

Your Workplace Mental Health Toolkit

Practical guides and resources for small business owners and HR managers. Get your workplace talking and support your team with confidence.



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Support your team with confidence

Welcome to Your Workplace Mental Health Toolkit

Every employee deserves a working environment where they feel supported. As a small business owner or manager, you do not need big budgets or HR departments to make a real difference. Simple, everyday actions are what matter most.

This practical guide gives you straightforward tools to help you spot when a team member may be struggling, hold supportive one-to-one conversations, and guide employees toward free, confidential NHS care when they need extra help.

What Is Included in This Toolkit



Workplace Insights

Key insights into why taking care of your team makes good business sense.



Best Practices Checklist

A step-by-step roadmap to build an open, supportive workplace culture.



Spotting the Early Warning Signs

Clear lists to help managers notice subtle changes in behavior, routine, or mood.



Step-by-Step Conversation Guide

Simple frameworks for opening supportive staff discussions with confidence.



1:1 Wellbeing Check-In Guide

Conversation prompts and actions to support common team mental health concerns.



Ready-to-Use Templates

Pre-written copy and designs for emails, and team messages and posters to share with your team.



The NHS Talking Therapies Pathway

Clear guidance on how your employees can access free, confidential NHS support.



Building a healthy, resilient workforce

Why taking early action on mental health is your strongest business decision

Navigating mental health challenges in smaller teams requires a thoughtful, proactive approach. Looking after your team's wellbeing helps protect both your people and the smooth running of your business.

Sickness Absence and Early Support

Mental health challenges are one of the main reasons people take time off work. Catching stress or anxiety early stops small issues from turning into long-term absence.

Start with open conversations: Create an environment where staff feel safe mentioning when they are struggling before it impacts their health.

Offer practical adjustments: Consider temporary changes like flexible working hours, task-sharing, or adjusted deadlines during stressful periods.

Helping Managers Feel Prepared

While most managers genuinely care about team wellbeing, many report feeling unequipped to hold sensitive conversations about mental health.

Provide simple conversation guides: Give managers gentle frameworks to use rather than expecting them to have clinical answers.

Normalise daily check-ins: Make asking "How are you doing today?" a regular part of everyday working life.

51%

of work-related ill health is caused by stress or anxiety.

Source: HSE

80%

of managers want to support mental health but lack practical tools.

Source: CMI/Mind

63%

Of long-term sickness absences stem from stress.

Source: CIPD

Your wellbeing roadmap

Use this step-by-step checklist to build a supportive culture in your workplace.

Internal awareness and open communication come first, ensuring your team feels comfortable before introducing external support options.



Measures to Action:



Open Communication

Have a business owner or manager share a warm, encouraging message with the team to show that talking about wellbeing is welcomed and safe.

[More →](#)



Manager Preparation

Share simple conversation frameworks with team leaders so they feel confident starting supportive discussions early.

[More →](#)



Regular One-to-One Check-ins

Build a short check-in into routine catch-ups to ask how people are coping with workload, stress, and home life.

[More →](#)



Visible Signposting

Share NHS Talking Therapies materials in communal spaces so support options are easy to find for those not ready to speak with management.

[More →](#)



Promote Self-Referral Options

Ensure staff know they can directly access free NHS support with full confidentiality, without needing a doctor's note or employer approval.

[More →](#)

Spotting the early warning signs

Burnout and anxiety rarely happen overnight. Managers are in the best position to notice subtle shifts in routine, mood, or energy. Look out for combinations of these common signs:

Work Performance & Routine



Uncharacteristic missed deadlines



Difficulty concentrating or making decisions



Working unusually long or late hours



Sudden drop in quality or attention to detail

Changes in Mood & Behaviour



Seeming unusually quiet or withdrawn



Expressing feeling overwhelmed by small tasks



Losing enthusiasm for everyday work



Increased irritability or quickness to frustration

Physical Signs & Energy



Looking constantly tired or drained



Frequent headaches or minor illnesses



Visible changes in posture or body language



Restlessness, pacing, or fidgeting during meetings

How to support conversation

You do not need to be a counsellor or therapist. Your role as a manager is simply to listen with empathy, offer workplace flexibility where possible, and gently direct staff to professional care if needed.

Step 1: Prepare the Setting

Choose a quiet, private space where you will not be interrupted. Make sure you have enough time so the conversation feels calm and unhurried.

Step 2: Open the Conversation Gently

Use warm, non-judgmental language focused on what you have noticed.



Say

"I noticed you seemed a little quiet in our team catch-up yesterday, and I just wanted to see how you are doing."



Avoid

"You seem stressed, what is going on?"

Step 3: Provide a Space to Listen

Give them space to talk. Do not feel you have to fix everything immediately or give expert advice.



Say

"Thank you for sharing that with me. It sounds like you have a lot on your plate at the moment."



Avoid

Overpromising or dismissing worries.

Step 4: Offer Support Where Needed

Remind them of the flexible workplace options you can offer, alongside confidential external support like NHS Talking Therapies.



Say

"We can look at adjusting your workload this week. Also, if you feel you need extra support, there are free, confidential NHS services you can access directly whenever you are ready."

1:1 Wellbeing Check-In Guide

Your goal in a 1:1 isn't to solve a mental health crisis - it's to listen, lighten the load, and signpost to support if needed. Here is your quick-response guide to a handful of common workplace scenarios.



I have too many competing priorities and feel buried under my workload.

- Work together to identify and agree on their top 3 priorities for the week.
- Explicitly give permission to pause, delegate, or push back deadlines on non-essential tasks.
- Help them block out dedicated “focus time” in their calendar with chat notifications turned off.



I'm finding it hard to switch off and stop worrying about work at home.

- Set boundaries - agree that emails and messages sent after hours do not require an immediate response.
- Encourage taking full, uninterrupted lunch breaks away from their desk.
- Implement 10-minute end-of-day “wrap-ups” to review tomorrow’s plan so they can mentally clock-out.



I'm struggling with personal pressures outside of work, and it's affecting my focus.

- Reassure them that their wellbeing comes first and explore short-term flexibility (e.g., adjusted start/finish times or temporary remote working).
- Follow up - ask “How can I best support you this week?” rather than digging into personal details.
- Provide NHS self-referral links if needed so they can seek expert advice at their own pace.

Email & Newsletter Templates

Use these pre-written options for your emails or newsletters to promote a positive and open attitude to mental health.

Internal Email

[↪ Group Email](#)

Hi team,

Following up on our recent 1-to-1s and catch-ups, we wanted to reiterate our commitment to supporting your wellbeing at work. While managers are always here to chat through any issues or discuss workload adjustments, we recognise that some people prefer seeking support privately.

Free, confidential support is always available via NHS Talking Therapies. Beyond 1-to-1 therapy, they provide practical tools and strategies to help you manage everyday challenges - from online Wellness Webinars and Mental Health & Wellbeing Courses to actionable techniques for tackling stress, burnout, and constant worry. This service is completely independent of work with no GP referral needed and no employer notification.

You can learn more about local services and self-referral options here: [\[Insert NHS Link\]](#)

Best,

[\[Your Name / Leadership Team\]](#)

Internal Newsletter / Staff Bulletin

[↪ Newsletter](#)

Confidential Mental Health Support

Looking after our mental health is just as important as our physical health. While managers are always here to support you with workload adjustments or workplace challenges, we know you may sometimes prefer independent advice.

Through NHS Talking Therapies, you can access free, confidential support designed to give you practical ways to cope with life's pressures. Whether you're looking for strategies to prevent burnout, ways to manage daily stress, Wellness Webinars or and Mental Wellbeing Courses, expert guidance is available. The service is entirely private, independent of work, and requires no GP referral.

[\[Click here to find your local NHS Talking Therapies service\]](#)

Internal Slack / Teams Templates

Use these pre-written options for your team chats or private messaging to open up conversations in your workplace.

Short Slack / Teams Message

→ Work Channel

Hi team, just a quick reminder that alongside speaking with your manager, free and confidential support is always available through NHS Talking Therapies. It's not just 1-to-1 therapy - you can access Wellness Webinars, self-paced courses, and practical self-help tools to help navigate daily stress and prevent burnout.

It's 100% private, with no GP referral or work approval needed. Feel free to take a look here: [Insert Link]

Short Slack / Teams Message

→ Post Catch-up

Hi [Name], thanks for catching up earlier. Just following up to say my door is always open if you ever need extra flexibility or workload support.

Sharing a quick link in case it's useful outside of work. NHS Talking Therapies offers free, confidential support. Beyond 1-to-1 therapy, they have online webinars, courses, and self-help options to give you practical ways to manage stress. Zero pressure, but here's the link if you want to take a look: [Insert Link]

Short Slack / Teams Message

→ Return-to-work

Hi [Name], welcome back! We're really glad to have you back. Please don't feel any pressure to rush straight into things - our focus is making your return as smooth as possible.

Alongside any adjustments we make, a quick reminder that further support is available via NHS Talking Therapies at any time. It offers free, professional mental health support with total privacy and no GP referral needed. Take things at your own pace! Here's the link if you ever need it: [Insert NHS Link]

Free Printable Resources

Download A3 Posters



Download A5 Flyers



Talking Therapies

Struggling to juggle work and everyday life?

FREE NHS Services

Fully Confidential

If workplace stress or personal pressures are getting too much, NHS Talking Therapies is here to help you get back on track.

Self-refer today - It is FREE and confidential.

→ kmtalkingtherapies.co.uk

Services provided by

Part of Spire Healthcare

Exhaustion
Rumination
Lack of motivation

Science-based
you find new
your mood and

to suit your
webinars,
1-1 therapy
d more.

approach

ur website, or by
code on this leaflet.

ed by a friendly
am. Together, we
t support for you.

therapist will support
our treatment.

FREE
ce.
.co.uk

The NHS Talking Therapies Pathway

If a member of your staff is struggling and needs additional out-of-workplace support, NHS Talking Therapies can help. Understanding how the service works helps you answer basic questions if an employee asks for guidance.

Our easy 3 step approach

1

Referral

Individuals can self-refer online via our digital referral assistant or by telephone.

2

Assessment

A friendly member of our team will assess you and together, we will agree on the best option of support for you.

3

Treatment

A fully qualified therapist will support you throughout your treatment.

How to refer

Staff can refer themselves directly without speaking to a GP or manager first as long as they are registered with a GP in one of our service areas. Simply complete a quick, confidential online form:

[View Referral Form](#)



Our Full Service Offering

Please note not all services are available in every service area.
Visit our website for location-specific service offerings.

[View all services](#)



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

[Learn more](#)



Counselling for Depression

[Learn more](#)



Digital Talking Therapies

[Learn more](#)



Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy (DIT)

[Learn more](#)



Employment Support

[Learn more](#)



Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR)

[Learn more](#)



Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)

[Learn more](#)



Talking Therapies for Couples

[Learn more](#)



Further Support

[Learn more](#)



Next Steps

Creating a supportive workplace is an ongoing habit that builds a stronger, happier team.



Start the conversation

Share an open, encouraging message about wellbeing with your team this week using one of the template options provided.

Support your managers

Pass this guide to line managers and team leads across your business.

Keep support visible

Put up posters or share links in communal spaces so staff know external NHS support is always available privately whenever they need it.

Explore further insights

Check out our Health Hub for free articles, podcasts, and practical toolkits to help you support your staff - [Visit Website](#).

Take your wellbeing plan further with our private training and support

Beyond NHS pathways, Vita Health Group also offer tailored corporate solutions to help your organisation manage complex workplace challenges and build resilient teams. Solutions include: Critical Incident Support, Workplace Mediation and clinician-led Manager & Wellbeing Training.

Learn more





Talking Therapies

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withyou

kmtalkingtherapies.co.uk