

MOMENTS THAT MATTER: MENTAL HEALTH

In many ways, mental health is just like physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it. Good mental health means being generally able to think, feel and react in the ways that you need and want to live your life. But if you go through a period of poor mental health you might find the ways you're frequently thinking, feeling or reacting become difficult, or even impossible, to cope with. This can feel just as bad as a physical illness, or even worse.

This support document is designed to help raise awareness and to provide useful information to anyone impacted by mental health problems.

What are mental health problems?

There are many different mental health problems. Some of them have similar symptoms, so you may experience the symptoms of more than one mental health problem or be given several diagnoses at once. Or you might not have any diagnosis, but still be finding things very difficult. Everyone's experience is different and can change at different times.

What are the most common conditions?

- Depression
- Post-natal depression (PND)
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Phobias
- Eating problems
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Bipolar Disorder

What should I do if I've noticed changes in the way I feel?

You may want support if you've noticed changes in the way you think or feel which cause problems in your day-to-day life. Seeking help is often the first step towards getting and staying well, but it can be hard to know where to start or where to turn to. It's ok to not be ok.

Tips to help

There are also things you can do to help yourself:

- Build time into your day to stop and relax
- Have a daily routine to keep your mind occupied and focused on healthy thoughts and activities
- Have enough sleep – without regular sleep your mental health can be affected
- Investigate health and wellbeing opportunities and look after your physical and mental health
- Try practicing mindfulness and meditation – it might help you find calmness
- Keep a mood diary – this may help you be more aware of your symptoms and what makes you better and worse
- Make use of the free confidential services available to you from the employee assistance programme, provided by LPF (see page 2)
- Seek support from your GP practice.

How can I offer support to a colleague?

Many people experiencing a mental health problem will speak to friends and family before they speak to a health professional. If someone lets you know that they're experiencing difficult thoughts and feelings, it's common to feel like you don't know what to say – but you don't need any special training to show someone you care about them. Often just being there for someone and doing small things can be really valuable:

- **Listen** – Simply giving someone space to talk, and listening to how they're feeling, can be helpful in itself. If they're finding it difficult, let them know that you're there when they're ready. You could simply ask 'are you ok?'
- **Offer reassurance** – Seeking help can feel lonely, and sometimes scary. You can reassure someone by letting them know that they're not alone, and that you'll be there to help.
- **Stay calm** – Even though it might be upsetting to hear when someone is distressed, try to stay calm. This will help your colleague feel calmer too and show that they can talk to you openly without upsetting you.
- **Be patient** – You might want to know more details about their thoughts and feelings or want them to get help immediately. But it's important to let them set the pace for seeking support themselves.

What other support can managers provide?

- Use regular one-to-ones to discuss any issues or concerns.
- Monitor sickness absence – higher levels of short term, frequent absence may be an early indicator of mental health problems.
- Ensure that your team / colleagues know that it's safe and right to be able to raise concerns with you.

If you need any support dealing with mental health problems, please contact the People and Communications Team.

What can I do if it's an emergency?

If you're concerned someone is not safe, stay with them and immediately call 999. You can also get quick medical advice by calling NHS 111.

If you're not in a situation like this, but you're worried someone you care about may experience a mental health crisis in the future, it's a good idea to make a crisis plan with them to work out what steps you will take to help them in an emergency.

What resources are available to help?

The [NHS](#) has helpful advice and information on mental health.

[Mind](#) provides advice and support for anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

[Mental Health Organisation](#) can help you look after your mental health.

[Mental Health UK](#) provide crucial help and support for those affected by mental health problems.

[SAMH](#) is Scotland's national mental health charity.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – Call confidentially for immediate advice and support on 0800 882 4102. They'll offer one of the following:

- Direct support, advice, or information
- Appointment for telephone or face to face counselling
- Signposting for other advice
- Referral to another agency if required, for example Occupational Health, GP, or Social Services.

Occupational Health (PAM)

You'll need the following access details:

- Username: CEC
- Password: CEC1