Their HR Business Partners and HR Officers
  2. Shropshire Councils Mental Health First Aiders https://staff.shropshire.gov.uk/how-do-i/your-health-and-wellbeing/useful-resource
  3. Referral to Shropshire Councils Occupational Health Service
  4. NOSS confidential counselling service
  5. MIND. https://www.shropshiremind.org/
  6. NHS Primary Care. https://www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk/
  7. For employees about to start work or commence an apprenticeship the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service offers bespoke confidential provision via their Jobcentre Plus Centres for a range of services and support. https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

- Ask the employee who you should contact if there is a crisis at work. This might be a family member, friend or healthcare professional.

- Encourage the employee to see their GP or other healthcare professional, if appropriate

- Make an early or immediate referral to Occupational Health for advice on how to manage mental health problems at work

- Ask the employee whether they would like any information to be shared with colleagues and respect their wishes

The Human Resources Team can provide you with further advice and support on managing an employee with a mental health problem.

Managing sickness absence due to mental health problems

Although many people continue to work whilst experiencing mental health problem, others may need to take time off.

Absences due to mental health problems can sometimes become long-term. Regular discussions between you and the employee, during their absence, can help to support them back to work as soon as they are ready. These discussions should focus on the employees well being and capability. In all cases advice from Shropshire Councils Occupational Health service should be sought as this may be helpful in planning a return to work.