Managing psychological health in the workplace

A must-read guide to enhance your employee mental health strategy

Find out more about the world's first ISO Standard tackling mental health in the workplace

What is mental health?

Mental health concerns how we think, feel and behave. Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health problems. They are often a reaction to a difficult life event, such as bereavement, but can also be caused by work-related issues.

What does the law say?

Whether work is causing a mental health issue or aggravating it, employers have a legal responsibility to help their employees. Work-related mental health issues must be assessed to measure the levels of risk to staff. Where a risk is identified, steps must be taken to remove it or reduce it as far as reasonably practicable.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities, as with any other hazard. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires an employer to take measures to control that risk.

Did you know?

1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety or depression) in any given week in the UK

Mental health and stress – what's the difference?

Work-related stress can aggravate an existing mental health problem, making it more difficult to control. If work-related stress reaches a point where it has triggered an existing mental health problem, it becomes hard to separate one from the other.

Common mental health problems and stress can exist independently – people can experience work-related stress and physical changes such as high blood pressure – without having anxiety, depression or other mental health problems.

They can also have anxiety and depression without experiencing stress. The key differences between them are their cause(s) and the way(s) they are treated.

Stress is a reaction to events or experiences in someone's home life, work life or a combination of both. Common mental health problems can have a single cause outside work, for example bereavement, divorce, postnatal depression, a medical condition or a family history of the problem. But people can have these sorts of problems with no obvious causes.

Supporting mental health in the workplace – set the Standard

Work plays an important role in our psychological health. This has been brought into sharp focus by the pandemic.

Did you know?

In 2021 mental health troubles were the most common cause of lost working time in nearly every industry, with absences averaging at least three times longer than for COVID-related reasons.

With growing awareness of how psychological illness can affect workers and the wider organisation they work in; it's never been more important to support your employees' mental health.

With a responsibility to protect both the physical and mental health of your employees, it's important to look at the processes, procedures and policies your people are working under and what systems need to be in place to support them.

The great news is that such a framework now exists – ISO 45003. The world's first international Standard covering mental health in the workplace was published in 2021! The launch of ISO 45003 is a timely reminder that businesses have both a responsibility and an incentive to create safe and healthy workplaces.

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So, what exactly is ISO 45003?

ISO 45003 is the first global Standard giving employers practical guidance on managing psychological health in the workplace. It was developed to help organisations of all sizes and from all sectors, identify and manage psychosocial risks to their workers, focusing on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of Health & Safety.

ISO 45003 is a great risk management tool to help organisations develop a structure that allows them to identify risk factors and assess them to discover what changes can be made to improve their working environment.

ISO 45003 builds on ISO 45001 on managing Health & Safety risks in the workplace with an occupational health and safety management system. ISO 45003 demonstrates leadership commitment to employee health and wellbeing and emphasises the need for promoting and protecting psychological (not just physical) health in the workplace.

Why is ISO 45003 important?

ISO 45003 demonstrates that your workers' psychological health is a priority. By committing to protect the mental wellbeing of your employees you can help create a strong, healthy, and happy workforce. ISO 45003's best practice guidelines offer many business gains. Let's look at some of the benefits of prioritising your people…

Did you know?

Poor mental health costs UK businesses up to £56 billion a year?

Did you also know?

According to Deloitte, for every £1 spent on employee wellbeing, employers make £5.30 back! Sounds like an investment worth making.

Benefits for your business

- ✓ Reduce absenteeism – from workplace stress, burnout, anxiety and depression
- ✓ Reduce presenteeism (when an employee is at work in body, but not in mind)
- ✓ Boost productivity
- ✓ Enhance worker engagement
- ✓ Improve recruitment and retention
- ✓ Enhance the reputation of your company
- ✓ Increase retention rates and lower recruitment costs
- ✓ Fewer workplace claims

Benefits for your employees

- ✓ Greater health and wellbeing
- ✓ Enhanced job satisfaction
- ✓ Increased job productivity
- ✓ Morale boost
- ✓ Higher motivation to perform
- ✓ Peace of mind that work is a safe place
- ✓ Better work-life balance
- ✓ Less likely to want to leave

Next steps...

How do I become certified in ISO 45003?

Unlike ISO 45001, ISO 45003 is a guidance Standard, not a requirement Standard which means you can't be certified in it in the same way. At QMS we offer a bespoke certificate that will demonstrate your compliance with its guidance. ISO 45003's processes can also be easily incorporated into an integrated management system with one or more ISOs.

Here at QMS, we help organisations of every size and sector with a fast, simple, and cost-effective route to ISO certification. We are one of the UK's leading certification bodies and we're by your side throughout your ISO journey. Our keep it simple approach means we support you at every step.

Achieving ISO 45003 certification is simple with our 3-step approach...

Step 1

To get you started, one of our consultants will spend some time with you to look at your current processes and how they fit with the guidelines.

Step 2

After this you'll receive a gap analysis report, highlighting any areas that need adjusting to meet the Standard's guidelines. While you make these adjustments, QMS will produce your documented management system.

Step 3

When you're ready, we'll follow up and check the adjustments have been made. You'll then be awarded your ISO 45003 certificate!

Take the first step today...

If you'd like to find out more about ISO 45003 and how it can help you build a more positive work environment.

Get in touch on **0333 344 3646** or email **sales@qmsuk.com**

More ideas for help and support – let's talk about it

If you feel like something's not quite the same with someone – there's something going on in their life or notice a change in what they're doing or saying - trust that gut instinct and take the time to ask them "Are you OK?"

By acting as eyes and ears and reaching out to anyone who's going through a tough time, you can show them that they're supported and encourage them to access help sooner.

If an employee or colleague reaches out to you...

- Find a good place to talk - take them somewhere comfortable, where others can't overhear.

- Listen - listen to what they're saying, don't jump to conclusions, let them talk.

- Reassure them- let them know that support is available.

- Just be there - it's difficult for people to express their feelings and fears, take the time and don't rush them.

- Sign post them to help - point them in the direction of the organisations that can help.

- Encourage them to seek support

Helplines

If you, or someone you know is suffering with mental health problems or experiencing depression, then you can reach out to any of the following organisations for more information and support:

Mind: https://www.mind.org.uk
or call **0300 123 3393**

Samaritans: https://www.samaritans.org/
or call **116 123 FREE**

CALM: https://www.thecalmzone.net/
or call **0800 58 58 58**

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