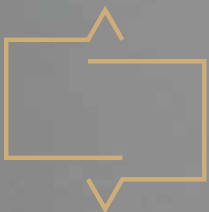
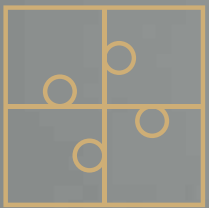


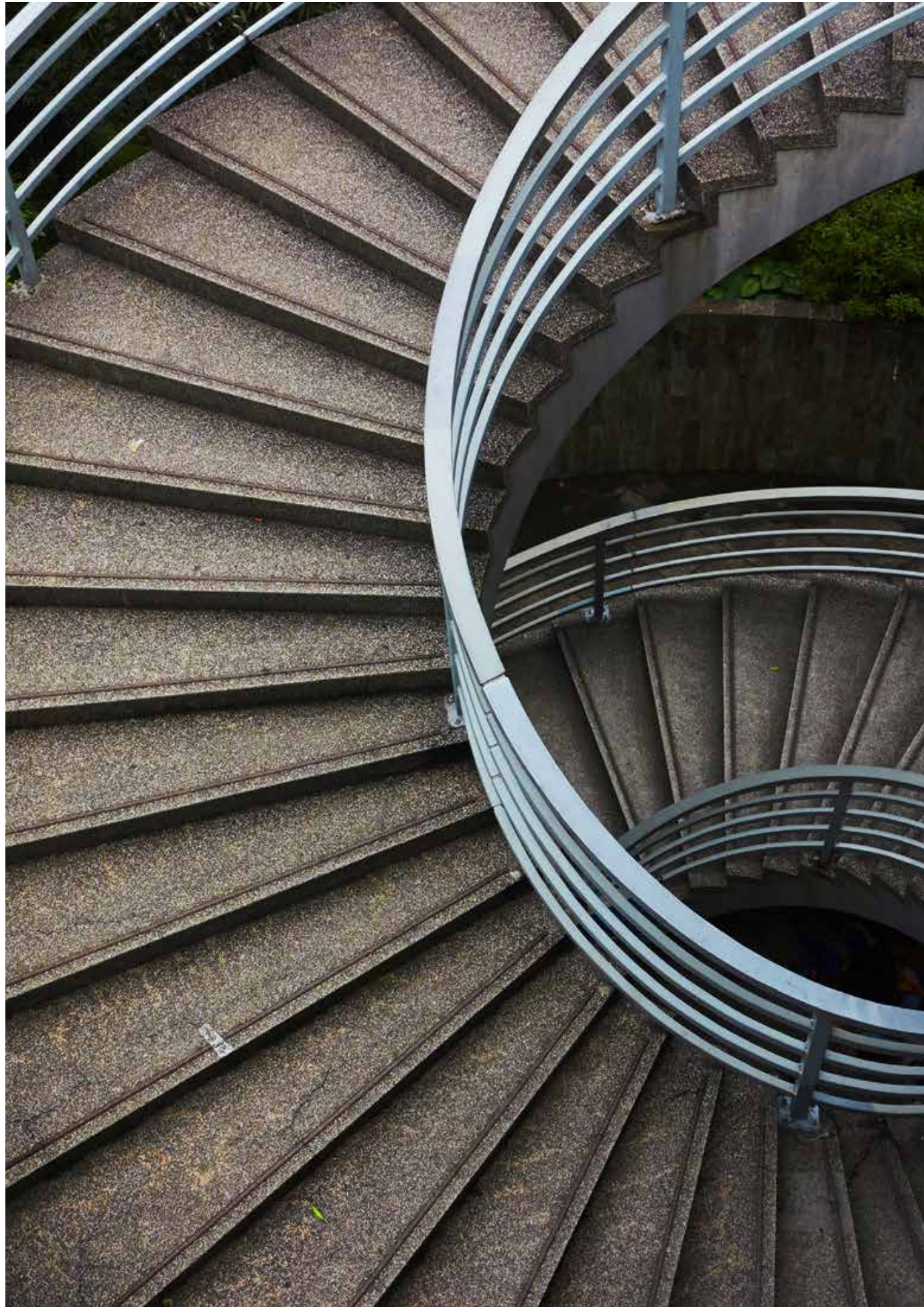
BADENOCH
+ CLARK

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

MENTAL HEALTH
& THE FAILINGS OF
THE UK WORKPLACE

badenochandclark.com





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Taboo or tabloid fodder. For much of history, the subject of mental health has been avoided, shied away from, brushed under carpets, or treated as altogether 'other'. In Victorian times the afflicted were little more than the damned, but have our attitudes over the years changed to reflect 21st century progress, or have outdated paradigms endured? In many ways our society has made leaps and bounds in the right direction, and yet mental health is still the poor cousin of tangible, touchable, physical illness. The imbalance is not only threatening our wellbeing, but the very fabric of our economy. Because despite our progress, working environments are not always the most inclusive environments – and where people don't feel accepted, supported, or 'part of the fabric', productivity is usually the first thing to take a hit. Which is not something any organisation can take in its stride in today's turbulent times.

According to the ONS Labour Force Survey, the total number of cases of work related stress, depression or anxiety in 2015/16 was 488,000. The total number of working days lost due to these conditions in that same period was 11.7 million – equating to an average of 23.9 days per case¹. If one quarter of your workforce buckled under the pressure of mental illness – that's the proportion of UK adults

expected to suffer with poor mental health during their lifetime² – and you didn't have adequate support systems in place, could your business survive such a substantial loss of time and productivity? Furthermore, the Centre for Mental Health suggests that the financial cost to UK business is a sizeable £26 billion a year – but that improving the management of mental health in the workplace could reduce the cost of lost productivity and staff turnover by 30%³.

But the problem could be even worse than we thought: according to a damning new report commissioned by Prime Minister Theresa May, 300,000 people with long-term mental health problems have to leave their jobs each year. The report also claims that poor mental health actually costs employers between £33 billion and £42 billion a year, with an annual cost to the UK economy of between £74 billion and £99 billion – adding further weight to the argument that steps must be taken in UK workplaces, and taken urgently⁴.

The impact on a business can be cataclysmic, but with a little help, and the right support, mental illness doesn't have to stand in the way of employee wellbeing, engagement, or productivity.

11.7 million

Total number of working days lost due to mental health conditions

This equates to an average of 23.9 days per case

£33-£42 billion

a year is the financial cost to UK employers

300,000 people

with long-term mental health problems have to leave their jobs each year



1 in 4

adults will be diagnosed with a mental illness

MENTAL HEALTH: THE LOWDOWN

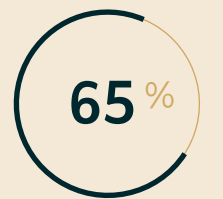
Poor mental health is often categorised as an inability to handle the pressures of everyday life; an inability to work productively; an inability to contribute to a community. In whatever guise it assumes, mental illness prevents its sufferers from reaching their true potential; hampers their zest for life; stifles their professional progress, and makes relationships more challenging than the norm. And unfortunately, it's more common than you might think.

While depression and anxiety are the most common mental health conditions (affecting 65% and 61% of people respectively), the sufferers we spoke to during the research stage of this whitepaper struggled with eating and body image disorders (15%), OCD (13%), self-harming (12%), addiction (11%), phobias (10%), personality disorders (5%), bi-polar disorder (5%), and

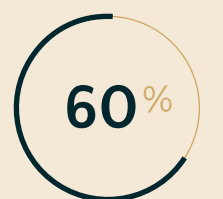
schizophrenia (2%). It's not always clear what causes one person to experience the debilitating effects of mental illness, where others won't: genetics, trauma, lifestyle, environment, biological predisposition, and learned behaviour are just some of the contributing factors. But what is clear is that not enough is being done to accommodate and support sufferers in UK workplaces.

Badenoch & Clark's 'Inspiring Inclusion in the Workplace' whitepaper uncovered real concern around the subject of disability – particularly with regards to mental health⁵. Our research into diversity and inclusion, conducted earlier this year, found that less than half (45%) of people thought their organisation offered an inclusive working environment for those with disabilities – a figure that rose sharply to 65% for those with a mental health disability. That same research also found that 60% of those with a mental health disability have taken pains to hide their condition, compared to 51% with a physical disability.

Research from our 'Inspiring inclusion in the workplace' report:



of those with a mental disability stated that their organisation did not offer an inclusive environment, or that there was more that they could do, in comparison to just 45% of those with a physical disability



of those with a mental disability have taken pains to hide their condition, compared to 51% of those with a physical disability

1. www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress/
 2. www.bbc.com/news/uk-35322354
 3. www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/employment-the-economic-case
 4. www.gov.uk/government/publications/thriving-at-work-a-review-of-mental-health-and-employers

5. www.badenochandclark.com/news-and-insights/inspiring-inclusion



Further research from our ‘Inspiring inclusion in the workplace’ report found that:

“It’s important to understand that your business could be suffering as a result of poor diversity and inclusion practices: 60% of respondents with a disability have experienced bias in comparison to just 35% of those without – with the majority saying it occurred in the workplace. And almost half of those with a disability (48%) have either left a job, or not applied for a role or promotion due to workplace bias, in comparison with just 20% of those who do not have a disability. Unsurprisingly then, 65% of employees with a disability believe their organisations could do more to encourage and embrace diversity and inclusion, against 52% of those without a disability.”

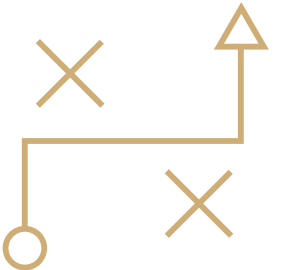
The tides appear to be changing, but with our working lives making up the largest proportion of our waking lives, it’s a change that needs to filter through; to make its way from the headlines of UK broadsheets to the boardrooms of UK business. And it needs to happen far more quickly than developments have in the past.

With such high-profile spokespeople as Princes William and Harry – and even figureheads from the hallowed halls of celebrity, including Lady Gaga, Ruby Wax and Andrew Flintoff – mental health is starting to command attention. Public discussion is helping to break taboos and occasion a change in mind set. People are listening to other’s stories and saying “me too” – and the realisation that they’re not alone, despite too many years of silence, is a breath of fresh air in an otherwise fog-filled vista of ignorance, judgement and misunderstanding. If you’ve never suffered from poor mental health – or known anyone who has – you may be wondering why this matters.

But from a cold, hard business perspective, the implications of taking a ‘head in the sand’ or ‘it doesn’t affect us’ approach can be catastrophic. We’re talking millions of pounds in sick days; poor productivity; reduced engagement; the decay of a positive working environment, and employees who are as far from ‘brand ambassadors’ as you could possibly imagine. Because if you don’t look after them, why would they ever talk positively about their workplace or recommend it to anyone else?

Conversely, businesses with a positive approach to mental health are more likely to see: maximised profitability; increased organisational performance; heightened retention levels; more favourable attrition rates, and less sickness absence. A sound mental health policy can also act as a significant attraction tool – and in an ultra-competitive global market, that’s not something to be scoffed at. However it’s an area that many businesses are failing to address: HR Magazine recently reported that three-quarters (74%) of HR professionals think employees are sacrificing their wellbeing to make a good impression, and that employee wellbeing is not high on the corporate agenda, with 33% saying wellbeing strategies are not taken seriously within their business.

Well-rested employees are more productive, so for employers to be driving their workforce to the edge of burnout is illogical. Investing in employee wellbeing will reap the rewards – taking a dismissive approach is short-sighted and fails to recognise how businesses have evolved. Illogical it is; uncommon it is not.



THE RESEARCH

To find out more about attitudes towards mental health in the modern UK workplace, and the effects of both the positive and negative treatment of mental illness on the sufferers themselves, Badenoch + Clark in partnership with leading insight agency Opinion Matters commissioned its own research: the statistics and insights that follow are based on the responses of 1,027 UK employees with one or more mental health conditions; the sample includes the medically diagnosed and the self diagnosed, with results broken down by sector (private/ public), gender, and education level. But what do they tell us?

NEARLY HALF OF SUFFERERS FEEL DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN UK WORKPLACES

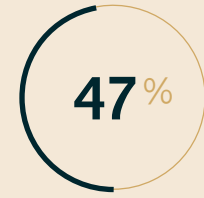
Take a moment to digest that statistic. Almost half of UK employees (47%) with a mental health condition have felt discriminated against in their place of work as a direct result of their condition.

Of the people that we surveyed, 19% have found it difficult to form work relationships; 16% believe they have been left out of social events; 15% feel they were overlooked for a job; 14% report that they were pushed out of a company, and 11% feel they have been overlooked for a pay rise or promotion. Now imagine reading those same figures, but replace 'mental illness' with 'cancer diagnosis'. We wouldn't stand for it: as employers; as recruiters; as people. And nor should we. But not everyone fully recognises the implications of living with an illness that cannot be seen.

When you suffer from a mental health condition, such as depression, anxiety, or OCD, it can be difficult to get out of bed in the mornings; leaving the house can feel like an insurmountable challenge; the associated exhaustion can make a full day of work – in a confined space,

surrounded by people who may not understand – seem less preferable to unemployment. And yet these daily challenges are not being understood or heard. These individuals are not being supported. If employees feel overlooked, underappreciated and unsupported, they won't be giving 100%; they won't be engaged; they will have no reason to remain loyal to your organisation, and they will leave with an overwhelmingly negative view of their time with you. It's an engagement headache, and a retention nightmare. But you, as an employer, can make a real difference here. You're in an ideal position to make your employees feel anything but overlooked. It's you who can help them to feel appreciated, feel valued, and feel part of a team.

Illness aside, these are highly capable people who simply need the right support from their employers. With that support in place, businesses can quickly turn disengaged workers into high-value employees. Help them, and you'll be helping your business to perform at its peak.



47% have felt discriminated against in their place of work as a direct result of their condition.

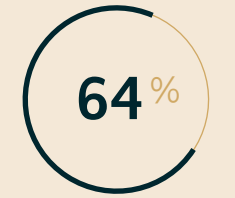


But what effect is the current status quo having on the employees in question? The experience, it seems, is sending us soaring in the wrong direction, and confining the unnecessarily controversial subject of mental health to the shadows. In fact, 64% refrained from disclosing any current or previous mental health issues during the recruitment process for their current or most recent role; while 18% of people have actually left a job owing to a lack of understanding around/attitudes towards mental health. A further 44% have considered in the past or are considering leaving at this very moment – a figure that poses serious cost and productivity implications for the employers in question.

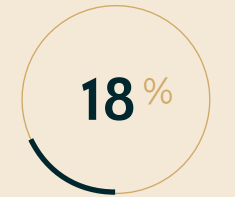
Interestingly, those who are diagnosed by a professional are much more likely to disclose their condition (42%) than those who self-diagnose (20%), and over half (51%) of those professionally diagnosed have left, or are considering leaving a job owing to attitudes towards mental health, against 33% of those who self-diagnosed. This tells us that when a condition is declared and made public, people are

more likely to have reason to leave their job. Little wonder then that a recent report from Bupa found a third (34%) of line managers would struggle to identify whether their staff were experiencing mental health problems – highlighting the need for better communication in the workplace⁷. Bupa's report also found that 30% of managers wouldn't know what to do if a member of their team did have issues with mental health. Being professionally diagnosed can legitimise an illness for the sufferer in question, but it can also increase the feeling of seriousness – something that a worrying number of businesses seem inadequately prepared to address.

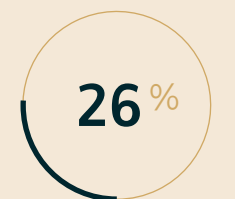
There are however a great many steps that organisations can take to improve their approach towards matters of mental health – such as implementing an open door policy, fuelling frank discussion, educating staff at every level, and clearly communicating HR guidelines that actually work for the people they're designed to protect – but more of that later.



64% refrained from disclosing any current or previous mental health issues during the recruitment process for their current or most recent role for fear of repercussion

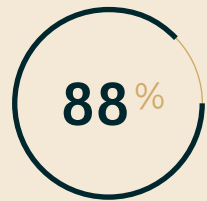


18% of people have left a job owing to a lack of understanding around/attitudes towards mental health

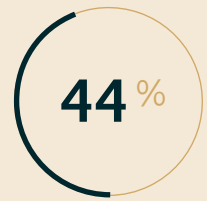


26% are considering leaving at this very moment

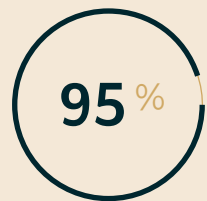
PROMOTING A POSITIVE APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH IS KEY TO COMPETITIVENESS



of people would be more likely to accept a job at a company if they did more to promote a positive attitude towards mental health



have considered leaving a job because of a lack of understanding around mental health in the workplace



of respondents believe their employer could do more to improve mental health in the workplace

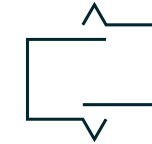
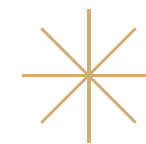
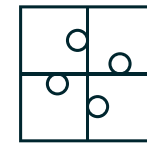
As the war for talent wages on, businesses simply cannot afford to rest on their laurels when it comes to mental health in the workplace. Research suggests that a positive attitude towards mental health could be a real competitive differentiator for employers in attracting and retaining talent.

Not convinced? The statistics speak for themselves.

An overwhelming 88% of people with a mental health condition would be more likely to accept a job at a company, or to recommend their employer to friends and family, if they did more to promote a positive attitude towards mental health – a figure that rises to 91% amongst those who have been professionally diagnosed with a mental illness. What's more, a dizzying 95% of respondents believe their employer could do more to improve mental health (or attitudes towards it) in the workplace.

The bottom line for employers? There's an awful lot more you could be doing, and taking those steps could make you a whole lot more competitive.

Research suggests that a positive attitude towards mental health could be a real competitive differentiator for employers in attracting and retaining talent.



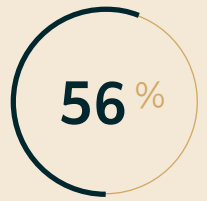
MENTAL HEALTH DAYS, AND WHY THEY'RE VALID

Whilst there is no legal difference between taking a day off work for a physical illness or for mental health reasons, this doesn't translate into practice. The majority of employees feel unable to take sickness absence to focus on their mental health, without the worry that it will negatively affect their career – which can of course exacerbate anxiety conditions. We wouldn't expect those afflicted with chicken pox or the flu to venture into work, and while mental health conditions do not carry risk of contagion, working under their influence can be bad news all round. If someone feels under pressure to carry on regardless, their performance is likely to be far below par – and bad performance is as damaging to a company as working when poorly is to general wellbeing.

Despite this, a sizeable 67% of the employees that we surveyed would feel uncomfortable telling people at work that they were absent for mental health reasons – a figure that rises to 72% in the private sector.

And their motivations are manifold.

Of those who would feel uncomfortable telling people at work that they were absent for mental health reasons, over half (59%) worry that colleagues would view them negatively as a result; 40% wouldn't feel comfortable being open about their mental health at work; 40% don't want to deal with people's prejudice around mental health, and a worrying 29% said their employer would frown upon a mental health condition as a reason to take time off work. Despite this, over half (56%) have taken at least one day's absence due to poor mental health in the past 12 months; 28% have taken six or more days absence, while almost one in ten (9%) has taken over 16 days. Internalising issues, it seems, is having a far greater impact on profitability and productivity than if a culture of openness and understanding was harnessed. These figures are particularly pertinent when we consider that the average worker took 4.3 sick days in 2016; our findings suggest that employees who are struggling with a mental health condition took an average of 6.19 days.



have taken at least one day's absence due to poor mental health in the past 12 months

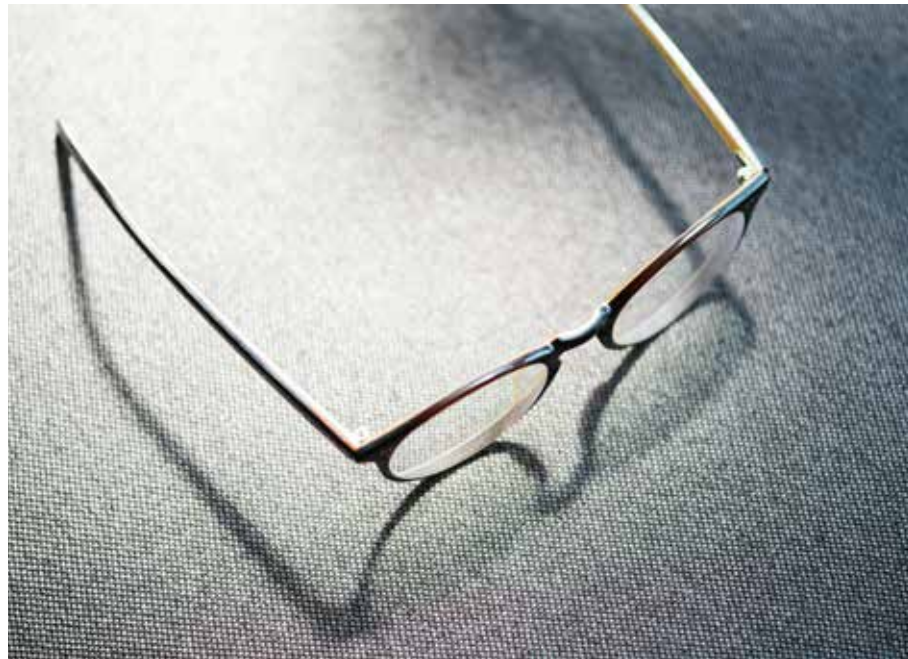
6.19 days

Average number of sick days of employees with a mental health condition

VS

4.3 days

Employees without a mental health condition

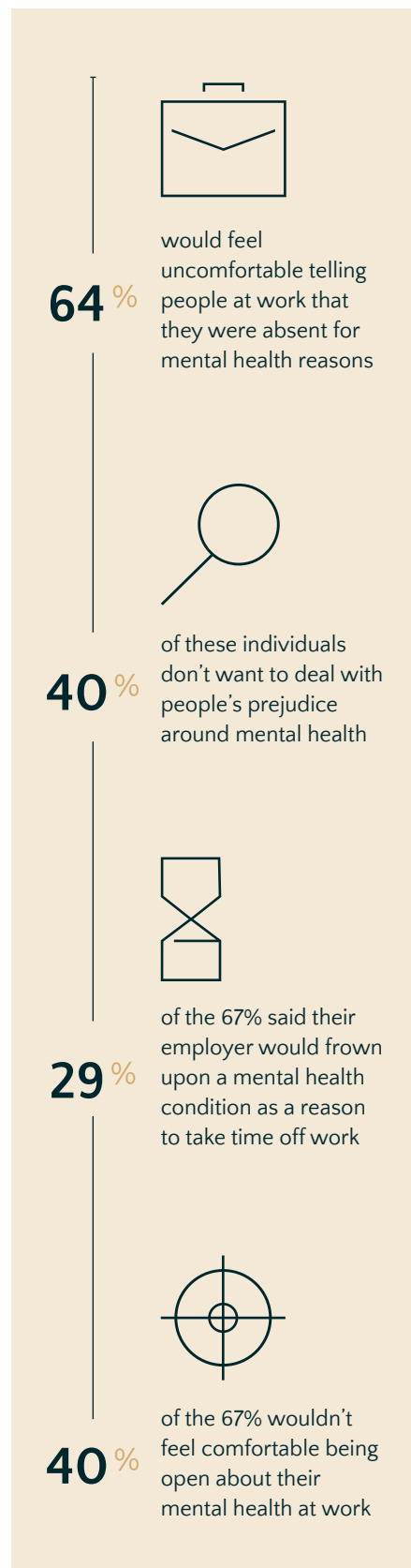


Dealing with these matters openly and honestly could help to significantly reduce the aforementioned numbers. Adequate support would mean that employees no longer felt obliged to hide an illness that, for some, still carries a tinge of 'shame' or self-reproach – and hiding anything of that magnitude can never align with happiness and productivity.

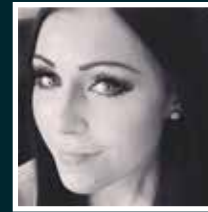
If you want to engage your employees, all whilst driving business performance and growth, you need to instil positive attitudes – and policies – towards mental health in the workplace. A key element of this is clear communication: your employees must be made aware that a mental health issue is a valid reason to be off work. Creating an empathetic environment could dramatically reduce the amount of time that employees need

to be absent, as you'd be removing the resultant stress that surrounds mental health conditions, and their association with the workplace. If your employees feel supported, and know that you care about them as individuals, you'll see a notable difference in terms of productivity and retention.

Something as straightforward as the implementation of flexible working can have the most wide-reaching of effects. For days when leaving the house, travelling during rush hour, or being surrounded by the deafening hum of other people is overwhelming, the option to work from home or to adjust start times can mean the difference between a sick day, and a day worked – just in a more flexible way. And we do practice what we preach.



CASE STUDY



Emma Attenborough-Sergeant

Chief Copywriter
for The Adecco Group UK & Ireland.



I was diagnosed with GAD (Generalised Anxiety Disorder) and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) around four years ago. I'd suffered with anxiety since childhood, but the OCD diagnosis came as a shock; there were things I'd simply considered personality quirks, rather than another illness entirely. But an understanding of both conditions helped in eventually being able to manage them – which is why professional diagnosis is so important. You have to know what you're dealing with, and it's too easy to miss things with self-diagnosis.

Treatment is rarely simple or straight-forward for any mental illness. I had counselling and subsequently CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), but the presence of two different conditions made a great many approaches contraindicative. Certain coping techniques for GAD exacerbate OCD symptoms, and visa-versa. Still, it gave me some useful strategies, and helped to talk to someone impartial and objective. Sessions had to be at the same time every week, and because of the stretched resources of the NHS, cherry picking that time was impossible. Having a manager who understood the need for me to attend those sessions during working hours was therefore invaluable, and helped to alleviate some of the pressure.

Despite therapy and medication, I found being in an office environment increasingly difficult. The noise and presence of other people can quickly become overwhelming to an unquiet mind – particularly in a job that requires silence and concentration.

I soon began to work from home a couple of days a week, and always found those days to be by far the most productive and least stressful. Over time, this became a more permanent, full-time arrangement. You do of course miss the camaraderie of working with your colleagues, so I would urge any employer to involve their home workers as much as practicable.

It's hard to put into words what a huge difference it makes to work as part of such an understanding team. I'm lucky as a copywriter that my role can be easily carried out from just about any location – not every job lends itself quite so well. But something as simple as being afforded time off to attend counselling can go a long way to making you feel valued.

My company has made provisions for me, and as a result, I feel able to give more to my job than when struggling in an office. I've also taken far less sickness absence since working from home: if I'm having a particularly challenging morning (as can often happen with anxiety conditions), I know I can work into the evening (and happily do so) to meet any deadlines. Before having that flexibility I might have missed an entire day of work instead. I feel a great sense of loyalty to The Adecco Group for their support, and I think I always will.

Finding the right approach to help someone with a mental illness is by no means easy, but when you get it right, it can be life-changing.

HR COULD LEAD THE WAY, BUT INCLUSION IS A JOINT VENTURE



Our findings raise an interesting question: who is ultimately responsible for attitudes towards mental health in the workplace? For true inclusion to be engrained in company culture, the answer should be everyone: all members of staff, through to line managers and C-Suite Executives.

Due to its role in shaping company culture and related policies, HR is in the unique position of being able to drive the mental health agenda forward and take charge of developing the kind of inclusive environment that will allow all employees to flourish. Ultimately, the role of HR in any organisation is to set appropriate policies and to guide the rest of the company in the right direction. But they can't do it alone. It's absolutely imperative that everyone is on board if you hope to foster a true culture of inclusivity; one that all employees live and breathe.

Whilst just 16% of respondents would feel comfortable discussing their mental health with their respective HR department, twice as many would talk to their team or line manager, highlighting the need for company-wide buy-in.

HR's role in establishing and regularly communicating its company's mental health policies and guidelines is a good place to start. However, clear policies must exist for that to happen: 27% said their current company doesn't have any policies in place to support people with mental health issues, while one third (34%) are unsure whether or not their company has any policies in place.

When asked about the most effective steps that their employer could take to create a more positive attitude towards mental health in the workplace, 45% spoke out in favour of business policies that both support employees and help line managers to deal with mental health challenges, while 33% said they would like to see clear communication that poor mental health is a valid reason for sick leave.

Doing more to encourage openness is also essential – particularly so when we consider that a third of people (33%) would be reluctant to discuss their mental health with anyone at work.



ARCHAIC ATTITUDES AND STEREOTYPING FUEL GENDER DIVIDE

Men are more likely than women to feel discriminated against in the UK workplace as a result of mental health, at 52% and 44% respectively: 20% say they've been overlooked for a job owing to a mental health condition, against 12% of women; 16% feel they were overlooked for a pay rise or promotion, compared to 8% of females; 16% believe they were pushed out of a company based on their mental health, versus 12% of female employees, and almost half (48%) have considered leaving a job because of a lack of understanding around or attitudes towards mental health, in contrast to 41% of women. Furthermore, men are more likely to self diagnose than women (27% vs. 21%), which suggests that these archaic attitudes are preventing many from seeking professional help.

Research from mental health charity Mind found that men are actually far more likely than women to suffer poor mental health as a direct result of their jobs, at 32% and 19% respectively⁸. But despite this, men are less likely to openly discuss the issues affecting them. What's more, the charity found that 58% of women felt they were regularly checked up on by their manager at an emotional level, whereas only 49% of men felt the same.

The disparity is even more alarming when we consider that men in the UK aged 20 to 49 are more likely to die from suicide than any other cause of death – three times higher than the number of women⁹. Could this be because women are more likely to open up, confide in someone,

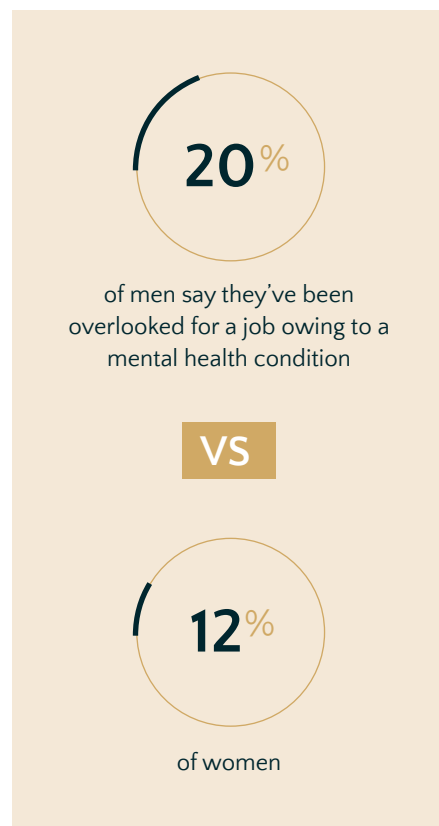


“The figures are chilling, and yet still it is something we hardly discuss, in public or private – which is a significant part of the problem itself... It is still the case that the type of men we think die by suicide are the unwell, the disturbed, the unlucky; who stumble at life's biggest hurdles and are too weak to get back up. Most of us like to think we're made of sterner stuff. We don't know that 75 per cent of people who take their own lives have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem⁸.”



'Grin and bear it', 'man up', and other outdated flippancies clearly have a significant impact on men where mental health is concerned. And hiding it isn't helping anyone. If employees feel unable to open up, their working practices will suffer, their stress levels will soar, and they won't be contributing to the business in the way that an engaged, supported, motivated employee would be able to.

At a time when great strides are being made across the UK to address gender inequality at work, we must strive for equal treatment in every area of working life. However we must also keep in mind that with the differences between their handling of mental illness, a blanket approach for all sufferers is never going to be faultless. It's about getting to know your employees, understanding the challenges they face, and pinpointing how you can support them in a meaningful way. In other words, treating your employees as individuals, rather than as mere statistics.



PUBLIC SECTOR LEADING THE WAY... IN THEORY

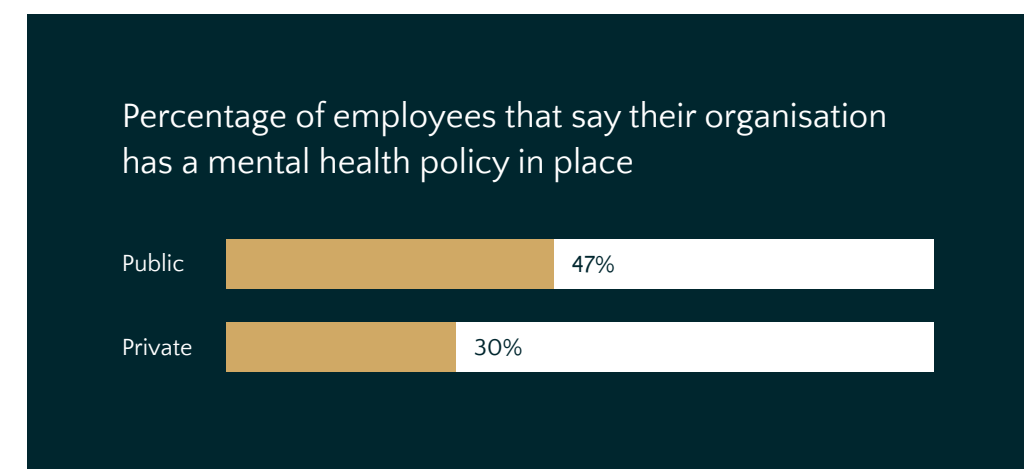
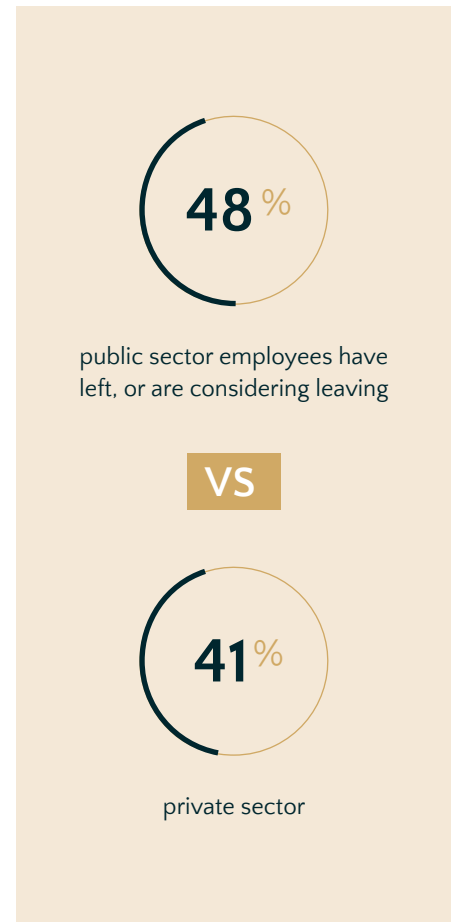
When it comes to attitudes towards mental health in the workplace, the public sector seems to be leading the way. They appear to be more knowledgeable, more appreciative, and more understanding of mental health than the traditionally bottom-line-focused private sector. But it's not all clear cut.

While a whopping 71% of those with mental health conditions in the private sector did not disclose their mental health condition compared to 58% in the public sector, almost one in two (48%) public sector employees have left, or are considering leaving their position, against a still worrying but more modest 41% of private sector employees.

Only half (47%) of employees in the public sector say their organisation has a mental health policy in place, compared to just 32% of employees in the private sector – but are these policies translating into practice? It could well be that HR in the public sphere is leading the way when it comes to encouraging openness, but with more people willing to leave their public sector job, it begs the question of whether

the day-to-day working environment provides the right sort of support and inclusiveness. It also raises the question of whether the public sector is simply paying lip service to the procedures they are expected to have in place, while private sector organisations could potentially be doing more to change behaviour from the 'shop floor' up. And if the private sector has a slightly better culture for those with a mental illness, this could add to the public sector's higher rates of attrition.

The findings from our research suggest that mental health conditions are slightly higher amongst private sector employees than their public counterparts (18% vs. 15% rate their mental health as 'poor'), while private sector employees are 7% less likely than those in the public sector to discuss their mental health with anyone at work. The disparity is even greater when broken down further: 41% of public sector workers would discuss mental health with their line manager, compared to just 34% of those in the private sector, and only 28% would open up to colleagues, against 35% in the public sector.



THE BETTER THE EDUCATION, THE BETTER THE SUPPORT?

When analysed at an educational level, we found that graduates were less likely to feel discriminated against because of their mental health (45%) than respondents who were qualified to A-Level standard (53%) or below (50%). Graduates and post-graduates are also more likely to work for mental-health-savvy organisations: 41% of graduates and 53% of post-graduates were happy to report that their employer has a mental health policy in place, compared to 30% of those with A-Levels or below, and 37% of those with no higher than GCSE qualifications.

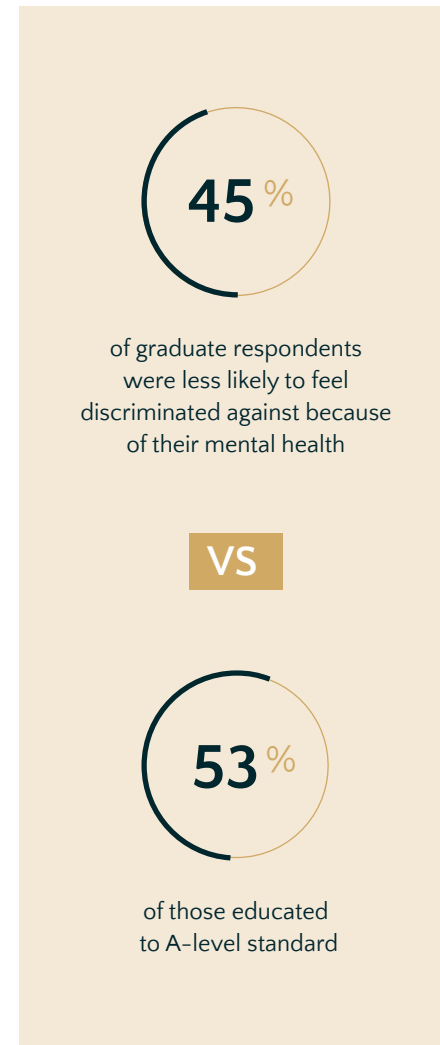
We did however find that graduates were less likely to disclose their condition when applying for a job: 76% of those with a degree kept their mental health issue under wraps during the application process for their most recent job, compared to 67% of those with an A-Level qualification, and 56% of people educated to GCSE level or below.

Graduates and post-grads are also less likely to leave their job owing to issues surrounding mental health: 63% have never considered jumping ship due to their employer's lack of understanding around mental health, against 51% of A-Level holders, and 50% of those with

GCSEs. Better treatment from employers is perhaps why graduates are less likely to need time off: 47% have never taken a sick day for mental health reasons, compared to 34% of college graduates and 34% of school leavers.

So what does all of this tell us? Are the sort of organisations who employ graduates and post-grads simply more understanding, open-minded, liberal and compassionate when it comes to matters of mental health, or is it more to do with job role? Graduates are statistically more likely to be in better paid jobs with more responsibility, so are they simply afforded more respect and autonomy than those in lower level positions?

High-skill, high-value employees are perhaps more likely to be taken care of by a company. It could also be argued that they are better able to articulate their problems. Businesses are more inclined to see the value of certain skilled, educated individuals, but the real business value of implementing positive change for the workforce as a whole cannot be overlooked. High turnover at any level will carry serious cost implications, and a problem with retention is not a reputation that any business wishes to cultivate.



“Graduates and post-grads are also less likely to leave their job owing to issues surrounding mental health.”

MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN: TOP TAKE-HOMES FOR EMPLOYERS

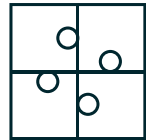
With the war for talent raging on, you can't afford to fall short when it comes to employee care. People are beginning to judge employers on how they handle these issues, and if you're not in with the best of them, your reputation could take a hit.

You'll be far more successful as a business in today's increasingly mental-health-savvy society if you embrace an understanding of how these issues could impact your employees. You could also reap massive cost savings as a result of increased retention, improved productivity, and optimised talent attraction. Ultimately, it's about support, openness, and inclusiveness; it's about hiring and promoting the worthy candidate, regardless of health issues, and it's about making sure people never feel restricted from applying for a role or promotion because of a lack of understanding and compassion around their condition.

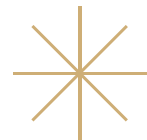
In today's fast-moving high-pressured culture, taking care of our mental well-being is more important – and more challenging – than ever before. We're busy, we're pressured, and we're part of a social media society that never switches off. It's exhausting, destructive, and sometimes extremely dangerous. So how can you, as an employer, make a real difference?



As part of our research, we asked our sample group of 1,027 UK employees – all of whom suffer from a mental health condition – about the steps their employer could take to create a more positive attitude towards mental health in the workplace. The results afford us a real insight into the struggles faced by those with a mental illness, and the practical ways that organisations can get involved.



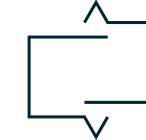
1. Clear policies that are acted upon: One of the most widely voiced complaints from our survey respondents was a lack of policies or guidelines around mental health; or, where policies did exist, a lack of clarity or communication. Employees want it to be known – both for themselves and their colleagues – that poor mental health is a valid reason to take time off work. People also felt strongly that policies must support both the employees who suffer with mental health conditions, and the line managers who are responsible for their wellbeing. This also encompasses the need for training – possibly even in-house mental health workshops – to help people better understand the implications of mental illness, to support those suffering, and to deal with the challenges it brings. And it's an approach that is already seeping into the public psyche, after PM Theresa May announced plans to give teenagers mental health training in a bid to help them cope with exam pressures and self-esteem¹⁰. But while this was the most popular suggestion to emerge from our research, policies alone are not enough. They are simply the easiest way to start the journey into providing better support for mental health, and the first part of a longer journey.



2. Flexibility around working arrangements: As we touched on at the beginning of this report, flexible working arrangements would go a long way towards helping those with a mental condition to better manage their working lives. The flexibility to work from home; to work from an office closer to home; to start after rush hour; to work shorter days – while these arrangements have to be implemented in a way that won't be detrimental to business operations, their successful introduction could hold the key to reducing absence, boosting retention, and heightening engagement and productivity levels. Because travelling to an office; working in close proximity to others; sticking to a rigid set of hours; being unable to remove oneself from difficult or emotional situations; the exhaustion associated with many mental health conditions; an inability to concentrate; the overwhelming feeling when surrounded by people you're unable to open up to, and many other related factors could be rendered far more manageable with a little understanding and tolerance.



3. Mental health benefits: Swathes of organisations offer discounted gym memberships for the upkeep of physical health, and it's time we afforded mental health the same attention. Seeing a medical professional about mental health issues can be highly beneficial, but many people face a lengthy wait for an NHS practitioner, or an expensive alternative through private care. Little wonder then that over a fifth of our survey respondents would like to see subsidised counselling or support offered by their employers. In recent years, company benefits have become as important to job seekers as their base salary. HR is already turning its attention to what can be offered to entice prospective employees, and we'd suggest this as both a quick-win and a longterm strategy for better workplace care – improving talent attraction and reducing sickness absence in one fell swoop.

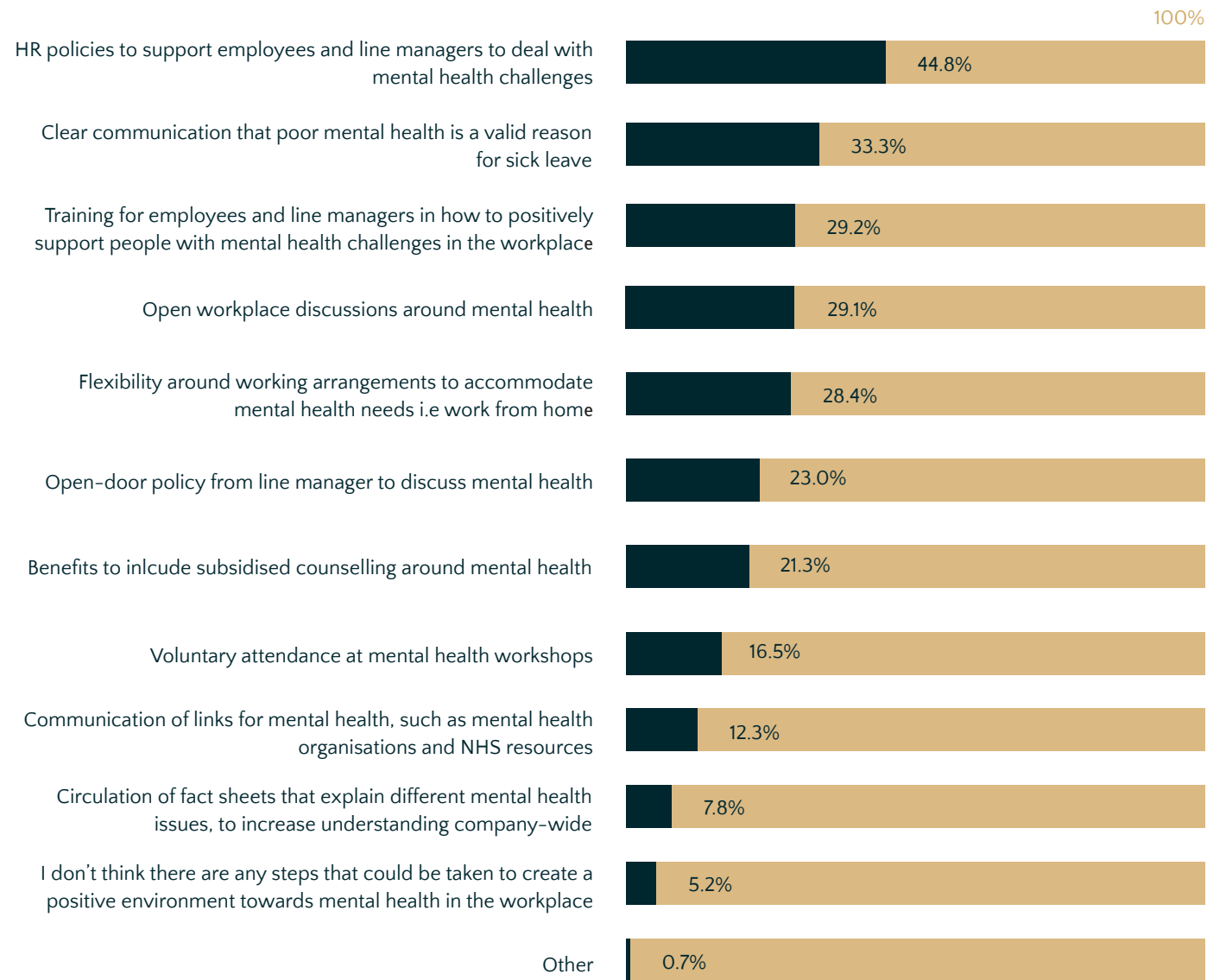


4. Open discussions, and open door policy: End the stigma. Abolish the taboo. Mental health isn't quite the hushed subject it once was, but you're still far less likely to find someone vocalising their struggles with anxiety than you would a headache. And the answer doesn't have to be complicated, or costly: encouraging people to talk more can make all the difference. Paving the way for your employees to speak openly and honestly about their struggles can make a huge difference to the working environment. And when people feel able to be themselves without fear of reprisal, they're less likely to suffer associated stress. Implement an open door policy so your team has at least one person to talk to, and consider a few other methods and initiatives – such as workshops, mental health fundraisers, or even a twitter campaign to get the conversation started. In fact, a good place to start is by joining the pros: on or around World Mental Health Day (10 October), the Mental Health Foundation organises 'Tea & Talk': a national fundraising event that encourages people to get together, pop the kettle on, have a chat – and make a donation. It's that simple. You can even order a free pack from their website to set you up for your own event¹¹. And remember: if people are comfortable in their working environment, they are more inclined to work harder, and stay with that employer for much longer.



5. Education through information: One of the greatest hurdles facing people with a mental illness is a lack of understanding about their condition. If the colleagues surrounding them have never experienced mental illness, or known anyone who has, it can be difficult to articulate precisely what a condition is and how it can manifest itself. But one of the easiest ways to remove the onus from the sufferer is by circulating fact sheets about some of the most common mental health issues. Increasing understanding and awareness is always the best place to start – and it will also go a long way towards opening up those discussions mentioned above. You could even include links for mental health organisations and NHS resources for people who need help, or who want to understand more. A lot of charities will have their own factsheets that you can download and circulate – perhaps at the same time as communicating your mental health policies and guidelines.

What three steps do you think would be most effective to create a positive environment towards mental health in the workplace?

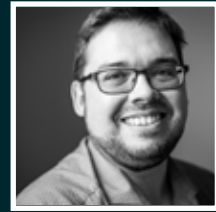


But keep in mind: it's not just about the quick wins. It's about implementing changes and really embracing them, living them, and breathing them. Taking steps towards supporting positive mental health is not a compliance tick-box exercise, and it shouldn't be treated as one. And it might not be plain sailing all the way, but it will absolutely be worth it when you have more engaged employees, higher attrition rates, a more lucrative employer brand, and the sort of environment that people really want to work in.

WORKPLACE WELLBEING IN PRACTICE

Chris O'Sullivan
Head of Business Development and Engagement
Mental Health Foundation

Alex Bailey
Leader
Bailey & French



Chris O'Sullivan

Head of Business Development & Engagement
Mental Health Foundation



Chris O'Sullivan, Head of Business Development and Engagement for the Mental Health Foundation, leads on workplace mental health for the Foundation across the UK, and believes that training is a critical part of a company's approach to mental health at work.

The line management relationship is critical to facilitating disclosure and enabling support, and leadership buy-in is key to creating the culture necessary for a mentally healthy workplace. Whilst it is important that line managers recognise distress and can respond with compassion, and provide practical support for those with mental health problems, it is equally important that managers and leaders create environments that support the mental wellbeing of all workers. We'd also suggest that leadership development includes managing mental health, with line managers selected for their human skills as well as their professional competence. You don't have to be a counsellor to make a huge difference to a person having a tough time.

Where organisations don't have guidelines or policies in place to support employees with mental health problems, it's often down to an impression that mental health is complex or risky, or that by talking about mental health, a can of worms will be opened. This is one more facet of stigma that must end. When I worked for Scotland's anti-stigma programme See Me, I witnessed discrimination and harassment in the workplace that ranged from overt bullying to contracts of employment that listed 'becoming of unsound mind' as a reason for dismissal. But employers can easily take steps to provide better support for employees with mental health problems.

Any initiative must start by making it safe to come forward, and then an advantage to come forward. A zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, coupled with raising mental health awareness in the business, is a good starting point. Making mental health a part of everyone's working life by promoting mental health days, along with the use of employee benefits to improve everybody's mental health, sends a clear message that mental health is something we all have and can improve.

We're currently working with a leading high street financial services company to implement their wellbeing strategy: this includes mental health awareness campaigns for staff, supporting and coaching staff to tell their stories in the business, a suite of eLearning for all staff, and a face-to-face training programme for people managers. This kind of holistic, sustained programme is the kind of action that evidence suggests is most likely to succeed. We also offer 'Be Mindful Online' – an evidence based online mindfulness training programme that achieves a 33% improvement in sleep quality and a 25% reduction in excessive rumination (chewing things over in your head) in a workplace audience.

I have always been open about my own mental illness diagnosis at work. I have a good relationship with my line manager and team and they are strong allies, but there is no book for career advancement for people with lived experience, and there's definitely a need for coaching and other professional development opportunities.

To read more about how you can support mental health at work, visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk



Alex Bailey

Leader
Bailey & French



Alex Bailey of Bailey & French, who specialises in the subject of wellbeing in the workplace, believes that many 'wellbeing programmes' – implemented by a number of organisations to improve the health and overall wellbeing of their employees – miss the point, and in addition to a focus on physical health and support for mental illness, a genuine effort to improve psychological wellbeing for all is needed.

Stress is the leading cause of workplace absence in the UK. In response, 'wellbeing' is on the agenda for the majority of people teams (only 8% of organisations say they're not doing anything to improve employee health and wellbeing). But in reality, many of these programmes focus on physical health and support for those with mental illness, rather than true psychological wellbeing for all people (CIPD, 2016).

For many people professionals, wellbeing is a new area of responsibility, and an addition to an already-heavy workload of existing HR processes and priorities. It is high on the organisational agenda, but often perceived sceptically by people across the organisation, who are focused on the day-to-day tasks of the business, and unconvinced of the value of the activities on offer.

There is frequently a lack of clarity around what 'wellbeing' means and what the expectations and outcomes are for programmes – it simply becomes another thing for HR to do, reinforcing their role as the 'parents' of the organisation. Programmes repeatedly fall to more junior members of the team, who have a lack of influence and find it difficult to get people on board.

The result is a high workload and confusion around where to start, which can lead to programmes never getting off the ground. Even those that do are less successful than they should be, or unhelpfully lead to a culture of entitlement, where people feel it's down to the organisation – and the people team in particular – to look after them. There's a lack of real engagement and a mentality that it's down to someone else – again, often the people team – to 'fix' things.

So, what options do we have if we really want to improve wellbeing within our organisations? Martin Seligman's PERMA model provides a simple, research-based framework, which we've used to create a flexible programme that easily adjusts to fit small single-site organisations, large multi-nationals, and everything in between.

Initiated by a simple conversation mat tool, it focuses on a series of six wellbeing workshops. At just an hour long, these are easy to fit into the working day – often over a breakfast or lunch – and built around interactive activities to empower individuals to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. These can be run in-person or virtually through online learning – either by the Bailey & French team or by internal champions, who we can upskill through a train the trainer session. Using an innovative preventative approach, they're interactive and fun – using conversation and reflection to encourage active peer-to-peer learning and exploration – and making wellbeing easy for everyone to understand and apply on both an individual and organisational level.

For more information on Bailey & French and their wellbeing programmes visit www.baileyandfrench.com. Alternatively, contact them directly on +44 (0) 1273 830 830 or info@baileyandfrench.com



GET IN TOUCH

It can be difficult to know where to start, or how to improve on what you're already doing. That's why we're positively encouraging you to get in touch. Ask for help. Use us as a sounding board. We can arrange a meeting – or a telephone call if you're time poor – to discuss strategy, and how we might be able to help you in shaping your mental health policy from an attraction and retention perspective. We don't profess to be all-out experts in the intricacies of these conditions, but we are championing mental health in the workplace as part of our diversity and inclusion drive.

We believe that together, we can make a real difference.

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