Managers lack sufficient training to support staff's post-pandemic mental health

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a stressful and unusual time for everyone, but whilst mental health has been a focus in the general public, the impact it has had on businesses across the UK has often been overlooked.

A well functioning workforce is _essential for the success of a business_. When employees are of good mental wellbeing, they take less days off and function more productively. This saves businesses time, resources and money.

But mental health issues aren't a quick fix, meaning we can expect to continue to see the damage the pandemic has created with regards mental health, way after everything has returned back to normal.

Working days lost due to mental health

No business benefits from its employees being off ill. They lose money and productivity as present employees are stretched to perform additional roles.

But the number of employees having to take time off of work _due to mental health_ reasons has shown a steady increase over the past three years. Predominantly due to stress, depression and anxiety, the number of _working_

days lost pre-pandemic was 45%.

Post-pandemic this figure has _risen to 51%._ This means that mental health has now become the leading cause of working days lost in a business year. And this is during a time of people working from home and not necessarily 'officially' having to take time off.

As things return to normal and employees return to the workplace environment, these mental health issues won't simply disappear. There will be stresses due to business recovery post-pandemic, readjusting to routines, and the fear of whether or not it is 'safe'.

As a result, it can only be predicted that this percentage of working days lost due to mental health will increase even further in 2021.

Why the increase?

Despite the obvious anxiety which comes with a global pandemic due to health concerns, there are a number of other factors that have affected employees during this difficult time.

Many companies have adjusted to working from home, but this can make it more difficult to maintain a healthy work life balance. Working days no longer cease the moment you leave the office, and instead employees have stated they often work many more hours than required.

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This has led to an 'always on' culture, meaning that employees are no longer getting the time to recharge and reset before starting work the next day. This can easily lead to poor sleep patterns, lack of leisure time and out of sync eating habits, all of which are key to mental health issues.

Furthermore, working from home means employees no longer enjoy the interaction they once received whilst attending the office. We often spend more time with our colleagues than we do our spouses, so having these connections broken on top of isolation from family and friends has also left many in the population feeling alone.

Managers need the right training

In a recent survey, 44% of employees said they would feel comfortable disclosing mental health issues to an employee or manager and whilst ideally

this percentage would be much higher, it does highlight that people are not afraid to ask for help.

So, why are the rates of mental health issues in the workplace still rising? Consulting your manager for mental health guidance is only effective if their advice is correct and actionable. Around 69% of line managers stated they believe supporting employee mental wellbeing is essential to the role, but only 13% of line managers had received official mental health first aid training.

This leaves a huge number of line managers unequipped to deal with employee wellbeing professionally and dramatically highlights a shortfall. Around a third (35%) of line managers stated that they desired some form of formal training to better equip themselves for deadlines with the mental health of employees.

By training managers properly, mental health can be addressed proactively, helping to reduce the number of days taken off due to stress, anxiety and depression. This keeps employees functioning productive and ultimately helps businesses save money and make more profit.

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